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A Commitment to Transparency: Learning More About the Charter Schools Program

Today as part of the U.S. Department of Education's (the Department) commitment to transparency, the Department's Charter Schools Program (CSP) released a dataset (<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/charter/cspawardsdatabase.xls>) showing all grants awarded since 2006 for the planning, initial implementation, and replication of public charter schools across the nation, as well as for dissemination and expansion. The dataset provides new and more detailed information on the over \$1.5 billion¹ that CSP has provided, since 2006, to fund the start-up, replication, and expansion of high-quality public charter schools in almost every State with public charter schools. CSP funding has served as a critical resource to expand access to high-quality public education opportunities across the country—particularly for students living in poverty—and the Department believes that sharing CSP data is an important step in better understanding CSP's investments.

CSP's investments have dramatically expanded the number of high-quality public charter schools serving our students. In fact, as of SY 2013-14, over 40% of the open charter schools in the country had received CSP funding, and these schools were serving approximately a million students. From SY 2006-07 to SY 2013-14, CSP invested over \$1.5 billion in the planning, startup, and replication of public charter schools. The vast majority (approximately \$1.4 billion) of this federal funding has flowed through State Educational Agencies (SEAs) (<https://innovation.ed.gov/what-we-do/charter-schools/charter-school-program-state-educational-agencies-sea/>). CSP has also awarded approximately \$97 million to Charter Management Organizations (CMOs) under the Replication and Expansion of High-Quality Charter Schools grant program (<https://innovation.ed.gov/what-we-do/charter-schools/charter-schools-program-grants-for-replications-and-expansion-of-high-quality-charter-schools/>), and approximately \$53 million to charter schools under the Non-SEA grant program (<https://innovation.ed.gov/what-we-do/charter-schools/charter-schools-program-non-state-educational-agencies-non-sea-planning-program-design-and-initial-implementation-grant/>). During this same time period, CSP planning and startup capital facilitated the creation of over 2,600 charter schools that were operational as of SY 2013-14; approximately 430 charter schools that served students but subsequently closed by SY 2013-14; and approximately 699 "prospective schools." Prospective schools include situations where an operator planned for, but has not yet opened, a school. CSP funding is intended for operators best positioned to open high-quality schools; however, as with any startup, school operators face a range of factors that may affect their school's opening. And as with any provider of startup capital, the Department learns from its investments, and data from these investments show the tremendous impact CSP-funded charter schools have had across the country, especially for students from low-income backgrounds and black and Hispanic students. Approximately 60% of students in CSP-funded schools (as of SY 2013-14)

were eligible for free and reduced-lunch. Many CSP-funded schools, especially those serving areas of high-poverty, are shattering low expectations and creating innovative solutions to break the barriers that have long prevented many at-risk students from achieving educational success. There is much we can all learn from the students, teachers, and families at these schools, and sharing data on the CSP's investments will help facilitate such learning.

The dataset released today draws from numerous sources to provide a comprehensive overview of CSP data. The dataset was developed by merging grantee-reported data with data available in the Common Core of Data, as well as the Civil Rights Data Collection. Also released today is an analysis (<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/charter/cspdata.pdf>) that highlights some of the key findings in the data, focusing on the period SY 2006-07 to SY 2013-14. We hope that the dataset and analysis released today will enable both the Department and the public to learn more about the charter schools that have received start-up funding under the program, such as operational status, enrollment and demographics, and academic outcomes. The Department will continue to apply these lessons learned to the quality growth of the sector.

¹ Amounts adjusted for inflation.

This entry was posted in Charter Schools (<http://innovation.ed.gov/category/charter-schools/>) on December 23, 2015 (<http://innovation.ed.gov/2015/12/23/a-commitment-to-transparency-learning-more-about-the-charter-schools-program/>).

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