

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



JIM HORNE
Commissioner of Education



CONTACT PERSON

NAME: Lisa Kammel
PHONE: (850) 488-5571
E-MAIL: Lisa.Kammel@fldoe.org

MEMORANDUM

TO: District School Superintendents

FROM: J.C. Bowman
Director, Choice Office

DATE: March 12, 2003

SUBJECT: Voluntary Public School Choice Program Request for Proposals
\$1.5 Million in Federal Funds Available

Please find attached a request for proposal for the **Voluntary Public School Choice Mentor District Project**. In October 2002, the Florida Department of Education received a five-year grant, including \$2,650,766 available for the 2002-2003 school year, to implement a Voluntary Public School Choice Program. The goals of the program are to reinstate, sustain and expand the degree of high-quality public school choice programs, as well as to expand and replicate successful implementation of public school choice throughout Florida and the nation. The main objectives for this program are to provide a wide variety of educational choices for all students, substantially impact students in low-performing schools by providing opportunities for them to attend higher-performing schools, improve low performing and under-enrolled schools, and increase student achievement.

The Florida Department of Education will meet the goals and objectives of the Voluntary Public School Choice Program by funding veteran and novice school districts in public school choice program implementation. School districts with documented success in implementation will have

the opportunity to apply for funding to become a Mentor District. School districts in need of guidance and assistance in developing and implementing a school choice program will have the opportunity to apply to become a Mentee District. The attached request for proposal is specifically for the Mentor District Project.

School districts with at least one full school year of successful public school choice implementation are encouraged to apply for funding to become a Mentor District. Funds may be used for:

- maintaining, improving and expanding the current school choice program;
- transferring tuition payments to public elementary schools or secondary schools that students choose under the program;
- providing transportation to students in the school choice program;
- capacity-enhancing activities that enable high-demand public elementary schools or secondary schools to accommodate transfer requests under the program;
- executing public education campaigns to inform students and parents about the program; and
- other costs that are reasonably necessary to implement the program.

School districts awarded funds to become a Mentor District have the opportunity to participate in the Voluntary Public School Choice Program and to receive funding for each of the five years of the program. During year two of the program, Mentor Districts will be partnered with a Mentee District of similar size and demographic make-up. Mentor Districts will provide guidance and assistance to Mentee Districts in planning, or redesigning, and implementing their Voluntary Public School Choice plan. The Mentor/Mentee partnerships may provide hands-on technical assistance, job process shadowing opportunities, resource sharing, and other assistance as needed.

The Department of Education expects to fund approximately 10 Mentor District Projects through the Voluntary Public School Choice Program. The budget period shall extend from the date noted in the award letter through September 30, 2003.

The attached request for proposal and additional materials include detailed information regarding the project background and purpose, application instructions, review procedures, and scoring criteria.

Proposals will be reviewed and recommended on a competitive basis by a review panel composed of individuals from the following areas: school choice, family involvement, student equity and diversity, transportation, community education organizations, school improvement, and public relations. To be considered for funding, applications must be received by the Department of Education on or before 5:00 p.m. on April 19, 2003. Applications must be received in substantially approvable form, the criterion for which includes:

- The narrative and budgetary information requested in the RFP and attached forms; and
- The original signature of the Superintendent/Agency Head and the date of board approval, or a letter indicating that the application is to be considered at the next board meeting.

If you have any questions regarding this project, please do not hesitate to contact Lisa Kammel, Program Director, Voluntary Public School Choice Program, at (850) 488-5571.