

U.S. Department of Education

Impact Evaluation of the DC
Opportunity Scholarship Program

*Office of Management and Budget
Statement for Paperwork Reduction Act Submission*

Attachment 1

Contract ED-04-CO-0126

September 28, 2007

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Authorizing Legislation

TITLE III--DC SCHOOL CHOICE INCENTIVE ACT OF 2003

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SEC. 301. SHORT TITLE

This title may be cited as the "DC School Choice Incentive Act of 2003".

SEC. 302. FINDINGS

The Congress finds the following:

- (1) Parents are best equipped to make decisions for their children, including the educational setting that will best serve the interests and educational needs of their child.
- (2) For many parents in the District of Columbia, public school choice provided for under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 as well as under other public school choice programs, is inadequate due to capacity constraints. Available educational alternatives to the public schools are insufficient and more educational options are needed. In particular, funds are needed to assist low-income parents to exercise choice among enhanced public opportunities and private educational environments, whether religious or nonreligious. Therefore, in keeping with the spirit of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, school choice options, in addition to those already available to parents in the District of Columbia (such as magnet and charter schools and open enrollment schools) should be made available to those parents.
- (3) In the most recent mathematics assessment on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), administered in 2000, a lower percentage of 4th-grade students in the District of Columbia demonstrated proficiency than was the case for any State. Seventy-six percent of the District of Columbia fourth-graders scored at the "below basic" level and of the 8th-grade students in the District of Columbia, only 6 percent of the students tested at the proficient or advanced levels, and 77 percent were below basic. In the most recent NAEP reading assessment, in 1998, only 10 percent of the District of Columbia fourth-graders could read proficiently, while 72 percent were below basic. At the 8th-grade level, 12 percent were proficient or advanced and 56 percent were below basic.
- (4) A program enacted for the valid secular purpose of providing educational assistance to low-income children in a demonstrably failing public school system is constitutional under *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris*, 536 U.S. 639 (2002), if it is neutral with respect to religion and provides assistance to a broad class of citizens who direct government aid to religious and secular schools solely as a result of their genuine and independent private choices.
- (5) The Mayor of the District of Columbia, the Chairman of the Education Committee of the City Council of the District of Columbia, and the President of the District of Columbia Board of Education support this title.
- (6) This title provides additional money for the District of Columbia public schools and therefore money for scholarships is not being taken out of money that would otherwise go to the District of Columbia public schools.
- (7) This title creates a 5-year program tailored to the current needs and particular circumstances of low-income children in District of Columbia schools. This title does not establish parameters or requirements for other school choice programs.

SEC. 303. PURPOSE

The purpose of this title is to provide low-income parents residing in the District of Columbia, particularly parents of students who attend elementary schools or secondary schools identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under section 1116 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6316), with expanded opportunities for enrolling their children in higher-performing schools in the District of Columbia.

SEC. 304. GENERAL AUTHORITY

- (a) **AUTHORITY**- From funds appropriated to carry out this title, the Secretary shall award grants on a competitive basis to eligible entities with approved applications under section 305 to carry out activities to provide eligible students with expanded school choice opportunities. The Secretary may award a single grant or multiple grants, depending on the quality of applications submitted and the priorities of this title.
- (b) **DURATION OF GRANTS**- The Secretary may make grants under this section for a period of not more than 5 years.
- (c) **MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**- The Secretary and the Mayor of the District of Columbia shall enter into a memorandum of understanding, as described in the statement of the managers, regarding the design of, selection of eligible entities to receive grants under, and implementation of, a program assisted under this title.

SEC. 305. APPLICATIONS

(a) IN GENERAL- In order to receive a grant under this title, an eligible entity shall submit an application to the Secretary at such time, in such manner, and accompanied by such information as the Secretary may require.

(b) CONTENTS- The Secretary may not approve the request of an eligible entity for a grant under this title unless the entity's application includes--

(1) a detailed description of--

(A) how the entity will address the priorities described in section 306;

(B) how the entity will ensure that if more eligible students seek admission in the program than the program can accommodate, eligible students are selected for admission through a random selection process which gives weight to the priorities described in section 306;

(C) how the entity will ensure that if more participating eligible students seek admission to a participating school than the school can accommodate, participating eligible students are selected for admission through a random selection process;

(D) how the entity will notify parents of eligible students of the expanded choice opportunities and how the entity will ensure that parents receive sufficient information about their options to allow the parents to make informed decisions;

(E) the activities that the entity will carry out to provide parents of eligible students with expanded choice opportunities through the awarding of scholarships under section 307(a);

(F) how the entity will determine the amount that will be provided to parents for the tuition, fees, and transportation expenses, if any;

(G) how the entity will seek out private elementary schools and secondary schools in the District of Columbia to participate in the program, and will ensure that participating schools will meet the applicable requirements of this title and provide the information needed for the entity to meet the reporting requirements of this title;

(H) how the entity will ensure that participating schools are financially responsible and will use the funds received under this title effectively;

(I) how the entity will address the renewal of scholarships to participating eligible students, including continued eligibility; and

(J) how the entity will ensure that a majority of its voting board members or governing organization are residents of the District of Columbia; and

(2) an assurance that the entity will comply with all requests regarding any evaluation carried out under section 309.

SEC. 306. PRIORITIES

In awarding grants under this title, the Secretary shall give priority to applications from eligible entities who will most effectively--

(1) give priority to eligible students who, in the school year preceding the school year for which the eligible student is seeking a scholarship, attended an elementary school or secondary school identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under section 1116 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6316);

(2) target resources to students and families that lack the financial resources to take advantage of available educational options; and

(3) provide students and families with the widest range of educational options.

SEC. 307. USE OF FUNDS

(a) SCHOLARSHIPS-

(1) IN GENERAL- Subject to paragraphs (2) and (3), a grantee shall use the grant funds to provide eligible students with scholarships to pay the tuition, fees, and transportation expenses, if any, to enable them to attend the District of Columbia private elementary school or secondary school of their choice. Each grantee shall ensure that the amount of any tuition or fees charged by a school participating in the grantee's program under this title to an eligible student participating in the program does not exceed the amount of tuition or fees that the school customarily charges to students who do not participate in the program.

(2) PAYMENTS TO PARENTS- A grantee shall make scholarship payments under the program under this title to the parent of the eligible student participating in the program, in a manner which ensures that such payments will be used for the payment of tuition, fees, and transportation expenses (if any), in accordance with this title.

(3) AMOUNT OF ASSISTANCE-

(A) VARYING AMOUNTS PERMITTED- Subject to the other requirements of this section, a grantee may award scholarships in larger amounts to those eligible students with the greatest need.

(B) ANNUAL LIMIT ON AMOUNT- The amount of assistance provided to any eligible student by a grantee under a program under this title may not exceed \$7,500 for any academic year.

(4) CONTINUATION OF SCHOLARSHIPS- Notwithstanding section 312(3)(B), an eligible entity receiving a grant under this title may award a scholarship, for the second or any succeeding year of an eligible student's participation in a program under this title, to a student who comes from a household whose income does not exceed 200 percent of the poverty line.

(b) ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES- A grantee may use not more than 3 percent of the amount provided under the grant each year for the administrative expenses of carrying out its program under this title during the year, including--

- (1) determining the eligibility of students to participate;
- (2) providing information about the program and the schools involved to parents of eligible students;
- (3) selecting students to receive scholarships;
- (4) determining the amount of scholarships and issuing the scholarships to eligible students;
- (5) compiling and maintaining financial and programmatic records; and
- (6) providing funds to assist parents in meeting expenses that might otherwise preclude the participation of their child in the program.

SEC. 308. NONDISCRIMINATION

(a) IN GENERAL- An eligible entity or a school participating in any program under this title shall not discriminate against program participants or applicants on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, or sex.

(b) APPLICABILITY AND SINGLE SEX SCHOOLS, CLASSES, OR ACTIVITIES-

(1) IN GENERAL- Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the prohibition of sex discrimination in subsection (a) shall not apply to a participating school that is operated by, supervised by, controlled by, or connected to a religious organization to the extent that the application of subsection (a) is inconsistent with the religious tenets or beliefs of the school.

(2) SINGLE SEX SCHOOLS, CLASSES, OR ACTIVITIES- Notwithstanding subsection (a) or any other provision of law, a parent may choose and a school may offer a single sex school, class, or activity.

(3) APPLICABILITY- For purposes of this title, the provisions of section 909 of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. 1688) shall apply to this title as if section 909 of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. 1688) were part of this title.

(c) CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES- Nothing in this title may be construed to alter or modify the provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

(d) RELIGIOUSLY AFFILIATED SCHOOLS-

(1) IN GENERAL- Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a school participating in any program under this title that is operated by, supervised by, controlled by, or connected to, a religious organization may exercise its right in matters of employment consistent with title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000e-1 et seq.), including the exemptions in such title.

(2) MAINTENANCE OF PURPOSE- Notwithstanding any other provision of law, funds made available under this title to eligible students that are received by a participating school, as a result of their parents' choice, shall not, consistent with the first amendment of the United States Constitution, necessitate any change in the participating school's teaching mission, require any participating school to remove religious art, icons, scriptures, or other symbols, or preclude any participating school from retaining religious terms in its name, selecting its board members on a religious basis, or including religious references in its mission statements and other chartering or governing documents.

(e) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION- A scholarship (or any other form of support provided to parents of eligible students) under this title shall be considered assistance to the student and shall not be considered assistance to the school that enrolls the eligible student. The amount of any scholarship (or other form of support provided to parents of an eligible student) under this title shall not be treated as income of the parents for purposes of Federal tax laws or for determining eligibility for any other Federal program.

SEC. 309. EVALUATIONS

(a) IN GENERAL-

(1) DUTIES OF THE SECRETARY AND THE MAYOR- The Secretary and the Mayor of the District of Columbia shall jointly select an independent entity to evaluate annually the performance of students who received scholarships under the 5-year program under this title, and shall make the evaluations public in accordance with subsection (c).

(2) DUTIES OF THE SECRETARY- The Secretary, through a grant, contract, or cooperative agreement, shall--

(A) ensure that the evaluation is conducted using the strongest possible research design for determining the effectiveness of the programs funded under this title that addresses the issues described in paragraph (4); and

(B) disseminate information on the impact of the programs in increasing the student academic achievement of participating students, and on the impact of the programs on students and schools in the District of Columbia.

(3) DUTIES OF THE INDEPENDENT ENTITY- The independent entity shall--

(A) measure the academic achievement of all participating eligible students;

(B) use the same grade appropriate measurement every school year to assess participating eligible students as the measurement used by the District of Columbia Public Schools to assess District of Columbia Public School students in the first year of the program; and

(C) work with the eligible entities to ensure that the parents of each student who applies for a scholarship under this title (regardless of whether the student receives the scholarship) and the parents of each student participating in the scholarship program under this title, agree that the student will participate in the measurements given annually by the independent entity for the period for which the student applied for or received the scholarship, respectively.

(4) ISSUES TO BE EVALUATED- The issues to be evaluated include the following:

(A) A comparison of the academic achievement of participating eligible students in the measurements described in this section to the achievement of--

(i) students in the same grades in the District of Columbia public schools; and

(ii) the eligible students in the same grades in the District of Columbia public schools who sought to participate in the scholarship program but were not selected.

(B) The success of the programs in expanding choice options for parents.

(C) The reasons parents choose for their children to participate in the programs.

(D) A comparison of the retention rates, dropout rates, and (if appropriate) graduation and college admission rates, of students who participate in the programs funded under this title with the retention rates, dropout rates, and (if appropriate) graduation and college admission rates of students of similar backgrounds who do not participate in such programs.

(E) The impact of the program on students, and public elementary schools and secondary schools, in the District of Columbia.

(F) A comparison of the safety of the schools attended by students who participate in the programs and the schools attended by students who do not participate in the programs.

(G) Such other issues as the Secretary considers appropriate for inclusion in the evaluation.

(5) PROHIBITION- Personally identifiable information regarding the results of the measurements used for the evaluations may not be disclosed, except to the parents of the student to whom the information relates.

(b) REPORTS- The Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Appropriations, Education and the Workforce, and Government Reform of the House of Representatives and the Committees on Appropriations, Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, and Governmental Affairs of the Senate--

(1) annual interim reports, not later than December 1 of each year for which a grant is made under this title, on the progress and preliminary results of the evaluation of the programs funded under this title; and

(2) a final report, not later than 1 year after the final year for which a grant is made under this title, on the results of the evaluation of the programs funded under this title.

(c) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY- All reports and underlying data gathered pursuant to this section shall be made available to the public upon request, in a timely manner following submission of the applicable report under subsection (b), except that personally identifiable information shall not be disclosed or made available to the public.

(d) LIMIT ON AMOUNT EXPENDED- The amount expended by the Secretary to carry out this section for any fiscal year may not exceed 3 percent of the total amount appropriated to carry out this title for the fiscal year.

SEC. 310. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

(a) ACTIVITIES REPORTS- Each grantee receiving funds under this title during a year shall submit a report to the Secretary not later than July 30 of the following year regarding the activities carried out with the funds during the preceding year.

(b) ACHIEVEMENT REPORTS.-

(1) IN GENERAL.-In addition to the reports required under subsection (a), each grantee shall, not later than September 1 of the year during which the second academic year of the grantee's program is completed and each of the next 2 years thereafter, submit a report to the Secretary regarding the data collected in the previous 2 academic years concerning-

(A) the academic achievement of students participating in the program;

(B) the graduation and college admission rates of students who participate in the program, where appropriate; and

(C) parental satisfaction with the program.

(2) PROHIBITING DISCLOSURE OF PERSONAL INFORMATION.- No report under this subsection may contain any personally identifiable information.

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(c) REPORTS TO PARENT.-

(1) IN GENERAL.-Each grantee shall ensure that each school participating in the grantee's program under this title during a year reports at least once during the year to the parents of each of the school's students who are participating in the program on-

(A) the student's academic achievement, as measured by a comparison with the aggregate academic achievement of other participating students at the student's school in the same grade or level, as appropriate, and the aggregate academic achievement of the student's peers at the student's school in the same grade or level, as appropriate; and

(B) the safety of the school, including the incidence of school violence, student suspensions, and student expulsions.

(2) PROHIBITING DISCLOSURE OF PERSONAL INFORMATION.- No report under this subsection may contain any personally identifiable information, except as to the student who is the subject of the report to that student's parent.

(d) REPORT TO CONGRESS.-The Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Appropriations, Education and the Workforce, and Government Reform of the House of Representatives and the Committees on Appropriations, Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, and Governmental Affairs of the Senate an annual report on the findings of the reports submitted under subsections (a) and (b).

SEC. 311. OTHER REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

(a) REQUESTS FOR DATA AND INFORMATION.-Each school participating in a program funded under this title shall comply with all requests for data and information regarding evaluations conducted under section 309(a).

(b) RULES OF CONDUCT AND OTHER SCHOOL POLICIES.-A participating school, including those described in section 308(d), may require eligible students to abide by any rules of conduct H. R. 2673-132 and other requirements applicable to all other students at the school.

SEC. 312. DEFINITIONS

As used in this title:

(1) ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.-The term "elementary school" means an institutional day or residential school, including a public elementary charter school, that provides elementary education, as determined under District of Columbia law.

(2) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.-The term "eligible entity" means any of the following:

(A) An educational entity of the District of Columbia Government.

(B) A nonprofit organization.

(C) A consortium of nonprofit organizations.

(3) ELIGIBLE STUDENT.-The term "eligible student" means a student who-

(A) is a resident of the District of Columbia; and

(B) comes from a household whose income does not exceed 185 percent of the poverty line.

(4) PARENT.-The term "parent" has the meaning given that term in section 9101 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

(5) POVERTY LINE.-The term "poverty line" has the meaning given that term in section 9101 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

(6) SECONDARY SCHOOL.-The term "secondary school" means an institutional day or residential school, including a public secondary charter school, as determined under District of Columbia law, except that the term does not include any education beyond grade 12.

(7) SECRETARY.-The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of Education.

SEC. 313. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS

There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this title \$14,000,000 for fiscal year 2004 and such sums as may be necessary for each of the 4 succeeding fiscal years