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# Grant to Fund Transfers From Failing Schools

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Students stuck in failing schools in Buffalo and Albany may soon get a chance to go somewhere else, thanks to a \$4.4 million federal grant.

The Brighter Choice Public School Choice Project was awarded the grant to help plan and create new charter schools, magnet schools and alternative schools. In addition, some of the money will go toward allowing children in failing city schools to transfer to suburban school districts.

The grant is part of President Bush's \$25 million Voluntary Public School Choice Program. Grants also went to 10 school districts and three state education departments across the country.

"It's a significant win as far as getting resources devoted to increasing options for low-income families," said Christopher L. Jacobs, founder and chairman of the Bison Scholarship Fund and the South Buffalo Charter

School. "It's just a part of the overall reform mosaic."

Jacobs is also a member of the Brighter Choice project team.

The grant, to be spent in Buffalo and Albany, runs for five years. How the money will be distributed has yet to be determined.

About \$400,000 assigned for the current school year will likely go toward outreach and planning efforts, including meetings with parents and community leaders over the next five or six months, said Tom Carroll, project director and founder of two charter schools in Albany.

Citing 31 of its 75 schools as failing, the state has declared Buffalo a school district "in need of improvement," and a new federal law, the No Child Left Behind Act, requires the district to offer transfers to children attending those schools.

Such transfers have been difficult, however, because parents have few

choices: Those Buffalo schools that aren't failing are already fully enrolled, the district is not required to pay for charter school transportation, and suburban districts usually won't accept students from outside their district without reimbursement.

The grant money is supposed to expand those choices.

Some of it might be used to provide full or partial payments to suburban districts, which charge \$2,500 to \$6,000 per year for a transfer student, while some of the money could be spent on improving transportation to Buffalo charter schools and creating new schools, said Carroll.

"We're trying to create as many additional seats as possible," he said. "Right now people don't have a place to go."