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City Nonprofit Group Gets Money for Merit Pay at Charter Schools

By [DAVID M. HERSZENHORN](#)

The United States Department of Education has awarded a \$10.5 million grant to a New York City nonprofit group to create merit pay systems in 10 local charter schools, local and federal education officials announced yesterday.

The grant, to be spent over five years, will allow the charter schools to pay annual performance bonuses of up to \$8,000 for school supervisors, \$6,000 for teachers and \$2,000 for aides.

The money was awarded to the Center for Educational Innovation — Public Education Association, a nonprofit group that has long been involved in the city school system.

Charter schools, which are publicly financed but managed privately outside the control of local school districts, generally do not have unionized teachers and can pay their employees whatever they want, including performance bonuses.

Still, the news of the federal grant was applauded by Schools Chancellor [Joel I. Klein](#), who has long advocated for merit-based pay throughout the city school system but failed to negotiate performance bonuses into the city teachers' contract.

Such bonuses, especially if they are tied directly to standardized test scores, are typically opposed by the city teachers' union, the [United Federation of Teachers](#).

The Fund for Public Schools, a nonprofit group controlled by the chancellor, has drawn up a plan for an ambitious merit pay program to be financed by private donations, but it never got off the ground. Mr. Klein said yesterday that there was no immediate intention to revive it.

"We're not moving forward on it right now," he said at a news conference at the city's Department of Education headquarters in Lower Manhattan.

Two of the charter schools participating in the grant program, Renaissance Charter School in Queens and [John V. Lindsay](#) Wildcat Academy Charter School in Manhattan, have staffs represented by the teachers' union.

Seymour Fliegel, the president of the Center for Educational Innovation, said that the teachers had voted to join the program but that [Randi Weingarten](#), the union's president, said the union's agreement was

needed to make any changes to pay structure. She said the union was willing to reach a deal if the teachers at the schools supported it.

Harvey Newman, the head of the center's charter school efforts, said that peer review groups, including teachers and the principal, at each school would set the standards for receiving merit bonuses and would decide how much to award employees.

“What we want to do is get everybody in it together,” he said.

Other schools participating in the program are: Bronx Charter School for Children; Hellenic Classical Charter School; Family Life Academy; Manhattan Charter School; Merrick Academy; Peninsula Preparatory Charter School; South Bronx Charter School for International Culture and the Arts; and Williamsburg Charter School.

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