

Ripon Area School District News Release

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Contact: Dr. Richard Zimman, 748-4600

For Immediate Release

Ripon Receives 2 Charter School Grants Totaling \$375,000

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction has awarded two charter school grants to the Ripon Area School District for the 2009-10 school year totaling \$375,000. Crossroads Academy is receiving a \$175,000 implementation renewal grant. The Quest Charter School is receiving a \$200,000 planning grant. Both schools are designed around the project-based learning concept.

Crossroads Academy, located in the lower level of Ripon's First Congregational Church, opened in September 2008 and graduated two students at the end of the 2008-09 school year. Crossroads is designed for students who have encountered a crossroads in their learning and need to enter a more individualized project-based learning environment that fosters academic, personal, and 21st century employment skills for students in grades 8-12. Crossroads has previously received \$200,000 in planning and implementation grant funds.

The Quest Charter School will be a project-based learning school for elementary students in grades 3-5. It will be located in the Murray Park Elementary School building although it will operate as an independent school. Randy Hatlen will serve as principal of both schools. The planning grant will focus on staff training and curriculum writing for the project-based approach. Some funds will also be used for equipment and materials. The new charter school will open for the 2010-11 school year and will be eligible to apply for implementation grants during its first and second year of operation.

Ripon's first charter school, the Ripon Exploration & Application Charter High (REACH) School, is located in the Ripon High School building. It offers a hands-on curriculum to students in grades 9-12. The REACH School is in its fourth year of operation with sixty-one enrolled students. The REACH School received three charter school grants for planning and implementation totaling \$450,000.

Wisconsin's charter schools are public schools that provide options to traditional schools, instructional methods, and curriculum. Charter schools are granted independent status by the public school board. Each charter school is operated by its own board within the terms of the contract, or charter, with the public school board. Admission to the charter school is voluntary and is open to all students. There are currently 206 charter schools in Wisconsin serving approximately 35,000 students.

In addition to awarding grants to Ripon for its three innovative charter schools, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction has also awarded a \$360,000 five-year alternative education grant to the Connections program for students in grades 6-8. Located within the Ripon Middle School building, Connections makes curriculum relevant by connecting it to life in the community through activities with its business partners. The Connections program began in September 2009 with 38 students and can expand to 60 students.

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