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## **Hansen Announces Star School Grants to Western Governors University**

**SALT LAKE CITY, Sept. 10**—U.S. Deputy Secretary of Education William Hansen today announced the award of a \$10 million Star Schools grant to help Western Governors University (WGU) launch its Teachers College, a national telecommunications network that will provide accredited, online degrees and certificates to K-12 teachers and prospective teachers.

Hansen, joined by Utah Gov. Michael O. Leavitt, made the announcement during a visit to Washington Elementary School, where they participated in President Bush's *Putting Reading First* campaign, which focuses on the importance of researched-based reading instruction for America's children.

"Our schools need more well-trained teachers who have the benefit of instruction in training methods that have proven to be effective in helping children to learn." Hansen said. "WGU Teachers College will be unique in that it will serve working adults who are already teaching in K-12 schools but who are seeking additional instruction to help their students."

The Star Schools Program supports the use of technology—via telecommunications networks—to improve teaching of literacy and job skills, as well as various subjects such as math, science and foreign languages. The program also assists underserved populations such as disadvantaged, limited-English-proficient, and disabled students. Further, the grants help produce educational projects that transmit course work and curriculum modules via satellite and other telecommunication systems.

The grant announced today will award WGU \$2 million a year for five years to help develop and acquire educational programming for preservice and in-service teacher education programs and to operate and maintain the existing Internet telecommunications system of WGU.

WGU is a consortium of 19 western states and about 40 universities. WGU Teachers College will provide teacher certification and advanced degrees in reading, math, science, technology, and English as a Second Language (ESL). A professional development portal will also be established for the ongoing training and development of existing teachers.

Through the Star Schools Program, the department has awarded more than \$125 million to telecommunications partnerships since the program was authorized in 1988. The program has provided services to more than 6,000 schools in every state, the District of Columbia, and several territories. Approximately 1,600,000 learners have participated in the student, staff development, parental, and community-based activities produced under the Star Schools Program.

The Star Schools Program is authorized by Title III part B of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended in 1994 and is administered by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

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