



# The Providence Journal

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THURSDAY, September 22, 2011 | providencejournal.com

## Central Falls schools receive grant from Gates Foundation

By Linda Borg  
Journal Staff Writer

CENTRAL FALLS — Central Falls is one of three school districts to receive support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to collaborate with area charter schools to improve student achievement.

Each of the districts, including Boston and Sacramento, Calif., will receive about \$100,000 in planning grants to discuss the possibility of developing a common approach to school enrollment, sharing access to school data systems and sharing effective teaching techniques.

In Central Falls, the collaboration between Supt. Frances Gallo and The Learning Community began three years ago. During a visit to the charter school, which also serves students from Providence and Pawtucket, Gallo was impressed with the Learning Community's strong reading scores. She asked the school to share its approaches with her teachers.

The collaboration has since grown to include more than 40 teachers and 1,450 students and reading scores have increased dramatically for students in the traditional public schools.

The Gates grant will allow Gallo to expand the partnership to include Blackstone Academy, Segway Institute for Learning, International Charter School and Blackstone Valley Prep, a mayoral academy. After one year, these school districts will be able to apply for larger grants from the Gates Foundation.

"We've been working with the Learning Community for three years now," Gallo said in an online interview Tuesday. "These teachers have been happily collaborating. And during that time, we have seen a tremendous increase in student achievement because teachers have been working together."

"We're excited to announce an extension of our effort to help public and private schools work

together," said Don Shalvey, deputy director of a Gates program called College-Ready. "In Central Falls, nearly 18 percent of public school students attend charters. We need to provide an opportunity for teachers to learn from each other and find new ways to help students."

Cumberland Mayor Daniel J. McKee, chairman of the Rhode Island Mayoral Academies, said that mayoral academies will draw 20 percent of their students from Central Falls in seven years.

"With or without the Gates Foundation, this is a good idea," McKee said yesterday. "Mayors are getting more involved in public education and we need to do it right. I see the partnership with Gates as a sign that Rhode Island is headed in the right direction."

This is the second cohort of cities to sign on to district-charter compacts. The first group was announced in December and includes nine cities.

We are proud of the hard work that Central Falls teachers do every day, and we are honored to be their partner in improving student achievement.

**THE LEARNING  
COMMUNITY**  
a public charter school

www.thelearningcommunity.com