

## NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION NEWS RELEASE

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# NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RECEIVES \$750,000 NASA GRANT

Nebraska schools with 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers will focus on boosting science and mathematics education for students under a new \$750,000 NASA grant awarded to the Nebraska Department of Education.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers are before- and after-school and summer programs in more than 100 schools across the state. Those schools have a diverse student enrollment and a high level of poverty with at least 40 percent of the students qualifying for free and reduced priced meals.

The program takes flight this summer, introducing teachers of fourth through eighth graders to NASA curriculum by providing professional development in hands-on activities on four topics: robotics, rocketry, aviation and near and outer space.

The Nebraska Department of Education will receive \$750,000 over four years from NASA for its Summer of Innovation program. The state's program known as *Nebraska Blast!* will provide professional development for fourth through eighth grade teachers working in schools that have a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center, as well as staff at those centers across the state. Nebraska was one of 36 applicants and only one of nine to receive a NASA grant.

"We are pleased that we have yet another opportunity to help students who are considered at risk academically," said Nebraska Education Commissioner Roger Breed.

The NASA curriculum will be introduced to teachers through regional workshops offered in Omaha, Lincoln, Columbus, Kearney and the panhandle.

Forty hours of professional development will be provided each year in collaboration with the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers, NASA Nebraska Space Grant Consortium and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension.

The goal is to increase the number of future scientists, mathematicians and engineers by expanding participation to low-income and minority students.

"I am delighted that we have such a broad and diverse group of partner organizations ready to implement this year's Summer of Innovation program," said Leland Melvin, NASA associate administrator for education. "We look forward to building on the momentum that began last year, so we can engage and inspire even more middle school students to reach higher and pursue STEM career opportunities." STEM is a national initiative focusing on science, technology, engineering and mathematics education.