

WASHINGTON -- Alabama will receive a \$2.3 million federal grant to help local schools adopt reforms that raise student achievement through an emphasis on basic academics and parental involvement, U.S. Rep. Spencer Bachus (R-AL) announced today.

The grant, awarded under the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program, is designed to support reforms that show the most promise for helping students reach high standards.

"These funds will be used to provide incentives for schools to develop and adopt comprehensive reforms that will improve the quality of our children's education," Bachus said. "Every child in Alabama deserves a world-class learning opportunity, and this grant will reward and encourage innovative reforms that will help us reach that worthy goal."

The \$2.3 million in federal funds will be distributed by the state to local school systems through a competitive process. The legislation approved by Congress to implement the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program calls for each participating school to receive at least \$50,000 per school, renewable each year for up to three years.

Approximately \$1.95 million of the grant will be used by the state to make awards in support of reform efforts in up to 37 schools identified as in greatest need of improvement due to low student achievement. In addition, in determining which local schools to support, the state may take into account indicators of need other than low student achievement, such as schools with high dropout rates. Another \$377,000 in funds will be available to assist up to seven other schools that need to substantially raise student achievement based on their performance on the state assessment.

The Alabama State Department of Education will select participating schools through a two-step process, a written application to be followed by an on-site visit to assess each school's preparedness for school reforms. As schools implement the improvements, the state will evaluate the effectiveness of the reforms based on whether they improve student achievement.

The state plans to begin making awards to local school districts in December 1998.