

Schools get grants

State gives SCSU,
St. Cloud \$600,000
to start lab schools
at two sites

By Patty Mattern

TIMES STAFF WRITER

Two lab school sites will open in St. Cloud next fall.

The state has awarded the St. Cloud school district and St. Cloud State University a \$600,000 grant to create the schools.

Gov. Arne Carlson, during a news conference this morning at Talahi Community School, announced the school district and university as grant recipients. The two schools are among six statewide to receive lab-school grants.

St. Cloud school district and university officials had hoped to receive a \$1.3 million grant for

Learning

two years, but they say they will work with the \$600,000.

"The grant we received will allow us to do a significant number of things in the one-year time frame," said St. Cloud Superintendent Bruce Thomas.

The lab school plan could receive more state money in the future as well, Thomas said.

"We'll be doing the best we can in the first year to demonstrate there is a need and value to continuing this collaborative venture," Thomas said.

Because officials are not receiving the amount they wanted, they are making adjustments to their lab school plans, said Pamm Minden, who has worked on the lab school project for the university. Minden is the director of research for the university's College of Education.

Unlike lab schools of the past, which were isolated on university campuses, the future St. Cloud lab schools will operate within existing schools. There would be no construction involved.

University and school district coordinators want to develop two kindergarten-through-third-grade learning lab sites within two existing St. Cloud elementary schools, said Gayla Holmgren, who is coordinating the project for the district.

During the grant application process, staffers from four St. Cloud schools showed interest in the lab school project. They include: Talahi Community School; Clearview Elementary School; Lincoln Elementary School and Westwood Elementary School.

Now that the grant is secured, Holmgren said she will be working this week and next to determine which two sites will be used for the lab schools.

More information will be given to all district schools, so staffers from those sites can still express interest in the project, Holmgren said.

The lab schools will provide an opportunity for teachers, teachers in training at St. Cloud State and university professors to try innovative strategies.

"We see it as a professional development center," Minden said.

The lab sites also will focus on the specific curriculums of literacy and life work skills.

The lab sites would also emphasize parent and community involvement.

Carlson made reviving lab schools a top priority in his education agenda last year.

St. Cloud State previously had a lab school, which started in 1869. It was the last public lab school to close in Minnesota when it shut down in 1983.