

[Beaver County Times](#)

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MIDLAND — A \$500,000 grant unveiled Wednesday by U.S. Rep. Jason Altmire at the Lincoln Park Performing Arts Center in Midland will help several Pennsylvania school districts develop their own cyber-learning programs.

“I have a passion for education. I know how important it is,” said Altmire, D-4, McCandless Township, in describing the grant as an investment in the state’s children.

Altmire pointed to Lincoln Park’s use of online education as a model for other districts, after a nearly 90-minute program that featured musical, dance and singing performances involving students and a composer in California playing live.

“We’re trying to give everybody access to these types of programs,” Altmire said.

Nick Trombetta — the founder and chief executive officer of the Pennsylvania Cyber Charter School as well as the driving force behind the National Network of Digital Schools and Lincoln Park — said the grant would allow NNDS to help between 10 and 12 districts create their own cyber programs and train teachers.

Trombetta estimated the grant would fund 120 new part- and full-time jobs among the participating districts. One of the key parts of the program, he said, is that it allows districts to interact and learn from each other.

Local districts involved in the project include Big Beaver Falls Area, Beaver Area, Quaker Valley and Mount Lebanon. Erie School District will also participate.

John Hansen, Beaver Area superintendent, said his district has partnered with the cyberschool for years and the new program is simply “another step” to “provide education for kids who really need it.”

Mount Lebanon Superintendent Tim Steinhauer said he was interested in how his students would benefit from foreign language and science instruction as well as classes for students to recover credits that they might have lost because of medical reasons.

“We’re looking for the opportunity to explore what the possibilities are,” he said.

Trombetta also cited figures predicting that by 2014, there will be 10.5 million pre-kindergarten through 12th-grade students enrolled in online classes and 50 percent of high schools will offer classes online by 2015.

“This is the world that’s coming,” Trombetta told those packed into the Lincoln Park auditorium.