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19 STATES NAMED AS FINALISTS FOR RACE TO THE TOP
Duncan Salutes State and Local Leaders for Leading “Quiet Revolution” for School Reform

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan today announced that 19 states are the finalists for more than \$3 billion available in the second round of funding in the Race to the Top program.

“Thirty-five states and the District of Columbia submitted bold blueprints for reform that bear the signatures of many key players at the state and local level who drive change in our schools,” Duncan said.

“Peer reviewers identified these 19 finalists as having the boldest plans, but every state that applied will benefit from this process of collaboratively creating a comprehensive education reform agenda,” Duncan added. “Much of the federal dollars we distribute through other channels can support their plan to raise standards, improve teaching, use data more effectively to support student learning, and turn around underperforming schools.”

Thirty-five states and the District of Columbia applied for the second round of Race to the Top. Including the 36 applications for the second round of Race to the Top, a total of 46 states and the District of Columbia applied for either the first or second rounds – or both.

The 19 finalists are: Arizona, California, Colorado, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and South Carolina.

Duncan named the finalists at the end of a major speech at the National Press Club. In the speech, Duncan saluted educators, elected officials, and private sector leaders for leading a “quiet revolution” of the education reform across the country.

“From educators to parents and political leaders to journalists -- there is a growing sense that a quiet revolution is underway in our homes and schools, classrooms, and communities,” Duncan said. “This quiet revolution is driven by motivated parents who want better educational options for their children. It’s being driven by great educators and administrators who are challenging the defeatism and inertia that has trapped generations of children in second-rate schools.”

He highlighted the momentum for adopting rigorous standards, elevating the teaching profession to reward excellence, turning around low-performing schools, and building better data systems to inform reform.

While the work is being done by governors, superintendents, and teachers at the state and local levels, the federal government is supporting their work through Race to the Top and other reform programs, including the Investing in Innovation Fund, the Teacher Incentive Fund, the School Improvement Grants under Title I, and the federal charter school program.

Through all of these programs, the Department of Education will be distributing almost \$10 billion to support reform in states and local communities.

“As we look at the last 18 months, it is absolutely stunning to see how much change has happened at the state and local levels, unleashed in part by these incentive programs,” Duncan said.

Race to the Top’s Next Steps

Race to the Top is an historic federal investment in education reform, with \$4.35 billion available to support states in their comprehensive reforms. The Department is reserving \$350 million for a separate competition to support consortia of states that are creating the next generation of assessments that will support reform.

In the first round of competition supporting state-based reforms, Delaware and Tennessee won grants based on their comprehensive plans to reform their schools and the statewide support for those plans. Almost \$3.4 billion remains to award grants to winners in the second round.

The finalists chosen today will travel to Washington during the week of Aug. 9 to present their plans to the peer reviewers who scored their applications. After the state’s presentations and an extended question-and-answer period, the peer reviewers will finalize their scores and comments.

The Department intends to announce the winners of the competition in September.

“Just as in the first round, we’re going to set a very high bar because we know that real and meaningful change will only come from doing hard work and setting high expectations,” Duncan said.

Duncan acknowledged that not all of the finalists would be awarded grants from the almost \$3.4 billion remaining in Race to the Top. President Obama has requested \$1.35 billion for the program in the administration’s fiscal 2011 budget.

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