

RACE TO THE TOP FUND

The ARRA provides \$4.35 billion for the Race to the Top (RTTT) Fund, a competitive grant program designed to encourage and reward states that are creating the conditions for education innovation and reform; achieving significant improvement in student outcomes, including making substantial gains in student achievement, closing achievement gaps, improving high school graduation rates, and ensuring student preparation for success in college and careers; and implementing ambitious plans in four core education reform areas:

- Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy;
- Building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction;
- Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most; and
- Turning around our lowest-achieving schools.

RTTT will reward states that have demonstrated success in raising student achievement and have the best plans to accelerate their reforms in the future. These states will offer models for others to follow and will spread the best reform ideas across their States, and across the country.

Time Line:

The US Department of Education (USDOE) will make RTTT grants in two phases. States that are ready to apply now may do so in Phase 1; States that need more time may apply in Phase 2. The final notice was published in the Federal Register on November 18, 2009. States have 60 days in which to file their applications' for possible Phase 1 funding. The application deadline for Phase 1 is January 19, 2010. The awards will be announced in April 2010.

Program Update:

State grant awards will be based on a scoring rubric (attached) which includes 19 criteria and one competitive criteria that equals to 500 points. The criteria for "Great Teachers and Leaders" may garner up to 138 points which is the highest number of points of any category. "State Success Factors" which would include articulation of the state's reform agenda is worth up to 125 points. Fewer points are grants for categories that include "Standards and Assessments" (70 points), Turning Around Lowest-Achieving Schools (50 points) and Data Systems (47 points).

Issues for Consideration:

Adoption of Common Core Standards and Assessments: In order to be eligible to apply for RTTT, states must adopt common core standards by August 2, 2010 or have a plan to adopt the standards by December 2019. This will have a tremendous impact on



instructional materials (both for state and local adoptions), professional development and curriculum, especially in high school mathematics. Further, participating states would also be required to show progress towards the development and adoption of common assessments, aligned to the common standards.

Identification of the Lowest –Achieving Schools: Part of the reform criteria is the state’s plan to identify the lowest five percent of persistently low-achieving schools (including non-funded Title 1 high schools) and how the state will support LEAs in turning around these schools using one of the four intervention models – Turnaround Model, Restart Model, School Closure or Transformation Model. This reform criteria raises a number of concerns from how these schools will be identified to what is the exit criteria for schools that move out of the “five percent” category.

Funding: RTTT has the potential to provide California with up to \$700 million in one-time funds to address the requirements of this grant. However, serious concerns have been raised about the use of one-time funding for what will be on-going long-term activities.

The final Notice of Priorities does encourage states to coordinate, reallocate or repurpose other federal, state and local resources to align the resources with RTTT goals. The question comes to mind that with the budget cuts recently imposed California schools, will there be enough resources to carry out the provision of RTTT, in addition to all the other state and federal mandates that are still in force.

State legislation: Legislation has been proposed to address the implementation issues of RTTT. CSBA, along with numerous interest groups, is working with the Governor’s office, the California Department of Education and the legislature in crafting a plan to address the requirements of RTTT. One concern that has been raised is having legislation that goes beyond the criteria to qualify for RTTT. SB X5 1 (Romero), contains a provision that would allow open enrollment for any student in a decile 1-3 school without consideration for whether that school is part of five percent persistently lowest achieving schools or what the impact will be on a “receiving” school. The Governor’s office has said that the open enrollment provision will provide California with a more competitive application. However, the applications will be judged on the basis of a scoring rubric and no extra-credit” points are provided for things above the criteria.

Next Steps:

The Assembly Education will hold its final informational hearing on December 2, 2009. It is expected that the Assembly will introduce legislation by that date to address the implementation issues surrounding RTTT. The bill will be heard in the Assembly Education Committee on December 9, 2009 with a vote on the Assembly Floor expected by December 10, 2009.

II. Points Overview

The chart below shows the maximum number of points that may be assigned to each criterion.

Selection Criteria	Points	Percent
A. State Success Factors	125	25%
(A)(1) Articulating State's education reform agenda and LEAs' participation in it	65	
(i) Articulating comprehensive, coherent reform agenda	5	
(ii) Securing LEA commitment	45	
(iii) Translating LEA participation into statewide impact	15	
(A)(2) Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans	30	
(i) Ensuring the capacity to implement	20	
(ii) Using broad stakeholder support	10	
(A)(3) Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps	30	
(i) Making progress in each reform area	5	
(ii) Improving student outcomes	25	
B. Standards and Assessments	70	14%
(B)(1) Developing and adopting common standards	40	
(i) Participating in consortium developing high-quality standards	20	
(ii) Adopting standards	20	
(B)(2) Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments	10	
(B)(3) Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments	20	
C. Data Systems to Support Instruction	47	9%
(C)(1) Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system	24	
(C)(2) Accessing and using State data	5	
(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction	18	
D. Great Teachers and Leaders	138	28%
Eligibility Requirement (b)	eligibility	
(D)(1) Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals	21	
(D)(2) Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance	58	
(i) Measuring student growth	5	
(ii) Developing evaluation systems	15	
(iii) Conducting annual evaluations	10	
(iv) Using evaluations to inform key decisions	28	
(D)(3) Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals	25	
(i) Ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools	15	
(ii) Ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas	10	
(D)(4) Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs	14	
(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals	20	
E. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools	50	10%
(E)(1) Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEAs	10	
(E)(2) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools	40	
(i) Identifying the persistently lowest-achieving schools	5	
(ii) Turning around the persistently lowest-achieving schools	35	
F. General	55	11%
Eligibility Requirement (a)	eligibility	
(F)(1) Making education funding a priority	10	
(F)(2) Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative s	40	
(F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions	5	
Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM	15	3%
TOTAL	500	100%
Subtotal: Accomplishments	260	52%
Subtotal: Plans	240	48%