

RACE TO THE TOP UPDATE

BACKGROUND

Washington is preparing a Round Two application¹ for Race to the Top which is due June 1, 2010 to the U.S. Department of Education. Winners for Round Two will be announced on September 30, 2010.

Race to the Top grants will reward past accomplishments and incentivize future improvements. The four areas of funding priorities are: 1) standards and assessments, 2) teacher/leader quality, 3) data collection and use, and 4) struggling schools. A successful grant to Washington could help us build upon the work in HB 2261, the education reform package from the 2009 legislative session.

Washington could potentially gain \$150-\$250 million to use for four years. Half of the funds will go to school districts that sign up to participate in the grant application. Those funds are used to implement the required application activities. The other half can be held by the state or shared with local school districts who sign up to participate. Thus, for example, if our state won a grant of \$240 million, it would receive \$60 million a year with \$30 million a year going directly to participating school districts. If more districts sign up there is less money per district. However, the greater the district participation, the stronger our application will be showing local support. The state may decide to give more than 50 percent to the local school districts.

Staff from the Governor's Office, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), State Board of Education (SBE), and the Professional Educator Standards Board has participated in work teams with advisors to develop initiatives. In addition, key stakeholders have been engaged through their associations in discussions on the grant in terms of content as well as how to structure the memorandum of understanding (MOU) that districts will use to sign off if they decide to participate.

The coordination of all this work is being done by Judy Hartmann from the Governor's Office, Alan Burke from OSPI, and Edie Harding from SBE. The Steering Committee (Governor, Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Chair of the SBE) make the final decisions on the key policy issues for the grant such as the state's education reform plan, initiatives, and funding allocation between the state and local districts.

McKinsey and Company was hired in September 2009 by the Partnership for Learning (with state and private funds) to conduct a diagnostic assessment of Washington's ability to meet the RTTT criteria. The State Board of Education and the Professional Educator Standards Board were briefed at their joint November 2009 meeting on Washington's competitive ability.

¹ The U.S. Department of Education announced the following states as finalists for Round One: Colorado, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

Some of Washington's current advantages include: 1) strong math standards that will most likely align well with the national common core math standards, 2) partnerships with other states to pool resources in summative and formative assessments -- Joe Willhoft from OSPI will discuss in greater detail on March 18, 3) we meet all the longitudinal data elements, and 4) we have strong partnerships to create an outstanding STEM program. Some of Washington's challenges include: 1) no state authority to intervene over low-performing schools, 2) a teacher evaluation system that primarily uses an unsatisfactory/satisfactory measure with no consideration for student growth and limited performance pay incentives, 3) insufficient preparation of students in science and math, 4) no charter schools. Our legislative package for Race to the Top for the 2010 session, to address some of these issues will be discussed under the Legislative Tab.

In addition McKinsey and Company provided some preliminary work on our state's education reform plan as well as a plan to engage stakeholders (primarily school districts) in the process to determine if they want to participate. McKinsey completed its work in January 2010.

Due to the enormity of the task, additional private and state funds are being used to hire a Race to the Top project manager to pull all the pieces of the grant application together. Dr. Jana Carlisle who has worked for Gates and the Rochester School District in New York was just hired to assist the coordinating committee in the final development of the grant application and communications/outreach.

POLICY CONSIDERATION

We hope to bring you some details of the state education reform plan and funding distribution at the Board meeting. A more in depth review of the initiatives and local school district interest in participating will be provided at the May Board meeting.

EXPECTED ACTION

None