



Early Ed Watch

A Blog from New America's Early Education Initiative

How Will 'Race to the Top' Winners Address Early Ed?

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Ideas for improving early learning programs are peppered throughout the applications from most of the 10 [Race to the Top](#) winners announced yesterday, which might be a surprise to those who have considered the program to be primarily for the more traditional K-12 field. But what is yet to be teased out is whether the competition actually spurred states to focus on early education or whether they simply threw it in as an "add-on."

First, a recap of [how the competition worked](#): To win a grant, states had to show how they would meet 19 criteria running the gamut from turning around low-achieving schools (garnering 40 points) to developing and adopting the Common Core standards (another 40 points). An applicant with a perfect score would have accrued 500 points. (None did.) States could also gain an additional 15 points by showing a commitment to improving science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education.

States were invited to describe their commitment to early education under an "invitational priority," but those plans did not help them accrue any points. That omission has [irked early education proponents](#) ever since the guidelines came out last year.

Still, there's value in looking at which states opted to include early learning in their applications. Of the Phase 2 winners, seven put descriptions of early learning projects under the "invitational priority" header. Here are the winners from both rounds:

Race to the Top winners, Phase 2		
Rank	State	Award
1	Massachusetts*	\$250,000,000
2	New York*	\$700,000,000
3	Hawaii*	\$75,000,000
4	Florida	\$700,000,000
5	Rhode Island	\$75,000,000
6	District of Columbia*	\$75,000,000
7	Maryland*	\$250,000,000
8	Georgia*	\$400,000,000
9	North Carolina	\$400,000,000
10	Ohio*	\$400,000,000

Race to the Top winners, Phase 1

Rank	State	Award
1	Delaware*	\$100,000,000
2	Tennessee*	\$500,000,000

* Addressed *invitational priority* "Innovations for improving early learning outcomes."

Early Ed Watch will be looking at these descriptions more closely in the coming months. Here are just a few plans that caught our eye in a quick scan this morning. A more thorough review will come in September.

- [Massachusetts](#) says that it will "focus its Race to the Top investments around linking early education standards and K–3 curricula and assessments." This is part of its plan to roll out a statewide pre-k-12 "teaching and learning system."
- [The District of Columbia](#) says it will increase the number of 3- and 4-year-old children in its publicly funded preschool and pre-kindergarten programs. In addition, it will expand a program that *Early Ed Watch* [reported on this summer](#) that blends Head Start, federal and local monies to create what the district says will be a comprehensive pre-kindergarten program in its Title I schools. The idea is to eliminate the current, segregated system of providing services for Head Start children in one classroom and non-Head Start children in another.
- [Georgia](#) says it will work to improve the quality of state-funded pre-K programs that feed into low-achieving elementary schools. It will also participate as a lead state in an [initiative coordinated by the Annie E. Casey Foundation](#) to improve reading outcomes for children by age 8.

Since these plans did not garner states any points in their application, they did not help states win Race to the Top money. A lack of plans in other states' applications did not make any difference in their outcomes either.

It is possible that some of these seven states and possibly others did weave discussions of early learning programs into other sections of the applications. For example, Florida says it will use Race to the Top, School Improvement Grants, and Title I funds to expand [pre-kindergarten programs to full day at elementary schools that feed persistently low-performing high schools](#), which is interesting in light of [the current focus on turnarounds](#).

Of course, it will take a fuller analysis to determine whether these interwoven early learning plans made a difference to reviewers. And it remains to be seen how many of these plans will have any real punch.

Other states that had worked early learning programs into their applications found themselves sorely disappointed yesterday. Colorado, for example, [was planning](#) to build something called a School Readiness Content Collaborative that would identify and develop aligned instructional materials and model curricula for early learning programs. With no Race to the Top funding, that effort will have to find money elsewhere.

(For a full review of how pre-k fared in the *first phase* of the competition, see [Pre-K Now's report](#) by Chrisanne Gayl, which provides a helpful analysis of how states may view pre-kindergarten programs in the context of their larger education reforms.)

Already many observers are wondering if the Race to the Top will be funded for next year. We'll need to wait and see what Congress does with President Obama's request to spend \$1.35 billion on the program in fiscal year 2011. So far, [subcommittees in both the House and the Senate](#) have included the program in their budgets, but at significantly lower amounts than requested. (See our [coverage of early learning programs proposed in the federal 2011 budget](#).) We'll keep you posted.

SUGGESTED READING

[Breaking Down the Race to the Top Scores](#)
[A Closer Look at Race to the Top Front-Runners](#)
[Advice for Duncan: 'Race to the Top' Needs A Larger Dose of Early Ed](#)
[Comparing Education Jobs Fund and Race to the Top Allocations](#)
[State Legislative Changes and Race to the Top](#)
[What Race to the Top Tells Us About the Future of the ESEA](#)
[Race to the Top and the Status of Education Innovation](#)
[Race to the Top, March Madness Style](#)
[Department of Education Releases Race to the Top Application](#)

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