



News for Immediate Release

Jan. 19, 2010

Pennsylvania's 'Race to the Top' Fueled by Effective Reforms, Strong Local Support

State Stands to Receive up to \$400 Million in Federal Grants to Accelerate Ongoing Educational Gains

Harrisburg – Pennsylvania's impressive record of academic gains, coupled with an innovative strategy for building on those achievements, puts the state in a strong position to land up to \$400 million through the highly competitive federal "Race to the Top" program, Governor Edward G. Rendell said today.

"We have worked hard in recent years to increase the performance of our students, as well as boost the state's commitment to adequate education funding – and we are getting results," Governor Rendell said. "Race to the Top provides us with a unique opportunity to accelerate our efforts."

The commonwealth today formally submitted a "Race to the Top" grant application to the U.S. Department of Education that seeks \$400 million for education reforms – the maximum that Pennsylvania would be eligible to receive under federal guidelines.

Pennsylvania and its participating school districts and charter schools plan to use the funding to implement a series of bold and ambitious initiatives at the state and local levels that will provide a strong catalyst towards the goal of ensuring every child receives a quality education that will be the foundation of a lifetime of success.

More than implementing reform, the participating districts and charter schools have made a commitment to meeting ambitious student achievement targets over the next four years, according to Education Secretary Gerald L. Zahorchak.

"In partnership with the leaders of 120 school districts and 59 charters who signed this Memorandum of Understanding, Pennsylvania has crafted a strategy what we believe can successfully double the number of students who hit our proficiency targets by 2014," Dr. Zahorchak said.

Zahorchak noted the list of participating districts and charter schools represents a diverse cross-section of students and includes many of the largest districts in Pennsylvania. The school districts and charter schools that submitted signed agreements collectively enroll more than 650,000 students, including 56 percent of

all low-income students, 75 percent of all African-American students, and 71 percent of all Hispanic students.

Zahorchak said Pennsylvania's Race to the Top application will stand out nationally thanks to the strong commitment by local education leaders across the state.

In order to participate in Pennsylvania's Race to the Top application, a school district's superintendent, school board president, and local teacher's union president were required to sign an agreement committing to implement required activities and to meeting student achievement targets. Few states will be able to demonstrate such deep commitment to reform from critical stakeholders, according to Zahorchak.

"Race to the Top represents a historic chance to build on our academic gains, and it affords Pennsylvania a unique opportunity to make our state's teachers unions and their local affiliates full partners in this work," Zahorchak said. "Given that Pennsylvania's law imparts vast powers to our local school boards, they too are critical partners to our school success.

"All of these key partners understand what needs to be accomplished and stand ready to help us do it," he added.

Pennsylvania's application also includes letters of support from more than 130 individuals and entities from across Pennsylvania, including federal and state lawmakers, mayors, business leaders and educators.

The U.S. Department of Education has indicated it will use the level of local support for education reforms as one of the key criteria for gauging the strength of each state's Race to the Top application.

The Race to the Top grant competition represents the largest discretionary funding effort for education reform ever made available by the federal government -- \$4.3 billion nationwide. The grants are not formula-based, but rather will be awarded to states that can show the strongest strategies and coordinated commitments to reform.

"President Barack Obama and U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan have set high expectations in return for this unprecedented investment," Governor Rendell said. "They expect our schools to live up to the promise of a high-quality education for every child -- and Pennsylvania is committed to meeting that expectation."

Pennsylvania's Race to the Top strategies will benefit each of the 1.8 million students in every one of its 500 districts. That's because the commonwealth will use a significant portion of its Race to the Top funding to build and deliver state-level tools and resources for all schools and all districts.

Pennsylvania's Race to the Top application is built around these primary objectives:

- **Increasing student achievement and developing data systems capable of supporting reform:** Schools will use real-time student data to guide instruction and help teachers identify students who are at risk academically. Teachers will know exactly where to target additional instruction and support, and parents and students will have an accurate picture of a student's academic and social-emotional strengths and weaknesses.
- **Turning around the lowest performing schools:** Pennsylvania's Race to the Top strategy includes identifying schools with the greatest challenges or obstacles to raising student achievement. Certain schools identified as "turnaround schools" will be required to choose one of four turnaround options – options that can include leadership changes or school closure.
- **Creating a world-class system for professional development:** Good leaders are a critical component of good schools, and schools must bolster efforts to attract, prepare and retain the best educators. Pennsylvania will develop a "model career ladder" for the promotion, compensation and advancement of teachers.
- **Developing a robust evaluation system for teachers and leaders:** Pennsylvania will develop model evaluation systems so professional evaluations can be used more effectively in schools to inform decisions about professional development, compensation, tenure, and the promotion and retention of effective teachers.
- **Evaluating programs to identify and spread best practices:** As Pennsylvania pursues these strategic reforms in thousands of school buildings and classrooms, it must be committed to identifying specific reforms that prove the most effective and make their use more widespread.

In addition to statewide reforms, Race to the Top rules call for at least half of a state's grant to be passed directly through to districts for district- and school-level reforms. Pennsylvania is going beyond this requirement by committing more than half of the funds to reforms at the local level.

To receive a share of this local funding, school districts and charter schools must agree to implement certain reforms and commit to delivering results – significant gains in student achievement that will be measured and for which they will be held accountable.

The memoranda of understanding submitted in recent days by nearly 180 districts and charters outline their commitments to these reforms and will be included as part of Pennsylvania's formal Race to the Top application.

School districts that agreed to join as "participating districts" in Pennsylvania's Race to the Top application will benefit from district allocations ranging from hundreds of thousands of dollars for smaller districts to millions of dollars for larger ones.

Participating districts can use these funds for proven initiatives such as increased instructional time, teacher training, and creation or expansion of early childhood education programs.

Additionally, Pennsylvania's application provides an even greater level of Race to the Top funding to support activities in 128 persistently low-performing schools that are part of the commonwealth's turnaround school initiative. These schools will share more than \$120 million in exchange for committing to one of four bold school intervention models to raise student achievement.

Notably, only 37 Pennsylvania schools met the federal definition for the turnaround initiative, but Pennsylvania recruited more than three times that number – a level of involvement Zahorchak cited as proof of the collective commitment to meaningful reform.

In addition to outlining a vision for future academic growth, Governor Rendell said Pennsylvania's Race to the Top application details its unprecedented improvements in public education in recent years – improvements that will help make the case for winning a portion of the competitive grants.

"Simply put, we know what works to help every child succeed and we want federal officials to know we can do what we commit to doing," the Governor said.

Among the accomplishments outlined in Pennsylvania's Race to the Top application:

- Pennsylvania has been recognized by the Center for Education Policy, a leading national educational research organization, as the only state to see increases in student achievement in elementary, middle and high school from 2002 to 2008. That progress continued in 2009, and Pennsylvania now has more than three-fourths of its students scoring at grade level in math and reading.
- Pennsylvania continues to build a nationally recognized system of high-quality early childhood programs – a system that has made us a model for other states.
- We have helped more than 17,000 high school students take credit-bearing college courses and get a jump start on a college degree while they are still working to earn a high school diploma.
- We have taken steps to ensure the equitable distribution of school funding across the state, enacting an historic funding formula for the state's basic education subsidy that means the quality of a child's education no longer is dictated by the wealth of that child's ZIP code.
- Pennsylvania has directed targeted assistance to the highest-need schools in the state, and we have built a world-class data system to track student performance – a data system that has garnered national honors from the Data Quality Campaign.

Today marked the deadline for all states to submit their Race to the Top applications to the federal government to be eligible for the first phase of funding. Awards are expected to be announced in April.

Secretary Zahorchak thanked districts for their swift and decisive response to the Race to the Top opportunity.

"We realize the relatively short time frame for pursuing Race to the Top funds required districts to move quickly to submit materials to us, and as always, educators across the state rose to the challenge," he said. "We hope their hard work in recent weeks will ultimately benefit every child in our schools for years to come."

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Editor's Note: A list of school districts and charter schools that submitted memoranda of understanding for Race to the Top is included below.

Participating school districts (those marked with asterisks have at least one school that will participate in the RTTT Turnaround Initiative):

ABINGTON SD
ALQUIPPA SD**
ALLEGHENY VALLEY SD
ALLENTOWN CITY SD
ARMSTRONG SD
BALD EAGLE AREA SD
BANGOR AREA SD
BELLWOOD-ANTIS SD
BETHLEHEM AREA SD
BIG SPRING SD
BLACKLICK VALLEY SD
BROCKWAY AREA SD
BURRELL SD
CATASAUQUA AREA SD
CENTRAL BUCKS SD
CENTRAL CAMBRIA SD
CENTRAL GREENE SD
CENTRAL YORK SD
CHESTER-UPLAND SD**
CHICHESTER SD
CLAIRTON CITY SD**
COATESVILLE AREA SD
CORNELL SD**
CRESTWOOD SD
CURWENSVILLE AREA SD

DALLAS SD
DERRY AREA SD
DUQUESNE CITY SD**
EAST ALLEGHENY SD**
EAST LYCOMING SD
EAST STROUDSBURG AREA SD
ELIZABETH FORWARD SD
ERIE CITY SD**
FANNETT-METAL SD
FORT LEBOEUF SD
FRAZIER SD
GIRARD SD
GLENDALE SD
GREATER LATROBE SD
GREENSBURG SALEM SD
HARBOR CREEK SD
HARMONY AREA SD
HARRISBURG CITY SD**
HAVERFORD TOWNSHIP SD
HAZLETON AREA SD**
HERMITAGE SD
HOLLIDAYSBURG AREA SD
INDIANA AREA SD
INTERBORO SD
IROQUOIS SD
JEANNETTE CITY SD
JENKINTOWN SD
JIM THORPE AREA SD
KANE AREA SD
KISKI AREA SD
KUTZTOWN AREA SD
LANCASTER SD**
LEBANON SD**
LEHIGHTON AREA SD
MARION CENTER AREA SD
MARPLE NEWTOWN SD
MCKEESPORT AREA SD**
MEYERSDALE AREA SD
MIDLAND BOROUGH SD
MINERSVILLE AREA SD
MOHAWK AREA SD
MONESSEN CITY SD
MONTGOMERY AREA SD
MONTOURSVILLE AREA SD
MORRISVILLE BOROUGH SD
MOUNT UNION AREA SD**
MUHLENBERG SD
NEW BRIGHTON AREA SD

NEW KENSINGTON-ARNOLD SD
NORRISTOWN SD**
NORTH EAST SD
NORTHERN BEDFORD COUNTY SD
NORTHERN CAMBRIA SD
OCTORARA AREA SD
OXFORD AREA SD
PANTHER VALLEY SD
PENN CAMBRIA SD
PENN HILLS SD**
PENNCREST SD
PENN-DELCO SD
PERKIOMEN VALLEY SD
PHILADELPHIA CITY SD**
PITTSBURGH SD**
PITTSTON AREA SD
PLEASANT VALLEY SD
POTTSGROVE SD
POTTSVILLE AREA SD
QUAKER VALLEY SD
QUAKERTOWN COMMUNITY SD
READING SD**
RIVERVIEW SD
SALISBURY-ELK LICK SD
SCHUYLKILL HAVEN AREA SD
SCRANTON CITY SD
SHARON CITY SD
SOUTH PARK SD
SOUTH WESTERN SD
SOUTHEAST DELCO SD**
SOUTHERN YORK CO SD
SPRING COVE SD
SPRING-FORD AREA SD
TURKEYFOOT VALLEY AREA SD**
TUSSEY MOUNTAIN SD
UNION CITY AREA SD
UPPER DARBY SD**
UPPER MORELAND TOWNSHIP SD
WARREN COUNTY SD
WEATHERLY AREA SD
WEST ALLEGHENY SD
WEST YORK AREA SD
WILLIAM PENN SD**
WILLIAMSPORT AREA SD
WILSON SD
WISSAHICKON SD
YORK CITY SD**

Participating Charter Schools

Ad Prima CS
Alliance for Progress CS
Antonia Pantoja Community CS
Architecture and Design CHS
Bear Creek Community CS
Belmont Academy CS
Boys Latin of Philadelphia CS
Center for Student Learning CS at Pennsbury
Chester Community CS
Christopher Columbus CS
Commonwealth Connections Academy CS
Crispus Attucks Youthbuild CS
Delaware Valley CHS
Erin Dudley Forbes CS
First Phila CS for Literacy
Franklin Towne CES
Franklin Towne CHS
Freire CS
Global Leadership Academy CS
Green Woods CS
Hardy Williams Academy CS
Independence CS
Khepera CS
KIPP Academy Charter School
KIPP West Philadelphia Preparatory Chart
Laboratory CS
Lehigh Valley CHS for the Performing Arts
Lincoln CS
Lincoln Leadership Academy CS
Lincoln Park Performing Arts CS
Manchester Academic CS
Maritime Academy Charter School
MAST Community Charter School
Mastery CS--Shoemaker Campus
Montessori Regional CS
New Foundations CS
New Hope Academy CS
New Media Technology CS
Nueva Esperanza Academy CS
Pennsylvania Cyber CS
People for People CS
Philadelphia Harambee Inst CS
Philadelphia Performing Arts CS
Planet Abacus CS
Pocono Mountain Charter School
Propel CS-East
Propel CS-Homestead

Propel CS-McKeesport
Propel CS--Montour
Renaissance Acad-Edison CS
Roberto Clemente CS
Russell Byers CS
Sankofa Freedom Academy CS
Tacony Academy CS
Tuscarora Blended Learning CS
Universal Institute CS
Urban League of Pittsburgh CS
West Oak Lane CS
West Phila. Achievement CES

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