

# APNewsBreak: 10 named school grant winners



By DORIE TURNER, Associated Press Writer

2 hrs 5 mins ago

ATLANTA – The U.S. Education Department said Tuesday that nine states and the District of Columbia will get money to reform schools in the second round of the \$4.35 billion "Race to the Top" grant competition.

Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Maryland, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island and Washington, D.C., will receive grants, department spokesman Justin Hamilton said. The amounts for each state were expected to be announced later.

The aim of the historic program is to reward ambitious changes to improve schools and close the achievement gap. The competition instigated a wave of reforms across the country, as states passed new teacher accountability policies and lifted caps on charter schools to boost their chances of winning.

Tennessee and Delaware were named winners in the first round of the competition in March, sharing \$600 million. The applicants named winners Tuesday will share a remaining \$3.4 billion. Another \$350 million is coming in a separate competition for states creating new academic assessments.

The historic program, part of President Barack Obama's economic stimulus plan, rewards states for embarking on ambitious reforms to improve struggling schools, close the achievement gap and boost graduation rates.

"New York's schools have made strong strides toward excellence and this grant will accelerate that progress," said U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., who met with Education Secretary Arne Duncan on New York's proposal. "This is great news for parents, teachers, and taxpayers across the state."

Thirty-five states and the District of Columbia applied for the second round of the competition. The Education Department named 19 applicants finalists in July.

More than a dozen states vying for the money changed laws to foster the growth of charter schools, and at least 17 reformed teacher evaluation systems to include student achievement. Dozens also adopted Common Core State Standards, the uniform math and reading benchmarks developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association.

"The change unleashed by conditioning federal funding on bold and forward-looking state education policies is indisputable," the Democrats for Education Reform said in a statement. "Under the president's leadership, local civil rights, child advocacy, business and education reform groups, in collaboration with those state and local teacher unions ready for change, sprung into action to achieve things that they had been waiting and wanting to do for years."

In a speech announcing the finalists last month, Duncan called the change a "quiet revolution."

Between both rounds of the competition, a total of 46 states and the District of Columbia applied.

While the program has been praised for instigating swift reforms, the competition for many states was an uphill battle, with teacher unions hesitant to sign on to reforms directly tying teacher evaluations to student performance on standardized tests, and education leaders concerned winning meant giving up too much local control.

A number of states that did not win the competition said they still planned to proceed with the reforms they had proposed, though they acknowledged change would take place at a slower pace.

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Associated Press writers Christine Armario in Miami and Michael Gormley in Albany, N.Y., contributed to this report.

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