

MASSACHUSETTS SELECTED AS FINALIST IN RACE TO THE TOP COMPETITION

Final Decisions Expected from USED Next Month

BOSTON - Thursday, March 4, 2010 - Governor Deval Patrick and state education officials received word from the U.S. Department of Education (USED) today that Massachusetts has been selected as one of 16 finalists in the federal Race to the Top (RTTT) competition.

A team of five people from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will be going to Washington, D.C. the week of March 15 for an in-person interview with federal officials, and final award notifications are expected to be made the first week in April. If selected, Massachusetts could receive as much as \$287 million in federal funding for education reform over the next four years.

"This is very exciting news, but this is only the first hurdle we have to cross," said Governor Patrick. "I am extremely proud of our proposal, and for the sake of our school kids we need to keep fighting for it."

"This news is very encouraging for the state's education system, especially on the heels of the successful passage of our education reform legislation," said Lieutenant Governor Timothy Murray. "Our administration is dedicated to improving the quality of public education and providing all students equal opportunity for success."

"Our proposal is a strong one, and I am extremely hopeful that we will be one of the states eventually selected for funding, but I know that this is a competitive process," said Education Commissioner Mitchell Chester. "Regardless of the final outcome, this effort has prompted us to develop a bold, forward thinking plan to improve our schools that will define our work going forward, with or without the federal funding."

"Massachusetts is hard at work to reform our education system and provide a school of excellence for every student," said Education Secretary Paul Reville. "The education reform legislation and our application both lay out the strategic vision for the Commonwealth to accomplish those goals."

"I'm thrilled to see education reform in Massachusetts acknowledged nationally as a trail-blazer and success. Massachusetts is working to close achievement gaps and ensure that every single student receives a world-class public education. Our entire congressional delegation pulled together with the Governor and the legislature to advance Massachusetts' case and we hope to see our state win the race to the top," said Senator John Kerry.

"The joint efforts of so many - from legislators to local educators - in the preparation of an innovative and far-reaching Race to the Top Application is already paying dividends for Massachusetts students and their families," said Congressman John Tierney. "This national race was backed by the historic levels of federal financial support in the Recovery Act, and I look forward to continuing to work in partnership with the Commonwealth to help nurture reform and improve the quality of our education system as this process continues."

"A world-class education system is essential for us to compete in the 21st Century economy," said Congressman James McGovern. "I look forward to the next round in the Race to the Top competition."

"As one of only sixteen finalists from an application pool that included 39 states, I congratulate Governor Patrick, our State Legislature, and education leaders from across Massachusetts," said Congresswoman Niki Tsongas. "Massachusetts' selection as a finalist in the Race To The Top competition is a testament to the excellent education reform proposals they have put forward, which aim to eliminate achievement gaps and improve troubled schools so that every child in Massachusetts is given the opportunity to achieve. I urge the Secretary of Education to give this impressive proposal the support it deserves from the federal government."

"It's very encouraging to be one of 16 finalists," said Senate President Therese Murray. "This next step is critical, and we have to keep fighting for our schools and capitalize on this unique opportunity."

"I'm delighted that we are now one step closer to qualifying for much-needed federal 'Race to the Top' dollars," said House Speaker Robert DeLeo. "This announcement shows that when we work together everyone benefits - most importantly the students of our state."

Statewide, leadership teams in more than 250 districts and charter schools, more than two-thirds of the state, agreed to implement the initiatives outlined in the state's RTTT application. In all, these Local Education Agencies represent 72 percent of K-12 students across the Commonwealth and 86 percent of the state's low-income students.

Each of these communities have committed to participating in efforts to:

- Develop and retain an effective, academically capable, diverse and culturally competent educator workforce.
- Develop curricular and instructional resources that support educator effectiveness with all students.
- Concentrate great instruction and supports for educators, students and families in our lowest performing schools.
- Increase our focus on college and career readiness for all students.

In January, Governor Patrick signed historic legislation that will turnaround underperforming schools, promote innovation and choice and eliminate achievement gaps that persist despite the successes of the state's landmark Education Reform Act of 1993. The law expands supports for students and schools needing the most help, and represents a major part of the Governor's education reform agenda designed to give all children the chance they deserve to succeed.

"After the successful passage of the Education Reform Act this year I feel very confident that Massachusetts is in a fantastic position to be eligible for Race to the Top Funds," said Senator Robert O'Leary, Senate Chair, Joint Committee on Education. "This announcement today reaffirms my belief that the reforms we passed in January will make our state stronger educationally and better serve all of our students in the long run."

"I am delighted that Massachusetts is a finalist for Race to the Top funding," said Representative Marty Walz, House Chair, Joint Committee on Education. "This designation recognizes the strong commitment we have made to closing our achievement gap and providing high quality education for all students."

The other finalists are Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina and Tennessee and Washington, D.C.

Massachusetts' full Race to the Top application is posted at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/arra/?section=2>.