



Race to the Top for Districts (RTT-D) Overview

Who can apply?	School districts (including charter schools/districts) or a consortia of districts can apply if they meet the following requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Serve at least 2,500 students across the district or the consortia• The participating schools must include at least 40% student who qualify for free or reduced price lunches• Each district can only join one application
Timeline	<u>2012</u> June – Comments are due June 8th ; final rules to be released by ED October – Expected application deadline November – Peer review of applications December – Winners will be announced <u>2014</u> Winning applicants must begin implementation of required evaluation systems in 2014-2015 school year
What are ED's priorities for applicants?	All applicants must demonstrate a focus on individualized student learning plans. Applicants must do this by building on the “four core educational assurance areas” in the Race to the Top competition in order to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase differentiation to meet the unique needs of diverse students• Expand student access the most effective teachers• Close achievement gaps across diverse student groups• Improve graduation rates Applicants must also have more than 50% of the students in one of the following categories: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. A district in a Race to the Top (RTT) state2. A rural district in a RTT state3. A non-rural district in a non-RTT state4. A rural district in a non-RTT state
What is the scoring rubric for the competition?	ED has not released a specific evaluation system for applications, but it will allocate points on the following categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comprehensive reform vision aimed at increasing test scores, graduation rates, college enrollment, attendance rates, and closing gaps• Capacity for success shown by recent reforms, increased transparency and stakeholder engagement, and a detailed plan for implementation• Preparing students and teachers for college and career ready standards by focusing on teaching, learning, performance measures & a supportive policy infrastructure• A strong and detailed plan to continue and extend reforms• Ability to sustain reforms• ED will provide competitive advantage to an applicant that has formed a coherent and sustainable partnership with public and private organizations, businesses, philanthropies, civic groups, and other community-based organizations
Next Steps?	For more information about the new Race to the Top – Districts competition, please reach out to the team at Whiteboard Advisors. You can contact David DeSchryver, VP of Education Policy, at David@WhiteboardAdvisors.com .

Summary of Draft Race to the Top for Districts (RTT-D)

Timeline

- The Department of Education will post final application rules in June
- Applications must be submitted by October
- Peer review will take place in November
- The Department of Education will announce winners in December

Eligibility Criteria

The draft guidance lays out a number of criteria identifying who is eligible to apply for RTT-D grants:

- Only districts or consortia of districts may apply
 - LEAs may apply for all their schools, specific grades, or for subject bands like lowest-performing schools
 - LEA consortia may stretch across states
- Each LEA may only sign on to one application
- Applicants must serve a minimum of 2,500 participating students. Consortia may include all participating students from across all participating LEAs
- The schools included in each program must include at least 40% of students qualifying for federally subsidized lunches
- Applicants must sign an official document assuring that the LEA has:
 - at a minimum, designed and committed to implement no later than the 2014-2015 school year:
 - A teacher evaluation system
 - A principal evaluation system
 - A LEA superintendent evaluation
 - A LEA school board evaluation
 - a robust data system with a unique teacher identifier and the ability to match student level P-12 and higher education data
 - a policy ensuring compliance with Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
- Applications must provide signatures from:
 - The superintendent
 - The local school board
 - The local union/association president where applicable

Application Requirements

LEAs must give their State Education Agencies (SEA) and a Mayor, City, or Town Administrator the opportunity to comment on the proposal. If the SEA and/or the representative from the City/Town choose to comment, the LEA's application must include the SEA and the City/Town's comments. The LEA may also include a response.

Consortia applications must also:

- Indicate whether one LEA is applying on behalf of the consortium, or whether the consortium has established itself as a separate legal entity applying for a grant on its own behalf

- Be signed by the Superintendent, School Board President, and local Union/Association President (where applicable)
- Submit copies of all Memoranda of Understanding or other binding agreements that assures that each member of the consortium is bound to every statement and assurance made in the application

Absolute Priorities

There are 5 Absolute Priorities. Each applicant must meet Absolute Priority 1 and one of Absolute Priorities 2-5. The Absolute Priorities 2-5 constitutes its own funding category, and the Secretary will award grants under each category for high quality applicants.

- **Absolute Priority 1, Personalized Learning Environment(s):** To meet this priority, the LEA or consortium's application must coherently and comprehensively address how it will build on the four core educational assurance areas in Race to the Top to create student centered learning environment(s) that are designed to
 - significantly improve teaching and learning through the personalization of strategies, tools, and supports for teachers and students that are aligned with college- and career-ready standards;
 - increase the effectiveness of educators, and expand student access to the most effective educators in order to raise student achievement;
 - decrease the achievement gap across student groups; and
 - increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers.
- **Absolute Priority 2, LEAs in Race to the Top States:** An LEA or a consortium of LEAs where more than 50 percent of participating students are in LEAs in States that received awards under the Race to the Top Phase 1, Phase 2, or Phase 3 competitions.
- **Absolute Priority 3, Rural LEAs in Race to the Top States:** An LEA or a consortium of LEAs where more than 50 percent of participating students are in rural LEAs in States that received awards under the Race to the Top Phase 1, Phase 2, or Phase 3 competitions.
- **Absolute Priority 4, LEAs in non-Race to the Top States:** An LEA or a consortium of LEAs where more than 50 percent of participating students are in LEAs in States that did not receive awards under the Race to the Top Phase 1, Phase 2, or Phase 3 competitions.
- **Absolute Priority 5, Rural LEAs in non-Race to the Top States:** An LEA or a consortium of LEAs where more than 50 percent of participating students are in rural LEAs in States that did not receive awards under the Race to the Top Phase 1, Phase 2, or Phase 3 competitions.

Selection Criteria

While ED has not yet released the point weighting system, it does lay out the selection criteria. ED will give preference to programs that demonstrate:

A. Comprehensive Reform Vision that builds on the four core educational assurance areas

- The vision for the project plan must highlight personalized learning
- A clear and credible approach
- Programs must be tied to specific elements of improving student achievement, including:

- Increased test scores (status and growth)
- Increased graduation rates
- Student and teacher attendance rates
- Decreased achievement gaps
- Increased college enrollment

B. District Capacity and Success Factors

- A clear track record of success in the past four years in advancing excellence and equity
- Increased "transparency" in LEA processes, practices, and investments, including making public, by school, actual school-level expenditures that are associated with regular K-12 instruction, instructional support, pupil support, and school administration
- Meaningful stakeholder engagement and support from families, teachers and principals in participating schools and letters of support from such key stakeholders
- A "high quality" plan for the LEA's approach to implementing the reform proposal that includes:
 - How the LEA central office, or the consortium governance structure will be organized to support and provide services to all participating schools;
 - The State context(s) in which the LEA or consortium will be lawfully implementing the proposal; and
 - How the implementation plan will translate into meaningful reform and support district-wide change beyond participating schools

C. Preparing Students for College and Career Ready Standards

- The LEA must have a "high quality" plan for improving teaching and learning by personalizing the learning environment(s) to enable all students to graduate college- and career-ready. The quality of the plan will be determined by how the applicant addresses:
 - Learning – Using an approach that engages all learners, in particular high-needs students, in an age appropriate manner, through the use of high-quality content aligned with college- and career-ready standards. The approach must engage all parents and teachers. The approach must provide the strategies and tools to allow students to advance, track, and manage their learning.
 - Teaching - Applications must highlight teaching, with an emphasis on personalized teaching and individualized learning for all students. Teachers must be able to capture and use student data. All participating educators have access to and know how to use tools, data, and resources to accelerate student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready graduation requirements.
 - Policy Infrastructure - Comprehensive policies and infrastructure for learning that provide every student, educator, and level of the education system (e.g., classroom, school, and LEA) with the support and resources they need, when and where they are needed.
 - Performance Measures - The definition of "performance measurement" is intentionally ambiguous at this point. ED is seeking public comment on appropriate standards.

D. Transition Plan and Continuous Improvement

- A high-quality plan, including timeline, deliverables, and most substantial risks and appropriate mitigation of those risks, for phasing in elements of the plan over the grant period;
- Plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals;

- Communication plans with both internal and external stakeholders; and
- A plan for long-term sustainability of the program. This must include how the applicant will monitor, measure, and publicly share the quality of its Race to the Top District funded investments, such as professional development, technology and staff.

E. Budget and Sustainability

- Districts must prove that they have an adequate budget to make the program long-term and sustainable.
- The applicant must submit a thoughtful investment and prioritization rationale, including a description of all of the funds (e.g., Race to the Top grant; external foundation support; local, State, and other Federal funds; or other support) that the applicant will use to support the implementation of the proposal.

Competitive Preferences: Cradle to Career, Resource Alignment, & Integrated Services

ED will provide competitive advantage to an applicant that has formed a coherent and sustainable partnership with public and private organizations; businesses, philanthropies, civic groups, and other community-based organizations; early learning programs; and post-secondary institutions to support the plan described in Absolute Priority 1.

The partnership must identify not more than 10 population-level desired results for students in the LEA or consortium of LEAs that align with the applicant's proposal and reform strategy. The results must include both educational results and other education outcomes and education and family and community results.

To benefit the application, the partnership must:

- **Track selected data:** The district must select indicators that measure aggregate results for all students participating in the program, and lay out how the partnership would improve those results
- **Build staff capacity:** The partnership should help the staff inventory the needs and assets of the community and create a decision making process and infrastructure to implement and evaluate solutions. The process should engage parents and routinely assess the implementation fidelity.
- **Integrate services:** The district needs to use the partnership to target resources where they are needed most, including students with disabilities, ELL students, and students affected by poverty and/or family instability. The district must show how the partnership will help scale the model beyond participating students to at least other high-needs students.

Definitions

There are many new definitions in the proposed rules that deserve comments. The following selected definitions deserve particular consideration. The full set of proposed definitions is here:

<http://www.ed.gov/race-top/district-competition/definitions>

Achievement gap: The difference in the performance between each ESEA subgroup (as defined in this document) within a participating LEA or school and the statewide average performance of the LEA's or State's highest achieving subgroups in reading/language arts and mathematics as measured by the assessments required under the ESEA.

College- and career-ready graduation requirements: Minimum high school graduation expectations (e.g., completion of a minimum course of study, content mastery, proficiency on college- and career-ready assessments, etc.) that include rigorous, robust, and well-rounded curriculum aligned with college- and career-ready standards (as defined in this document) that cover a wide range of academic and technical knowledge and skills to ensure that students leave high school ready for college and careers.

Core educational assurance areas:

- Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy;
- Building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction;
- Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most; and
- Turning around our lowest-achieving schools.

Digital learning content: Learning materials and resources that can be displayed on a digital device and shared electronically with other users. Digital learning content includes both open and or commercial content. In order to comply with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, any digital learning content used by grantees must be accessible to individuals with disabilities, including individuals who use screen readers. For additional information regarding their application to technology, please refer to www.ed.gov/ocr/letters/colleague-201105-ese.pdf and www.ed.gov/ocr/docs/dcl-ebook-faq-201105.pdf.

Interoperable data system: System that uses common, established structure such that data can easily flow from one system to another and in which data are in a non-proprietary, open format.

Low-performing schools: Schools that are in the bottom 10 percent of performance in the State, or who have significant achievement gaps, based on student academic performance in reading/language arts and mathematics on the assessments required under the ESEA or graduation rates.

Personalized learning plan: A formal document, available in digital and other formats both in and out of school to students, parents, and teachers, that, at a minimum: establishes student learning goals based on academic and career objectives and personal interests; sequences content and skill development to achieve those learning goals and ensure that a student can graduate on-time college- and career-ready; and is updated based on information about student performance on a variety of activities and assessments that indicate progress towards goals.

Principal evaluation system: A system that: (1) will be used for continual improvement of instruction; (2) meaningfully differentiates performance using at least three performance levels; (3) uses multiple valid measures in determining performance levels, including as a significant factor data on student growth(as defined in this document) for all students (including English learners and students with disabilities), and other measures of professional practice (which may be gathered through multiple formats and sources, such as observations based on rigorous leadership performance standards, teacher evaluation data, and student and parent surveys); (4) evaluates principals on a regular basis; (5) provides clear, timely, and useful feedback, including feedback that identifies needs for and guides professional development; and (6) will be used to inform personnel decisions.

School board evaluation: An assessment of the LEA school board that both evaluates performance and encourages professional growth. This evaluation system rating should reflect both (1) the feedback of many stakeholders, including but not limited to educators and parents; and (2) student outcomes performance in order to provide a detailed and accurate picture of the board's performance.

Superintendent evaluation: Rigorous, transparent, and fair annual evaluation for the LEA superintendent that provides an assessment of performance and encourages professional growth. This evaluation rating should reflect (1) the feedback of many stakeholders, including but not limited to educators, principals, and parents; and (2) student outcomes performance in order to provide a detailed and accurate picture of the superintendent's performance.

Student Growth: The change in student achievement for an individual student between two or more points in time, defined as—

- For grades and subjects in which assessments are required under ESEA section 1111(b)(3): (1) a student's score on such assessments and (2) other measures of student learning, such as those described in the second bullet, provided they are rigorous and comparable across schools within an LEA.
- For grades and subjects in which assessments are not required under ESEA section 1111(b)(3): alternative measures of student learning and performance, such as student results on pre-tests, end-of-course tests, and objective performance-based assessments; performance against student learning objectives; student performance on English language proficiency assessments; and other measures of student achievement that are rigorous and comparable across schools within an LEA.

To access the full Department of Education draft rules please visit: <http://www.ed.gov/race-top/district-competition/>

Please contact David DeSchryver, VP Education Policy, at david@whiteboardadvisors.com with questions regarding this program.