

Schools Sign On to Receive Race to the Top Funds

Out of a total of 361 Iowa school districts, 245 have submitted a memorandum of understanding (MOU) indicating their agreement to participate in reform efforts outlined in Iowa's second application to receive federal Race to the Top grant funds.

School districts that are participating serve a total of 342,812 students, or more than 73% of Iowa's K-12 public school population. These school districts serve 79% of Iowa students living in poverty.

Race to the Top is a federal competitive grant program to encourage and reward states that are creating the conditions for education innovation, and reform. Iowa first applied for funds in January 2010, but did not succeed in the first round of grants.

Areas of Reform

Areas of reform include:

- Providing intensive support for Iowa's lowest-achieving schools.
- Continuing to build a balanced system to assess how students are doing academically and providing several different ways to determine their progress from year to year.
- Further development of a valid and reliable teacher and principle evaluation system.
- Integrating a set of academic standards currently being developed at the national level in the subject areas of English, language arts and mathematics into the Iowa Core Curriculum.

The Iowa Department of Education is currently writing the second application, which is due to the U.S. Department of Education on June 1. The second round of winners will be announced in August.

Iowa is applying to receive \$175 million, which is the maximum amount Iowa is eligible to receive. If Iowa is awarded the grant, each Iowa school district signing on to participate will receive a minimum of \$60,000 to support reform work.

A list of participating districts can be found at www.iowa.gov/educate/