
NEWS RELEASE

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U.S. Department of Education praises R.I. for Race to the Top progress

The U.S. Department of Education has recognized Rhode Island as one of three states making “remarkable progress” in implementing the \$75-million federal Race to the Top grant, according to Department officials discussing the report on a conference call with reporters.

In releasing the Race to the Top Rhode Island Report: Year 2 last Friday (February 1), Education Secretary Arne Duncan said: “Rhode Island has set a clear path forward on comprehensive education reform that will better support teachers and principals and enable student growth for years to come. They have overcome challenges and proved what’s possible when everyone works together. We look forward to seeing their continued progress and strong execution of key efforts that will empower educators to transform their classrooms into models of 21st-century learning.”

“I congratulate Commissioner Gist and educators across Rhode Island for the progress made to date under our Race to the Top grant,” said Governor Lincoln D. Chafee. “In awarding Rhode Island a Race to the Top grant, the U.S. Department of Education recognized that we had a great plan in place for transforming education in our state. The Year 2 report that the Department has issued recognizes that we are putting our plan into action, which will benefit our students today and will ensure our economic prosperity as we move forward.”

“I am very pleased that Secretary Duncan and the Department of Education have recognized the hard work and dedication of Rhode Island educators and friends of education in every community in our state,” said Education Commissioner Deborah A. Gist. “We were honored to be one of 12 states to receive a Race to the Top grant, and we have pledged to use these funds to make investments and to build systems that will improve education in Rhode Island for years to come. At the midpoint in this four-year grant, I am especially proud that Rhode Island educators are working together to transform education in our state.”

The Department praised Rhode Island educators for effective management of the grant, which Rhode Island received in 2010, and for success in implementing a number of initiatives that the grant funds, including, among other initiatives:

- training 5,800 Rhode Island educators in implementation of the Common Core State Standards, which will go into effect in the next school year;

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- creating assessments aligned with the Common Core that will measure students' learning throughout the school year;
- implementing educator evaluations across the state;
- providing additional support to 262 first-year teachers;
- establishing an Academy for Transformative Leadership to support school leaders in low-achieving schools; and
- developing improved data systems for instructional management, for educator support, for educator certification, and for early warning to identify students at risk of failure.

To date, Rhode Island has spent \$21.3 million in Race to the Top funds, including \$4.1 million to implement educator evaluations, \$2.1 million for transition to the Common Core State Standards and for curriculum development, and \$1.25 million to develop data systems to improve instruction. Rhode Island is on course toward spending the full \$75 million of the award by the end of next year (Year 4 of the grant).

The Year 2 report from the U.S. Department of Education is available here:

<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/performance/rhode-island-year-2.pdf>

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