

Governor Quinn Announces Nearly \$43 Million in Race to the Top Competition

Written by Katelyn Tye

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Federal Funding Award to Advance K-12 Reforms, Improve Student Achievement and Boost Science Technology Engineering, Math (STEM) Learning Across Illinois

CHICAGO – December 23, 2011. Governor Pat Quinn today announced Illinois earned a \$42.8 million federal grant under the U.S. Department of Education's Race to the Top (RTTT) program to help bolster Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) education across the state and other work to close the achievement gap. Half of those funds— about \$21 million —will go directly to the state's local districts that agree to accelerate education reform. Illinois is one of seven states in the nation to be awarded a portion of the \$200 million in federal funds, which will be distributed through the 2013-14 school year to benefit K-12 students.

"The best long-term economic tool is a good education," Governor Quinn said. "As Illinois continues to pursue a strong education reform agenda, this grant allows us to continue to reach for improved scores, higher graduation rates and a system that produces graduates who are well prepared for the 21st century job market."

"Education in Illinois is undergoing a sea change aimed to ensure new generations of students become better prepared for college and careers," said State Superintendent of Education Christopher A. Koch. "These federal funds will help support the many efforts under way so that children across the state will have greater access to a quality education."

Illinois applied for the grant and was declared eligible for funds as one of nine finalists in the second round of RTTT. The grant application reflects the priorities of the previous two RTTT applications and ongoing work under the state's current reform agenda, which includes implementing the new rigorous Common Core Learning Standards in Math and English Language Arts, advancing teacher and principal effectiveness and providing educators with data that can better inform and improve classroom instruction. Among the initiatives is advancing STEM programs of study and developing a system of induction and mentoring for STEM educators.

"These federal funds will help support Illinois' ongoing work to implement new practices in the classroom during the next several years that aim to improve student learning and close the achievement gap," said Illinois State Board of Education Chairman Gery J. Chico. "An investment in education and our long-term reforms is an investment in children's well being

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and our state's economic future.”

Other projects to be funded include the oversight and delivery of professional development to help align district curriculum to the new Common Core Learning Standards in English Language Arts and Math and high quality student assessments that can be used to measure student growth and be incorporated into educator evaluations.

Funds will also be used to bolster ongoing development of a data system that supports personalized learning and access to high quality resources. Specifically, Illinois has been selected to be one of the first states to implement the Shared Learning Infrastructure, a multi-state collaborative to develop a next-generation technology system that will enable teachers to easily find high-quality and highly-customizable curriculum and classroom resources aligned to the Common Core Standards.

The six other states awarded funds under the third Race to the Top Competition are: Arizona, Colorado, Kentucky, Louisiana, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. To learn more about the Race to the Top and Illinois' plan for the \$42.8 million, please visit http://www.isbe.net/racetothetop/PDF/phase3_app.pdf

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