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## Delaware schools: 'Top' dollars to go to the neediest

State to distribute federal funds

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State officials on Wednesday released how much each district and charter school will receive in federal Race to the Top grant dollars, figures that show some large school districts will receive less money than some charter schools.

Money was divvied up among schools based on a federal formula that takes into account how many children in the district or charter come from low-income families.

For instance, the Appoquinimink School District in southern New Castle County has a student enrollment of about 9,100, but it received slightly less money than Kuumba Academy Charter School in Wilmington, which serves 250 students.

Across Delaware, 39 public school districts and charter schools will share \$59,561,064 -- half of the state's \$119 million Race to the Top grant. The money will be distributed over four years. Delaware was one of two winners for the first round of President Barack Obama's education reform program. The state and U.S. departments of education must both sign off on local district and charter school plans to spend the money. The plans were sent to the U.S. Department of Education on Monday.

Implementation of the Race to the Top plan has the "potential to be game changing" in Delaware public schools, said Paul Herdman, who is president and CEO of the Rodel Foundation of Delaware. In the grand scheme of things, the local shares of the federal grant might not be a lot of money for every district, but the overall plan includes systematic changes that will help reform the state's schools on a grand scale, he said.

"This country is trying to fundamentally rethink what education looks like and I think this is a huge catalytic step," Herdman said. "It could be significant if we do it right."

Each local spending plan had to be aligned with the goals of the state's Race to the Top plan, said Dan Cruce, the state deputy secretary of education.

"It really needs to be about kids in classrooms," he said.

In March, Delaware and Tennessee were the only two states chosen to receive funding in Round One of Obama's initiative, winning a collective \$600 million. Delaware scored highest among the 41 applicants vying for more than \$4.35 billion in federal stimulus money under the program.

Obama's Race to the Top program is meant to encourage states to join a national effort to turn around failing schools, boost student achievement and reward teachers who excel. Some critics questioned the choice of Delaware and Tennessee, saying their plans weren't bold enough and federal officials shouldn't have weighed teacher union buy-in to the plans so heavily. But when announcing Delaware and Tennessee as winners, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan lauded their efforts to improve struggling schools and tie teacher evaluation systems to student achievement.

Delaware's plan includes programs designed to reward success and efforts to help struggling schools: five top-performing schools a year will each get a \$150,000 bonus; the state will pay for all state students to take the SATs; highly rated teachers who are willing to transfer to the neediest schools would be eligible for a \$5,000 bonus.

Part of Delaware's Race to the Top plan includes restructuring 10 schools with low academic achievement rates. Until now, those schools' improvement plans have included mainly changes in curriculum, but no big staff changes. State officials have not released the names of the first few buildings that will enter the turnaround program yet but said a decision will be based on performance history and scores from this year's round of student testing.

Money not awarded directly to the school districts will go toward services that will touch all public school students. Some of the statewide initiatives include adding: data coaches to meet with small groups of teachers several times a month to review student data and help teachers develop lessons; development coaches to work with principals; fellowships for highly effective educators.

For the local share announced Wednesday, Christina, the largest school district in the state, got the most money. More than \$9 million will be available over the next four years. The district plans to spend some of that money to help support teachers and to improve instruction, said district spokeswoman Wendy Lapham.

The public needs to know that there are rules for how the money can be spent, so the school can't use it to fill any budgetary need, she said.

Edison Charter School has high expectations for the more than \$880,000 the Wilmington school will get.

With a new school leader, and some fresh ideas for the coming fall, the school's administrators plan to use a large portion of the money for a program that prepares middle school students for high school math and English Advanced Placement programs, said head of school Salome Thomas-EL. The program was selected because it has been proven effective, he said.

"We can't just keep throwing more money at problems," Thomas-EL said. "We need to make sure the programs are rigorous and the students are prepared."

One Delaware school, Charter School of Wilmington, was not awarded any Race to the Top money of its own. That school did not have any impoverished students enrolled in 2009, so it was not entitled to any money. The school will still benefit from programs paid for with the state's share, Cruce said.

## **DISTRIBUTING FUNDS AMONG THE DISTRICTS**

Half of Delaware's Race to the Top funds -- or \$59,561,064 -- will be divided among school districts and charter schools on a need-based formula. Here is how much each will receive.

Academy of Dover \$200,574

Appoquinimink \$215,163

Brandywine \$5,003,399

Caesar Rodney \$3,227,192

Campus Community \$197,009

Cape Henlopen \$2,138,953

Capital School \$5,683,477  
Christina School \$9,922,366  
Colonial \$5,034,670  
Delaware College Prep \$81,230  
Delaware Military \$24,769  
Delmar \$340,857  
East Side \$396,110  
Family Foundations \$219,270  
Indian River \$3,212,062  
Kuumba \$219,275  
Lake Forest \$1,683,503  
Laurel \$1,453,584  
Maurice J. Moyer Academy \$343,060  
Milford \$1,763,698  
MOT \$17,061  
New Castle Vo Tech \$1,144,528  
Newark Charter \$57,248  
Odyssey \$71,924  
Pencader Business \$38,083  
Poly Tech \$256,424  
Positive Outcomes \$44,916  
Prestige Academy \$74,271  
Providence Creek \$218,899  
Red Clay \$7,908,498  
Seaford \$3,683,728  
Smyrna \$1,591,706  
Sussex Academy \$25,406

Sussex Tech \$284,769

Thomas Edison \$880,638

Wilmington Charter \$0

Woodbridge \$1,902,745

These allocations are reflective of the calculations done in accordance with USED guidelines using data available to DDOE as of June 2010.

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