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Delaware wins \$100 million in Race to the Top funding

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Delaware and Tennessee are the winners in the first round of the Race to the Top education reform competition U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced this afternoon. The

\$100 million will be distributed over the next four years.

Delaware officials submitted [their application](#) for a portion of \$4.35 billion that's designed to spur education reforms. The full [235-page application](#) can be found on the state's website. The state's plan includes strong standards and assessments, and changes in the way under performing schools are improved. The plan, which was supported by education leaders throughout the state, also changes the way teachers are evaluated by focusing on student improvement. Secretary Duncan says that support from all districts played a role in Delaware's winning application. "Delaware also has a strong application that will reach into every corner of the state and has the full support of its teachers unions." Duncan says the Department of Education is confident that all students in the state will benefit from the reforms that will be funded by the Race to the Top.

Governor Jack Markell says the award recognizes the team effort that Delaware put together in its application. "The fact that we had this wonderful team of people from many different constituency group work for months." Markell says the state had already started its own education reform efforts before the possibility of Race to the Top funding became available. "We had well over 100 stakeholders who were part of that process. I believe that starting that early and getting people at the table in the end was a critical difference for Delaware."

Part of the state's reform plans include tying teacher ratings to student performance. Markell says if a teacher's students are improving, they'll receive an effective rating. "That's a big change, but I think one of the things we've got to focus on over the next 14 or 16 months has to do with the definition of student achievement." Delaware Secretary of Education Lillian Lowery says the state wants to discuss that process with teachers to determine other indicators of success outside of just the state assessment. She says, "There are other indicators of success we want to discuss with our teachers and our teachers union to make sure that every one has some justification as to why we're going to do what we do."

Delaware was ranked number one in the competition, with the state's application garnering 454.6 points out of a possible 500. Tennessee, which was the only other state to be awarded funding, finished second with 444.2 points and will receive \$500 million. The rest of the top ten which missed out on funding includes, in descending order, Georgia, Florida, Illinois, South Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Kentucky, and Ohio.

States like Pennsylvania, which was a finalist for the funding, have the opportunity to reapply for round two. Duncan says, "Race to the Top doesn't end today. The good news is that about \$3.4 billion remains to be awarded. Every other state in the country will have the opportunity to apply." Duncan says just by taking part in the application process, they can bring together major players who can work together for reform whether or not their application is awarded federal money.

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