

# *Race to the Top Implementation and NAEP<sup>1</sup>*

## **Background**

The Race to the Top Program, authorized under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), provided \$4.35 billion for a competitive grant program designed to encourage and reward States that are creating the conditions for education innovation and reform; achieving significant improvement in student outcomes, including making substantial gains in student achievement, closing achievement gaps, improving high school graduation rates, and ensuring student preparation for success in college and careers; and implementing ambitious plans in four core education reform areas:

- Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy;
- Building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction;
- Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most; and
- Turning around our lowest-achieving schools.

Race to the Top awards to states have been distributed in three phases.

- Phase I – March 29, 2010: \$600 million awarded to two states (Delaware and Tennessee)
- Phase II – August 24, 2010: \$3,325 million awarded to nine states/jurisdictions (District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, and Rhode Island)
- Phase III – December 22, 2011: \$200 million to seven states (Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania)

In addition to the state grants, the Race to the Top program is providing support for the Assessment Consortia (<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-assessment/index.html>) described previously in the Board materials, the Early Learning Challenge <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/index.html>, and the Race to the Top competition for districts <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-district/index.html>.

In their winning applications, states included specific goals, activities, timelines, budgets, key personnel, and annual targets for key performance measures. The priorities and selection criteria for the competition are detailed in Attachment A of these materials. Of particular interest to the National Assessment Governing Board is the group of criteria addressing student outcomes, specifically on NAEP. These criteria are highlighted in Attachment A and excerpted below.

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<sup>1</sup> Additional information about the Race to the Top program, including state specific awards and performance reports, is found at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html>.

States were required to articulate the extent to which “LEAs participating in the State’s Race to the Top plans (including considerations of the numbers and percentages of participating LEAs, schools, K-12 students, and students in poverty) will translate into broad statewide impact, allowing the State to reach its ambitious yet achievable goals, overall and by student subgroup, for

- (a) Increasing student achievement in reading/language arts and mathematics (at a minimum), as reported by the NAEP and the assessments required under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA);
- (b) Decreasing achievement gaps between subgroups in reading/language arts and mathematics, as reported by the NAEP and the assessments required under the ESEA;
- (c) Increasing high school graduation rates (as defined in this notice); and
- (d) Increasing college enrollment (as defined in this notice) and increasing the number of students who complete at least a year’s worth of college credit that is applicable to a degree within two years of enrollment in an institution of higher education.”

## **Introduction**

Appropriately, the National Assessment Governing Board is interested in learning more about the goals specified by states which received these funds, especially as they are related to NAEP. Questions that might be asked include:

1. What types of goals were specified by states? For example, did states specify scale score unit increases or an increase in the percent of students at or above a specific achievement level, or something else?
2. How ambitious were the goals for NAEP in the short term and the long term?
3. What kind of variety was included in terms of the ambitiousness or size of the goal on NAEP?
4. Were the performance goals on NAEP similar to or different from performance goals on the state tests?
5. How stringently will the Department use the NAEP goals and results for monitoring states?
6. How has the Department addressed potential test integrity issues if the stakes on NAEP are increased significantly via monitoring?

At this meeting, Ann Whalen, Director of Policy and Program Implementation in ED’s Implementation and Support Unit, will provide a briefing for the Board about the use of NAEP in the goals set by the current Race to the Top grant recipients. In addition, she will briefly address the status of Early Learning Challenge and the Race to the Top competition for districts, and answer questions of interest to Governing Board members.

## ***Ann Whalen***

*Director of Policy and Program Implementation  
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Ann Whalen serves as Director of Program and Policy Implementation in the Implementation and Support Unit in the Office of the Deputy Secretary. As Director, Ann manages a team of program officers to serve as the single point of contact at the Department of Education for an over \$50 billion portfolio of formula and discretionary grant programs consisting of the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund, the Race to the Top State program, the Race to the Top Assessment program, and the Education Jobs Fund.

Prior to her work in the Implementation and Support Unit, Ann was a special advisor to the Secretary of Education, working across offices within the Department to develop and implement policy, regulations, guidance and programs including: School Improvement Grants, State Fiscal Stabilization Fund, Teacher Incentive Fund, and Race to the Top Assessment.

Ann came to the U.S. Department of Education with Secretary Duncan from Chicago Public Schools (CPS), where she most recently served as deputy to the chief education officer and focused on the development and implementation of curriculum and instruction strategies, as well as district level policies and guidelines since 2006. From 2003 to 2006, Ann served as deputy director of special initiatives for the CEO of CPS, working on the development and implementation of system-wide policies, assessments and professional development.

Prior to her time at CPS, Ann worked as a project administrator for the Department of Planning and Development for the City of Chicago, where she coordinated with community groups, developers, city officials, and other city agencies in anticipating and meeting the development needs of neighborhoods on the city's south side. Ann has also worked as a research assistant for the Consortium for Research on Information Security and Policy (CRISP) at the Center for International Security and Cooperation at Stanford University, where she received her bachelor's degree in political science.