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**PRESS RELEASES****16 Finalists Announced in Phase 1 of Race to the Top Competition Finalists to Present in Mid-March; Winners Announced in Early April****FOR RELEASE:**

March 4, 2010

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Today the Department of Education announced that 15 states and the District of Columbia will advance as finalists for phase 1 of the Race to the Top competition. Race to the Top is the Department's \$4.35 billion effort to dramatically re-shape America's educational system to better engage and prepare our students for success in a competitive 21st century economy and workplace.

States competing for Race to the Top funds were asked to document past education reform successes, as well as outline plans to: extend reforms using college and career-ready standards and assessments; build a workforce of highly effective educators; create educational data systems to support student achievement; and turn around their lowest-performing schools.

The phase 1 finalists are:

- Colorado
- Delaware
- District of Columbia
- Florida
- Georgia
- Illinois
- Kentucky
- Louisiana
- Massachusetts
- New York
- North Carolina
- Ohio
- Pennsylvania
- Rhode Island
- South Carolina
- Tennessee

"These states are an example for the country of what is possible when adults come together to do the right thing for children," Secretary Arne Duncan said.

"Everyone that applied for Race to the Top is charting a path for education reform in America" Duncan continued. "I salute all of the applicants for their hard work. And I encourage non-finalists to reapply for phase 2."

The 16 finalists were chosen from among the 40 states and the District of Columbia that submitted applications for phase 1. Winners for phase 1 will be chosen from among the 16 finalists and announced in April. Applications for phase 2 will be due on June 1 of this year, with finalists announced in August and winners in September. The only states prohibited from applying in phase 2 are those that receive awards in phase 1.

**How Finalists Were Chosen**

Panels of 5 peer reviewers independently read and scored each state's application. The panels then met in February to finalize their comments and submit scores. Each state's score is the average of the five independent reviewers' scores.

The Department arranged the applications in order from high to low scores and determined which applicants were the strongest competitors to invite back based on "natural breaks"—i.e. scoring gaps in the line-up. The top 16 applications were then selected as finalists. All 41 applicants from phase 1 will receive their peer reviewers' comments and scores after the winners are announced in April. The Department will post the scores and applications on its Web site.

**Choosing Winners from Among the Finalists**

The finalists will be invited to DC in mid-March to present their proposals to the panel that reviewed their applications in depth during the initial stage, and to engage in Q&A discussions with the reviewers.

The purpose of the finalist stage is to allow reviewers to ensure that the state has the understanding, knowledge, capacity, and the will to truly deliver on what is proposed. The presentations will be videotaped and posted for viewing on the Department's website at the end of Phase 1.

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At the conclusion of the presentations, the reviewers will meet again to discuss each application, finalize scores and comments, and submit them to the Department. Again, the final score for each application will be an average of the five peer reviewers' scores. The scores will be arranged in order from high to low and presented to Secretary Duncan for final selection.

**Number of Winners & Award Sizes**

The number of phase 1 winners will be determined by the strength of the applications. While the department does not have a predetermined amount of money to award in each phase of the competition, we expect no more than half of the money will be awarded in phase 1 to ensure a robust competition in phase 2.

"We are setting a high bar and we anticipate very few winners in phase 1. But this isn't just about the money. It's about collaboration among all stakeholders, building a shared agenda, and challenging ourselves to improve the way our students learn. I feel that every state that has applied is a winner—and the biggest winners of all are the students," Duncan said.

Of the \$4.35 billion in Race to the Top funds provided under the Recovery Act, the Department will distribute approximately \$4 billion directly to states to drive education reform and \$350M to consortia of states that compete in a separate competition to create new college and career-ready assessments. The assessment competition is still in the design phase.

Based on Race to the Top's early positive effect on national education reform, President Obama proposed to continue the program next year by requesting \$1.35 billion in the Administration's FY 2011 budget.

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