

## **U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ANNOUNCES 61 APPLICATIONS AS FINALISTS FOR \$400 MILLION RACE TO THE TOP-DISTRICT COMPETITION**

Today the U.S. Department of Education announced that 61 applications have been selected as finalists for the Race to the Top-District (RTT-D) competition. The 2012 RTT-D program will provide close to \$400 million to support locally developed plans to personalize learning, directly improve student achievement and educator effectiveness, close achievement gaps, and prepare every student for success in college and careers.

The 61 finalists, representing more than 200 school districts, were selected from 372 applications the Department received in November, to demonstrate how districts could personalize education for students and provide school leaders and teachers with key tools that support them to meet students' needs.

"These finalists are setting the curve for the rest of the country with innovative plans to drive education reform in the classroom," said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. "This competition was designed to support local efforts to close the achievement gap and transform the learning environment in a diverse set of districts, but no matter who wins, children across the country will benefit from the clear vision and track records of success demonstrated by these finalists."

Race to the Top-District applications were randomly assigned to 3-person panels that independently read and scored each application, with independent reviewers' scores averaged to determine a district's score. The Department arranged the applications in rank order from high to low scores and determined which were the strongest competitors to invite back based on "natural breaks" – i.e. scoring gaps in the lineup. The top 61 applications were then selected as finalists.

Consistent with the Department's plan to select high-quality proposals from applications across a variety of districts, the finalists represent a range of districts, both rural and non-rural, from both Race to the Top states and non-Race to the Top states.

The Department expects to select 15-25 winning applications the Race to the Top-District competition for 4-year awards that will range from \$5 million to \$40 million, depending on the population of students served through the plan. Awards will be announced no later than Dec. 31, 2012.

The Department has posted the list of districts who submitted an application on its website: <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-district/index.html>. The list includes all districts that applied and does not indicate their eligibility for the competition.