



The State of Illinois **RACE TO THE TOP**

A P P L I C A T I O N F O R F U N D I N G

GOING THE DISTANCE FOR ILLINOIS STUDENTS

WHY IS "RACE TO THE TOP" SO VALUABLE TO THE ILLINOIS EDUCATION COMMUNITY?

The "Race to the Top" is a competitive federal grant program that will provide resources to states that are leading reform efforts in four areas: Improving the use of standards and assessments, increasing the use of data, increasing the effectiveness of teachers, and improving struggling schools.

Illinois is already on course for strategic reforms that align with the four areas of "Race to the Top". If we win the race, it could bring \$400 million for the state and its schools to help more quickly implement the reforms to which we are already committed. Teachers

and administrators will be pursuing many of these reforms regardless of the outcome of Illinois' "Race to the Top".

If Illinois receives \$400 million from "Race to the Top" it will allow us to more rapidly develop a statewide shared technology infrastructure, provide teachers and administrators with real-time access to data and reduce duplicative reporting requirements. In addition, teachers and principals will receive high quality induction and mentoring, including intensive training in the use of data to improve student growth.

HOW DOES "RACE TO THE TOP" BENEFIT ILLINOIS?

"Race to the Top" will help Illinois support reforms designed to improve outcomes and opportunities for Illinois students and foster improved effectiveness of educators.

Illinois is one of the states leading the Common Core State Standards Initiative which will use internationally benchmarked learning standards to better prepare students for college and career readiness. The state-driven Common Core will mean fewer, clearer and higher Illinois Learning Standards and the "Race to the Top" will provide professional development for teachers and administrators to implement the new state standards, improve student growth measures and better align standards and assessments from preschool through post-secondary.

Students will be able to earn a Career Readiness Certificate, aligned with the needs of the marketplace and increasingly used by businesses around the state in hiring.

HOW DOES "RACE TO THE TOP" BENEFIT CLASSROOM TEACHERS?

"Race to the Top" funding will allow for the construction of a statewide technology infrastructure to provide teachers real-time access to student growth data and assist in their professional development to use that data. "Race to the Top" will also assist teachers by enabling them to more efficiently customize instruction and provide educators with tools to measure student growth and inform instruction and interventions. It will provide support for districts and teachers as Common Core Learning Standards go into effect and district curriculum is revised. In addition, "Race to the Top" funding will allow Illinois to develop frameworks and processes to support teachers and principals in the implementation of new evaluations, which will be tied in part to student growth data.

HOW DOES "RACE TO THE TOP" BENEFIT ADMINISTRATORS?

"Race to the Top" helps support the reforms in districts that will be moving forward regardless of whether or not Illinois receives "Race to the Top" funding. Districts will benefit from new statewide supports to bring relevance and practical application to more rigorous standards – steps that will help our students successfully compete on a global stage and will provide funding for teacher and administrator professional development.

The development of a statewide technology infrastructure will also allow administrators to reduce district Information Technology (IT) costs through "cloud computing". Educators will be able to follow students through their entire educational career, from preschool through college graduation.

In addition, it will reduce district administrative burdens through the faster development of a Longitudinal Data System which will reduce and simplify district reporting to the State.

HOW DO WE IMPROVE ILLINOIS' POSITION IN THE "RACE TO THE TOP"?

While districts agreeing to participate in Illinois' Phase I "Race to the Top" application enroll 74% of our students and 80% of our low-income students, it was pointed out by federal reviewers these districts only represent 42% of all districts. Reviewers noted statewide reform requires broad support from management and labor.

It is critical that Illinois demonstrate additional support for our Phase II "Race to the Top" application. The two states that received "Race to the Top" grants in the first round had 100% participation. Support is needed from teachers, administrators and local board members to access these federal resources at a time state funding for education is dwindling.