

From: Elzie, Bo
Sent time: Tuesday, January 10, 2012 9:24:26 AM
To: Cari Miller (Cari@excelined.org) <Cari@excelined.org>
Subject: RE: Edweek: Big Race to Top Problems in Hawaii, Florida, N.Y., Says Ed. Dept.

Sigh! Yes, we are meeting today to discuss this. Thanks for sharing.

Sincerely,

Bo Elzie

Project Director

Race to the Top Struggling Schools

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From: Cari Miller (Cari@excelined.org) [mailto:Cari@excelined.org]
Sent: Tuesday, January 10, 2012 9:08 AM
To: Elzie, Bo
Subject: FW: Edweek: Big Race to Top Problems in Hawaii, Florida, N.Y., Says Ed. Dept.

Meant to send this your way too.

From: Cari Miller (Cari@excelined.org)
Sent: Tuesday, January 10, 2012 8:59 AM
To: Webster, Melinda (Melinda.Webster@fldoe.org); Smith, Kevin (Kevin.Smith@fldoe.org); laurie.lee@fldoe.org; Colle, Hope (Hope.Colle@fldoe.org)
Subject: FW: Edweek: Big Race to Top Problems in Hawaii, Florida, N.Y., Says Ed. Dept.

FYI

From: Jaryn Emhof (Jaryn@excelined.org)
Sent: Tuesday, January 10, 2012 12:57 AM
To: Alexis Franz (Alexis@excelined.org); Cari Miller (Cari@excelined.org); Celeste Lewis (Celeste@afloridapromise.org); Christy Hovanetz (Christyh@excelined.org); Deirdre Finn (dfinn@afloridapromise.org); Erin Price (Erin@excelined.org); Fonda Anderson (Fonda@excelined.org); Jaryn Emhof (Jaryn@afloridapromise.org); Joanna Hassell (Joanna@afloridapromise.org); Mandy Clark (Mandy@excelined.org); Mary Laura Bragg (MaryLaura@excelined.org); Matthew Ladner (Matthew@excelined.org); Minda Corso (Minda@afloridapromise.org); Nadia Hagberg (Nadia@excelined.org); Patricia Levesque (Patricia@afloridapromise.org)
Subject: Edweek: Big Race to Top Problems in Hawaii, Florida, N.Y., Says Ed. Dept.

Big Race to Top Problems in Hawaii, Florida, N.Y., Says Ed. Dept.

By [Michele McNeil](#) on January 10, 2012 12:01 PM
http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2012/01/race_to_the_top.html

In its first official assessment of \$4 billion in Race to the Top grants, the U.S. Department of Education today commended the 12 winners for working hard to implement the first year of their reform plans—but raised specific red flags about the pace of change in Hawaii, New York, and Florida.

Overall, the majority of Race to the Top recipients seem to be on the right track in implementing their ambitious reform agendas, the department said in weighing progress by the 11 winning states and the District of Columbia. But it found that nearly all have had significant problems in hiring employees and vendors to turn their plans into reality.

Specifically, the state-by-state reports show that most winners are struggling to implement new teacher-evaluation systems based at least in part on student

growth. Many also are navigating tricky waters in their relationships with local schools districts, which ultimately must make the Race to the Top plans work.

In addition, four states—Hawaii, Florida, Georgia, Ohio, and Tennessee—have seen turnover in the governor or chief state school officer's jobs since the grants were awarded in 2010, hampering implementation to varying degrees, the reports say.

Called to Account

The reports, reflecting first-year implementation of President Obama's signature education initiative, seem to indicate that Maryland, Massachusetts, and Ohio may be doing the best job at fulfilling their promises so far.

But the reports also provide ammunition for U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, who has vowed to hold Race to the Top winners to a tough standards in implementing their commitments.

He used their release to turn up the heat on New York, in particular. That state, which won \$700 million, is embroiled in legal and district battles over how to implement a 2010 law, enacted in the run up to Race to the Top, which created a new teacher-evaluation system partially based on student growth.

"New York made significant progress through Race to the Top over the last year, but has recently hit a roadblock that not only impedes Race to the Top but could threaten other key reform initiatives, as well," Duncan said in a statement released today. "New York has a chance to be a national leader or a laggard, and we are only interested in supporting real courage and bold leadership. Backtracking on reform commitments could cost the state hundreds of millions of dollars for improving New York schools."

Indeed, New York education chief John King [acknowledged](#) the state's precarious position in an interview with *Education Week's* Christina Samuels for an article this week.

"We are concerned about district capacity to execute on commitments they made on Race to the Top. We are concerned about being able to fulfill our state race to the top objectives," he said. Separately, New York Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo, in his state of the state speech last week, admitted the 2010 teacher-evaluation law didn't work.

Already, the department has indicated that Hawaii's grant is in big trouble. Federal officials have put the state on ["high-risk" status](#) and threatened to revoke the remaining \$70 million or so of its \$75 million Race to the Top grant.

But today, Duncan commended the state for reaching [some sort of agreement](#) with its teachers' union that's supposed to help.

Details remain sketchy about the agreement and how it would help jump-start the teacher-evaluation plans that put the grant at risk. Hawaii officials couldn't be reached for comment yesterday. Still, Duncan said in a statement: "The recent collective bargaining agreement will play a critical role in making Hawaii's education reform plan possible."

Duncan also clearly thinks Florida has gone off track, though the Sunshine State seems to be in better shape than New York and Hawaii.

"In year one, Florida made a great deal of progress but also experienced some serious setbacks," Duncan said. "As Florida moves further into year two, we will be looking to them to demonstrate unwavering commitment and continued collaboration to ensure that their work gets back on track."

Florida officials, however, don't characterize their setbacks as "serious" and say they have met new contracting deadlines. What's more, Pam Stewart, the K-12 chancellor for the Florida Department of Education, said in an interview last night she's confident the state can still meet its ambitious goals by the time the four-year grant runs out—and points to the good work accomplished so far, such as in implementing new teacher evaluations (which so many other states have struggled with).

As far as the contracting process, "we did not execute everything in Year One that we had hoped," she said. "It is a lengthy process, it makes it a good process."

State by State

Some highlights of the big challenges states have faced, as outlined in the reports:

- **Delaware:** The state, which won \$120 million in the first round, was forced into a one-year delay in using its new teacher-evaluation system to inform personnel decisions. Delaware also had problems reconciling what the local districts perceive their needs and commitments are under Race to the Top with what the state thinks those needs and commitments really are.
- **District of Columbia:** The District experienced significant challenges with staffing the grant, worth \$75 million. The report indicates that multiple people have been responsible for administering the grant, each person for fewer than six months. No one who actually worked on the grant is helping administer it now for the District. Delays particularly hampered its school turnaround work.
- **Florida:** The state has budgeted nearly every penny (98 percent) of its \$700 million grant for contracts, and has struggled to issue them in a timely manner. Many first-year activities have been delayed at least a year because of this.

- **Georgia:** Six of the state's largest school districts experienced leadership challenges, hampering implementation of the \$400 million grant. Although the state experienced typical timeline delays, it was further hampered by the fact that state officials did not update and push back those timelines when they submitted their application in the second round of grants. The timelines were the same as in the state's losing Round 1 application.
- **Massachusetts:** The state, which won \$250 million, experienced trouble finding high-quality employees and vendors to do its data-system work.
- **Maryland:** Recommendations for a statewide teacher-evaluation system, made by a state task force, were delayed six months. The state won \$250 million.
- **North Carolina:** The state, rather than a contractor, will implement a new teacher corps program, delaying that program by a year. In addition, a new instructional improvement system is delayed, as is a program to expand virtual courses in math and science in low-performing schools. North Carolina won \$400 million.
- **New York:** The state faces a big challenge in getting its 715 districts to implement teacher-evaluation plans via new labor contracts.
- **Ohio:** Staff hiring delays delayed the rollout of the kindergarten-readiness assessment pilot. The number of participating school districts dropped to 478 from 538, primarily because some districts were going to get small grants. The state won \$400 million.
- **Rhode Island:** The state, which won \$75 million, faced challenges in supporting its low-performing schools and in implementing a high-performing charter schools initiative.
- **Tennessee:** The time it took to fill key leadership positions meant delays in timelines and problems providing capacity to support local districts. Tennessee won \$500 million in the first round of competition.