

THE SUN

Maryland wins Race to the Top funds

State to receive \$250 million for schools

By Liz Bowie, The Baltimore Sun

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Maryland will receive \$250 million in federal grants as a winner in the Race to the Top competition, which is aimed at transforming schools across the country, officials said today.

The U.S. Department of Education allocated \$3.4 billion to the competition, and awards to the winners ranged from \$75 million to \$700 million. Winners announced today included Washington, D.C., Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Ohio and Rhode Island.

"These states show what is possible when adults come together to do the right thing for children," U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said in a prepared statement. "Every state that applied showed a tremendous amount of leadership and a bold commitment to education reform. The creativity and innovation in each of these applications is breathtaking."

Maryland schools secretary Nancy S. Grasmick received confirmation of the award this morning, at a meeting of the state board of education.

Amid the suspense over the awards, Grasmick briefly left the meeting and went into her office. When she returned, she said, "I have unofficial word" — triggering applause from board members and others at the meeting.

She did not discuss the matter further, except to say, "I am happy." Board Chairman James H. DeGraffenreidt, Jr., responded, "We will wait until the appointed hour so that you can express yourself fully."

Later, she received official confirmation from the office of Gov. Martin O'Malley.

In the past year state education officials and lawmakers have changed the rules governing teacher tenure and evaluations, adopted a new set of standards for what will be taught in the classroom, agreed to overhaul failing schools and pledged to develop a new system for collecting student data — all in hopes of winning the federal money.

Two states, Tennessee and Delaware, won in the early round announced this spring. Maryland was one of 18 states and the District of Columbia to be chosen as a finalist earlier this summer in the second round.

O'Malley and Grasmick went to Washington two weeks ago to be grilled on the 2,000 page application and try to persuade the department to give the state the money.

Maryland was considered somewhat of a dark horse in the competition

While other states had been busy preparing an application, Maryland had done little to position itself to be a likely winner. It was one of only a small number of states that decided not to file an application in the first round, but since then O'Malley and Grasmick pushed through legislation and the state board has voted unanimously on a number of reform measures considered rather to be in line with the Obama administration education agenda.

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