

Upcoming Opportunity

Race to the Top Applications for School Districts

The U.S. Department of Education's *Race to the Top - District Program (RTT-D)* is a unique opportunity for those concerned with improving student and learning supports to encourage districts not only to apply, but to pursue the development of a unified and comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students. (see <http://www.ed.gov/race-top/district-competition>)

Below we have excerpted from the Department's May 2012 announcement highlights to underscore how such work fits the application priorities.

Also, remember that we have a great many resources related to this -- see our website at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu> and click on the *Rebuilding Toolkit* in the left column.

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Excerpt from the U. S. Department of Education's announcement about the *Race to the Top applications for school districts*.

“...As proposed, applicants will be selected based on their vision and capacity for reform as well as a strong plan that provides classrooms and teachers with the resources to prepare students for college and career. Districts must effectively engage and collaborate with teachers, parents and outside organizations to create their plan and provide assistance to ensure a successful transition to proposed reforms. Plans will focus on transforming instruction so that it meets all students' learning abilities. Teachers will track and receive real-time data and information that helps them adapt their lessons and individualize instruction to accommodate the differences among their students.

The Race to the Top district-level competition will encourage transformative change within schools, targeted toward leveraging, enhancing, and improving classroom practices and resources. School leaders will have the ability and flexibility to strategize how best to use time, staff the school, and manage the school budget.

Teachers will have resources inside and outside the classroom that help them build on their talent and offer tools and ideas to improve their day-to-day work. School staff will work collaboratively to grow each teacher's instructional skillset by leveraging the support and skills of their colleagues. And all students will have equal access to high-quality learning materials inside and outside of class, be challenged to demonstrate learning before transitioning to new material, and know where he or she stands in a given subject based on performance data.

The proposal offers competitive preference to applicants that form partnerships with public and private organizations to sustain their work and offer services that help meet students' academic, social, and emotional needs, and enhance their ability to succeed....”

Note: The center at UCLA is co-directed by Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor and operates under the auspices of the School Mental Health Project, Dept. of Psychology, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1563 Phone: (310) 825-3634. Email: smhp@ucla.edu.

We think that the above statement provides a clear opportunity for working with district leadership to strengthen a unified and comprehensive system of learning support.

Here are a few more excerpts to focus on:

From the section entitled: *Competitive Preference Priority--Cradle-to-Career Results, Resource Alignment, and Integrated Services*
<http://www.ed.gov/race-top/district-competition/competitive-preference-priority>

“An applicant receives points under this priority based on the extent to which it integrates public and private resources to augment the schools' core resources by providing additional student and family supports, such as addressing the social-emotional, behavioral, and other needs of the participating students (as defined in this document), giving highest priority to those students in high-needs schools. A reform proposal does not need to be comprehensive, but could address a subset of these needs.

In determining the extent to which the applicant meets this priority, the Department will consider –

- (1) Whether the applicant has formed a coherent and sustainable partnership with public and private organizations, such as public health, after-school, and social service providers; businesses, philanthropies, civic groups, and other community-based organizations; early learning programs; and post-secondary institutions to support the plan described in Absolute Priority 1. The partnership must identify not more than 10 population-level desired results for students in the LEA or consortium of LEAs, which may span from cradle to career, that align with the applicant's proposal and reform strategy. The results must include both educational results and other education outcomes (e.g., children enter kindergarten prepared to succeed in school, children exit 3rd grade reading at grade level, and students graduate from high school college- and career-ready) and education and family and community results (e.g., students demonstrate social-emotional competencies, students are healthy, students feel safe at school and in their communities, students demonstrate career readiness skills through internship and summer job opportunities).
- (2) How the partnership would
 - i. track the selected indicator(s) that measure each result at the aggregate level for all children within the LEA or consortium, and at the student-level data for the participating students (as defined in this document);
 - ii. use the data to target its resources to improve results for each participating student (as defined in this document), with special emphasis on students facing significant challenges, such as students with disabilities, English learners, and students affected by impacts of poverty or family instability;
 - iii. develop a strategy to scale the model beyond the participating students (as defined in this document) to at least other high-needs students (as defined in this document) and communities in the region over time; and improve results over time;

- (3) How the partnership will enable, within participating schools (as defined in this document), the integration of education and other services (e.g., services that address social-emotional, behavioral, and other special needs) for participating students (as defined in this document).
- (4) How the partnership will build the capacity of staff in participating schools (as defined in this document) by providing them with tools and supports to –
 - i. assess the needs and assets of participating students that are aligned with the goals for improving the education and family and community results identified by the partnership;
 - ii. identify and inventory the needs and assets of the school and community that are aligned with the goals for improving the education and family and community results identified by the partnership;
 - iii. create a decision-making process and infrastructure to select, implement, and evaluate solutions that address the individual needs of participating students (as defined in this document) and support improved results;
 - iv. engage parents and families of participating students in both decision-making about solutions and in addressing student, family, and school needs; and
 - v. routinely assess the partnership's implementation progress and resolve challenges and problems.
- (5) The extent to which the applicant has established annual ambitious yet achievable goals and performance measures for the proposed population-level desired results for students.”

NOTE FROM THE CENTER: In many ways, this application parallels the federal *Promise Neighborhoods* program which stresses all children and youth having “access to great schools and strong systems of family and community support that will prepare them to attain an excellent education and successfully transition to college and a career.”

Given this, you will find helpful the Center’s brief report entitled: ***Pursuing Promise Neighborhoods: With or Without the Grant Program***
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/purpromneig.pdf>

This brief stresses the importance for grantees to use what has been learned about

- (1) rethinking and coalescing existing programs and services in order to develop a unified and comprehensive system
- (2) establishing an effective school, home, and community collaborative to weave together different funding streams, reduce redundancy, and redeploy available resources.

As design aids, prototypes are offered for a unifying intervention framework and for a school, home, and community collaborative infrastructure.

Finally, even if a district isn’t successful in its application for RTT-D, any locale, despite sparse dollars, can use available resources to begin developing a unified and comprehensive approach to addressing barriers to learning and teaching and re-engaging disconnected students.