



Hanna Skandera
Secretary-Designate

New Mexico
Public Education Department
300 Don Gaspar
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501-2786
www.ped.state.nm.us

Larry Behrens
Public Information Officer
505-476-0393
Larry.Behrens2@state.nm.us

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: December 6, 2012

New Mexico Awarded \$25 Million in Federal 'Race to the Top' Competition

SANTA FE – New Mexico's students are among the latest winners of the national 'Race to the Top' challenge. The U.S. Department of Education announced early Thursday the state will receive \$25 million in new funding as part of the award. Citing New Mexico's commitment to education reform and early learning, the U.S. Department of Education announced the award will be paid out over the next four years. New Mexico becomes one of only 14 states to receive the award as part of the early learning challenge portion of 'Race to the Top.'

"The commitment to reform for our students has again made New Mexico a national education leader," said Governor Susana Martinez. "This is just another example of the great things that happen when we put our students first and choose to invest in ensuring that our kids are prepared to read and succeed. We have worked diligently with the federal government to prioritize student achievement in education, and this sort of bipartisan cooperation – with Washington and within New Mexico – is what our children deserve from their leaders."

"Congratulations to Governor Martinez and state leaders for your work and dedication to providing children with a strong start to a high-quality education," said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. "Investing Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge resources to improve education quality and opportunity on the frontend will help more of New Mexico's children be successful in high school, higher education, and beyond."

New Mexico's application is a collaborative effort of the Public Education Department, the Children, Youth and Families Department and the Department of Health.

"This is another huge victory for our students and schools," said Public Education Department Secretary-Designate Hanna Skandera. "Every day we tell our students that challenges can be overcome and to never give up, we hope this award will provide everyone in our state with an example of what is possible."

“This is an amazing early Christmas gift for New Mexico’s children,” says CYFD Secretary Yolanda Deines, whose department funds early childhood programs. “We want to focus on increasing the quality of our early childhood programs, with an emphasis on sending kids to Kindergarten ready to learn. The funding will also help our efforts to improve access for children in under-served communities.”

This latest announcement is the second round of the ‘early learning’ version of the competition. Last year, New Mexico narrowly missed out the award when the state’s application received the 10th highest score in a round where the top 9 states received funding. The strength of the state’s 2011 application is the catalyst for New Mexico winning in this round.

Funds from the ‘Race to the Top’ grant will be focused on helping the state’s youngest students. New funding will allow the state to develop standards and alignment across many early childhood programs allowing for better student achievement both before and after Kindergarten.

Programs focusing on literacy for students from Pre-Kindergarten through 3rd grade will receive additional support as part of the award. The state could start to receive the new funds as early as February.