

Race to the Top Monthly Update

Race to the Top Program News

Maryland has entered the competition for a new federal Race to the Top (RTTT) grant program—this one aimed at improving early childhood education. On October 19, 2011 the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) submitted its proposal to the [Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Fund](#). The program is designed to narrow the school readiness gap for children in poverty, English Language Learners, and those with disabilities. Maryland's entrance into the latest RTTT competition meshes well with the State's other efforts to improve student performance and eliminate chronic achievement gaps. Maryland is eligible for \$50 million over four years. The decision about the awards will be announced in late December.

Higher Standards

This fall, all Maryland schools will have the opportunity to participate in online follow-up sessions to the [Educator Effectiveness Academies](#) that were held across the State this summer. The primary purpose for these follow-up sessions is to provide a forum to maintain the momentum generated from the Academies. There will be follow-up session focusing on school transition plans, English/Language Arts, Mathematics, and STEM. Each interactive session will build upon the information Academy participants received this summer, reviewing some material, reinforcing important concepts, and extending material as appropriate. The sessions will be recorded and placed on the [mdk12.org](#) website.

Robust Data

MSDE's [Division of Accountability, Assessment, and Data Systems](#) is making progress towards developing a number of educational dashboards as part of the RTTT grant. A dashboard is an on-line tool that provides users with a logical, easy-to-use presentation of information from the P12 Longitudinal Data System (LDS) that enables a user to look at the data in a variety of ways. In addition to the dashboards, online multi-media training modules will be rolled out to support meaningful use of the information in the P12 LDS.

Effective Educators

This month the seven Local Education Agencies (LEAs) that are piloting the new teacher and principal evaluation system had their first technical assistance meeting with consultants from the U.S. Department of Education's [Assessment and Accountability Comprehensive Center \(AACC\)](#). These monthly meetings provide LEAs with research-based assistance as they implement the new evaluation system in their schools. During the meetings, LEA representatives and AACC experts discussed questions and issues about student growth measures, focusing on the specific needs of each LEA.

Strategic Help for Struggling Schools

A key function of MSDE's [Breakthrough Center](#) is to develop collaborative relationships between the State, LEA, and community partners that support the work of the turnaround schools. Earlier this month, the Breakthrough Center established a partnership between Drew Freeman Middle School, a turnaround middle school in Prince George's County, the Suitland Family and Life Development Corporation, the National Science Foundation, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The goals of this partnership are to provide teacher professional development in [STEM](#) and promote science and mathematics learning through the development of STEM-related programs at the middle school.