

Ohio's Race to the Top: Myths vs. Facts

What is the national Race to the Top competition?

Race to the Top is a new, national, competitive education grant program with \$3.4 billion available for Phase 2 grants to states. All states are eligible to apply for funds to help local school districts and public charter schools improve: (1) college- and career-ready academic standards, (2) data systems for tracking progress and improving instruction, (3) teacher and principal effectiveness, and (4) performance among the lowest-performing schools.

How will students benefit from Race to the Top?

Student success is at the center of Ohio's work and four goals detail the benefit to students across the state. Ohio will:

- Improve the graduation rate by 0.5% a year.
- Reduce graduation rate gaps by 50% between underrepresented and majority students in participating districts and schools.
- Reduce performance gaps by 50% on national and state-wide assessments between underrepresented and majority students in participating districts and schools.
- Reduce the gap between Ohio and the best performing states in the nation by 50% on reading and mathematics proficiency as measured by national assessments.

❖ Myths vs. Facts

If Ohio receives a Race to the Top grant...

MYTH: Teacher and principal evaluations will be based solely on students' test scores.

FACT: Each participating LEA will develop its own teacher and principal evaluation systems that are rigorous, transparent and fair and that meet the criteria outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding (below):

"LEAs commit to adopting comprehensive evaluation systems and definitions of effective and highly effective teachers and principals which encompass multiple measures including student growth as one of multiple significant factors, and which are aligned with criteria established by the state. Recognizing the complexities of implementing new evaluation systems in a collective bargaining state, LEAs commit to designing revised evaluation systems, implementing pilots, and providing training, with full implementation within four years."

Ohio's Educator Standards Board is developing a model teacher evaluation framework that districts may choose to use or adapt based on local context. LEAs must include the use of value-added data as one factor when it is available from statewide assessments; however, it need not be the controlling factor in an evaluation. For grade levels and subjects where there are no statewide tests, LEAs will develop measures of student growth that can be incorporated into the evaluation systems. The existing Ohio Principal Evaluation System is currently being implemented in a number of districts across the state. It is anticipated that evaluation systems may vary from district to district as long as they are aligned with state criteria.

MYTH: Districts will be required to implement non-voluntary transfers.

FACT: Districts will be required to create and implement a plan that includes innovative strategies to ensure that students in high-poverty and high-minority schools have access to highly effective teachers. These strategies may include additional compensation, creating professional learning communities, and distributive leadership models. Placement of teachers in schools with high-poverty and high-minority students cannot be based solely on seniority. Districts must also implement recruitment and professional development strategies to increase the pool of effective teachers available in the LEA for hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas including mathematics, science, special education, English language learner programs, and teachers in other areas as identified by the LEA.

MYTH: Teachers will no longer be able to achieve tenure.

FACT: Teachers will continue to have the opportunity to achieve tenure status.

MYTH: Districts will be required to implement a state-mandated merit pay system.

FACT: Through RttT, districts may augment or otherwise revise compensation systems at the local level. Such changes must be made in collaboration with teachers and local unions. House Bill 1's new licensure career ladder provides a framework for lead teacher roles which may include additional compensation for teachers in such expanded roles. The decision on compensation systems remains with the LEAs.

MYTH: Ohio's educational system will become more "top down" and prescriptive.

FACT: ODE will not prescribe how LEAs will use RttT funds to implement reforms at the local level. Each LEA will develop a Final Scope of Work which will describe how the district will use RttT funds to support RttT initiatives. ODE envisions flexibility in local implementation as long as the commitments in the MOU are met.

MYTH: Some LEAs won't benefit from RttT because of the grant's allocation formula.

FACT: All participating school districts and community schools are guaranteed funds for participating. RttT funding allocations are based on Title I percentages. For Phase 2 of the grant application, Ohio has established a funding floor of \$100,000 for participating school districts and \$25,000 for participating community schools. These funds will come from the state's share of RttT funding. Any LEA whose Title I share would be less than these amounts will qualify for the funding floor. In addition, all participating districts will benefit from RttT related state and regional professional development, participation in the development of new program models and priority access to the state's instructional improvement system and data analysis reports.

MYTH: The RttT initiatives that districts implement will end when the four year grant period is over.

FACT: RttT funds will be used to accelerate implementation of House Bill 1 and system-wide change that will extend well beyond the four-year grant period. Education Secretary Arne Duncan has stated that the work will be relevant beyond RttT as a result of other grant opportunities including the Teacher Incentive Fund, School Improvement Fund and Investing in Innovation Fund. It is clear that RttT activities coordinate with and align to the work already taking place in Ohio under the School Improvement Grant and the Ohio Improvement Process. In fact, many of the RttT reforms under the Great Teachers and Leaders and Data Systems to Support Instruction categories will provide the necessary funds for addressing the reforms that are already required under H.B. 1 and are expected to be legislated under the reauthorization of ESEA. (See RttT/House Bill 1/ESEA Blueprint Alignment <http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDetail.aspx?Page=3&TopicRelationID=4&ContentID=82198&Content=84990>)

MYTH: MOU commitments will take precedence over local collective bargaining agreements.

FACT: Nothing in the state MOU is intended to waive or override any statutory or contractual rights or duties currently in local districts. Recognizing that some collective bargaining agreements may not currently align with the RttT Memorandum of Understanding, districts and unions commit to working collaboratively to address areas of RttT that differ from existing collective bargaining agreements through the collective bargaining process which may include additional Memoranda of Understanding between the LEA and the labor organization.

MYTH: Districts cannot "opt out" once they have signed on to participate.

FACT: By submitting an MOU, each LEA is demonstrating a commitment to fully participating in the state's RttT efforts. It is recognized that in some cases, irreconcilable issues may arise between the differing LEA stakeholders. In such cases, the Ohio Department of Education will work with the LEA to attempt to resolve the issue. If the issue cannot be satisfactorily resolved, the LEA will be dropped from participating in RttT.

MYTH: Teachers will be fired/dismissed without due process.

FACT: Teachers will retain all due process rights currently provided under state law.