

August 16, 2011

EDUCATION WEEK

LOGIN | REGISTER | SUBSCRIBE

Get 2-Week FREE Trial >>

Sign Up for FREE E-Newsletters

Current Issue

TOPICS

BLOGS

REPORTS & DATA

EVENTS

DISCUSSIONS

OPINION

MULTIMEDIA

EDUCATION WEEK ONLINE

Get 3 Months of Premium Online Access Only \$19.97!

START NOW.

EDUCATION WEEK ONLINE

Get 3 Months of Premium Online Access Only \$19.97!

START NOW.

Education Week's blogs > Politics K-12

See our Schools & Stimulus coverage

Politics K-12

Your education road map

Michele McNeil covered education and state government in Indiana for a decade before joining *Education Week* as a state policy reporter in June 2006. Alyson Klein, who reports on federal education policy, joined the staff in February 2006 after nearly two years at *Congress Daily*.



Michele McNeil

Alyson Klein

[« Get Your NEA Convention Fix](#) | [Main](#) | [Ed. Dept. Warns States It Will Enforce 'Broken' NCLB](#) >>

New Race to Top Stresses Pre-K Tests, Early Ed. Program Ratings

By [Michele McNeil](#) on July 1, 2011 12:01 AM | [46 Comments](#) | [1 Recommendation](#)

To win a grant in the U.S. Department of Education's new Race to the Top competition for early-childhood education aid, states will have to develop rating systems for their programs, craft appropriate standards and tests for young children, and set clear expectations for what teachers should know.

That's according to the proposed rules released today by the Obama administration that will govern the \$500 million competition, which was made possible by the [fiscal 2011 budget deal](#) Congress passed in April.

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan was given **\$700 million in new Race to the Top money**, and chose to put most of it into early education, while keeping a \$200 million slice to award to runners-up from last year's competition. (Details of that separate contest have yet to be announced.)

The Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge awards will range from \$50 million to \$100 million, depending on a state's population, and the contest is open to all states, not just the winners in last year's competition. This could be especially attractive for small states, which were eligible for maximum grants of \$75 million in the first edition of Race to the Top. For big states, \$100 million won't go as far; the biggest states in the original Race to the Top won \$700 million each. For this early-learning competition, four states—California, Florida, New York, and Texas—are eligible for \$100 million.

In crafting this new iteration of Race to the Top, the Obama administration is building upon the success of last year's \$4 billion competition, which pushed states to embrace charter schools, merit pay for teachers, and better data systems. This competition is designed to improve the quality of and access to early-childhood programs, and to eliminate some of the "vast inequities" in care, said Special Assistant to the President for Education in the White House Domestic Policy Council Roberto Rodriguez, speaking in a call with reporters Thursday afternoon.

219
Tweet

ARCHIVES

Select a Month...

RECENT COMMENTS

msndis : If the kids come to school knowing how to read, wh [read more](#)

RECENT ENTRIES

[Ed. Dept. Gives Montana Deadline to Comply With NCLB](#)

[GOP Proposes Unprecedented Flexibility in Ed. Spending](#)

[Kline Talks Flexibility Bill, Says It Won't Be Bipartisan](#)

[Kline Unhappy With Duncan's Lack of Details on NCLB Waivers Plan](#)

[Ed. Dept. to Create Up to 6 Promise Neighborhoods](#)

[An NCLB Showdown in Montana?](#)

[Kline: No Response from Ed. Department on Waiver Letter](#)

[Ed. Dept. Warns States It Will Enforce 'Broken' NCLB](#)

[New Race to Top Stresses Pre-K Tests, Early Ed. Program Ratings](#)

[Get Your NEA Convention Fix](#)

CATEGORIES

[Arne Duncan \(160\)](#)

[Barack Obama \(147\)](#)

[Campaign 2012 \(12\)](#)

[Campaign Ads \(7\)](#)

[Civil Rights \(8\)](#)

[Advisers \(10\)](#)

FOLLOW THIS BLOG

[RSS via Reader](#)

[RSS via Email](#)

[Follow on TWITTER](#)

Advertisement

EDUCATION WEEK ONLINE

Get Premium Access Now!



Start Your One Month Risk-Free Trial.

"We believe this Race to the Top can have the same kind of impact," Rodriguez said. "How do we really do more to boost the quality of our early-learning programs?"

Under the competition guidelines developed by the Education Department—working with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services—a winning state must:

- Come up with and use early-learning and development standards for children, along with assessments;
- Develop and administer kindergarten-readiness tests, and develop rating systems for early-education programs;
- Demonstrate cooperation across the multiple agencies that touch early-childhood issues (from departments of health to education), and establish statewide standards for what early-childhood educators should know;
- Have a good track record on early learning, and an ambitious plan to improve those programs;
- Make sure early learning and prekindergarten data is incorporated into its longitudinal data system.

(And no, states do not have to develop pay-for-performance plans for early childhood teachers—which was an important component in the first Race to the Top competition.)

In a nod to rural districts and advocates, who often **feel overlooked** by the department, the Obama administration says it may go out of its way to reward states with large rural populations, potentially bypassing a higher-scoring urban state in favor of lower-scoring rural state.

Just as in the original Race to the Top, this competition will rely on outside judges to pick the winners. But the ultimate decision rests with Duncan.

Because the department has to get these awards out the door by the end of this year, officials have waived the typical rulemaking process. But they are asking for input. The public can comment on the proposed criteria through July 11.

Applications will be available in late summer, and awards will be made by the end of the year. States will have until Dec. 31, 2015 to spend their winnings.

Categories: [Arne Duncan](#), [Race to the Top](#)

Tags: [early education](#), [Race to the Top](#)

Recommend | Print | Email | BOOKMARK | | |

Recommend this Story (1)

You must be logged in to leave a comment. [Login](#) | [Register](#)

- Congress (136)
- Debates (23)
- Democratic Convention (29)
- Democrats (8)
- ED in '08 (21)
- ESEA (33)
- Ed Department News (12)
- Federal Budget (58)
- Federal Stimulus (136)
- Hillary Clinton (28)
- Inauguration (3)
- Joe Biden (8)
- John McCain (52)
- Mike Huckabee (15)
- Mitt Romney (12)
- No Child Left Behind (87)
- Personnel File (18)
- Prekindergarten (6)
- Race to the Top (15)
- Reading List (14)
- Republican Convention (23)
- Sarah Palin (12)
- State Races (39)
- Teachers' Unions (60)
- Transition (47)
- Transparency Watch (6)
- Vouchers (24)

RISK-free Trial.

TopSchoolJobs

Director to lead Education Management Organization (EMO)
Collaborative for Educational Services, Northampton, MA

Multiple Positions
The Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, RI

[MORE EDUCATION JOBS >>](#)
[POST A JOB >>](#)



ADVERTISER LINKS

[Coupons - Coupon Codes&Deals](#)

[Investing IQ From Fisher Investments](#)

MOST VIEWED ON EDUCATION WEEK

- [Judge Blocks Colorado District's...](#)
- [Digital Education Blog: ACLU Files...](#)
- [Chicago Community Group Breaks Down...](#)
- [High-Tech Teaching in a Low-Tech...](#)
- [Living in Dialogue Blog: GOP Candidates...](#)

30 comments Sort by: Oldest to Newest

	<p>TonyC Score: 0</p> <p>12:32 AM on July 1, 2011</p> <p>No more tests! Especially not for 4 year old children.</p>	 Report Abuse
	<p>Rama Schneider Score: 0</p> <p>6:23 AM on July 1, 2011</p> <p>'tests for young children' ... really???</p> <p>Once upon a time, a long time ago in a now lost and forgotten land little children were encouraged to play and explore (with some adult oversight). Then one day an evil witch/warlock came by with a bright shiny test that made a whole bunch of money for some</p>	 Report Abuse

corporation somewhere ... and WHOOPS ...
there went childhood.

This whole testing regime is a disease that afflicts
all too many well intentioned people.



raceangel8138

Score: 0

9:37 AM on July 1, 2011

Seriously? Now they want to kill the little ones
with testing too? Can we get someone in charge
of crafting education policy who is not in the
pocket of the testing companies? This is just
getting ridiculous.



Luria Learning

Score: -1

9:45 AM on July 1, 2011

We need to make sure kids enter K knowing how
to count and the letters of the alphabet. When I
taught K I have many students who could not
count five things a d did not know a single letter.

Here is a video of partner reading with pre K
students.

<http://luria-learning.blogspot.com/2011/06/daily-5-and-literacy-cafe-video.html>

Sacha

<http://luria-learning.blogspot.com>

2 replies



Marian Cruz

Score: 0

12:03 PM on July 1, 2011

I am very concerned about this emphasis on
testing Kindergarten children. When I think of
my children and what they were expected to
achieve in Kindergarten, I shutter to think what
affect this would have on them.

These are very young children that should be
allowed to socialize, have meaningful literature
read to them, music and art as the primary part
of their day.

I question what companies that make these tests
have on this decision. Way too much testing
going on and not near enough time for real
meaningful learning that expands their ability to
think and make sound choices.



ShannonH

Score: 0

12:08 PM on July 1, 2011

If everyone would take a breath for a moment -
assessment doesn't necessarily mean 'test'.
Assessment can easily, and should, be watching
students to exhibit criteria specific behaviors
during an activity.

2 replies





Greg Graham

Score: 1

12:16 PM on July 1, 2011

Wow, it looks like neither side of the aisle understands the proper approach to education. We're going from bad to worse. I know a couple who just returned from a year teaching in South Korea, the supposed model for education. According to this couple, who taught the elite in South Korea, besides an incredibly unhealthy family/social life, these children have incredibly poor critical thinking skills, as well as a lack of good ole common sense. They are relentlessly drilled to be able to answer questions on tests. IS THAT OUR GOAL? I'd rather seek to produce better human beings who know how to explore, discover, and THINK. Please, is there not a politician alive who will articulate these values that our mothers taught us?!?

<http://gxgraham.wordpress.com/>



Report Abuse



atemkin

Score: 0

12:24 PM on July 1, 2011

Have they lost their minds? With all their gab about need for innovation, creativity, teamwork and communications skills, it is unbelievable to me how Obama is missing the point of how to get there. God bless our country's children because we are giving them no help for their future at all.



Report Abuse



cinthia

Score: -1

12:25 PM on July 1, 2011

Thank goodness. Now we can identify the children who will need our help most, early on before it is to late and they either require an IEP or end up dropping out of high school. Thank you Race to the TOP!

[2 replies](#)



Report Abuse



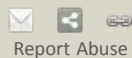
Carrie Cook

Score: 0

12:49 PM on July 1, 2011

So, if the testing is really only observing with anecdotal notes while preschoolers interact, together, in a natural and authentic environment, then...yes, we can evaluate young minds. It must be kept social, engaging, and as authentic as possible to every day action and not paper/pencil testing. Can't wait to see the "plans" for testing and in the mean time we have got to get a hold of Mr. Duncan.

Also, no criteria for parental/community education towards early learning? The money should work at trying to bridge the gap between schools and the home life in order to reach the youngest of learners.



Report Abuse



"Old" Teacher

Score: 1

1:06 PM on July 1, 2011

What are these people smoking? Lets work on



Report Abuse

making sure children come to schools from families that have enough food, clothes, jobs and medical care. That parents are encouraged to pay attention to their children, that parents CAN read to them. Bring us children who understand that they are responsible for their actions and they need to play nice, share, learn the the alphabet, and do what the teacher tells them to do.

Hire professionals and let them do their job!
Testing babies is ridiculous.



[speakingofeducation](#)

Score: 0

1:41 PM on July 1, 2011

Yes, testing pre-Kiindergarten children sounds nightmarish. This is particularly problematic since it seems unclear what exactly happens with the test and its results.

If a child tests as 'not ready,' what will happen?
If a child tests as 'not ready in numbers,' will there be remediation?

In my middle school we can't do anything that smacks of the dreaded tracking, but so much testing so early raises the specter of just this.

We seem to be pushing in all directions at once, and we call the shapelessness "direction."

<http://speakingofeducation.blogspot.com/>



[Reading 101](#)

Score: -1

2:32 PM on July 1, 2011

Some of this is good,some is bad.

Teacher knows within 8 weeks who is struggling;sadly,the money will go to more tests. Intervention is the key.and what is not made apparent here but is very true is that proper instruction based on the 'Reading First"model prevents a lot of the mess.

I also like multisensory instruction in phoneme grapheme instruction after we teach the sounds and shapes of letters;whole language has left all this out. and develops critical thinkers that can't read and spell!



[Doug McRae](#)

Score: 0

2:35 PM on July 1, 2011

The notion that any Pre-K "tests" would be used for any accountability purposes is nothing short of extremely poor public policy, failing to take into account what Pre-K "tests" attempt to measure. Pre-K "tests" do not generally attempt to measure academic achievement, but rather try to measure "readiness" for differing academic or pre-academic tasks, and are very heavily influenced by individual student developmental factors which evolve with great variability for differing kids. Pre-K "tests" typically involve teacher observations of various behaviors, rather than any kind of paper and pencil data collection. While using such "tests" for individual student diagnosis and readiness



purposes can be justified, any aggregate data for program evaluation or accountability purposes would be highly suspect and/or simply just lousy education policy. Doug McRae, Former Test Publisher (now retired)

2 replies



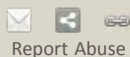
[kimmichiganteacher](#)

Score: 0

4:52 PM on July 1, 2011

I'm a teacher and mom of twin boys going into 3rd grade in the fall. I'm so sick of all this testing crap. Seriously, sometimes I wish we could go back to the Little House on the Prairie school house days and educate our kids without the interference of the government on a daily basis (yeah, yeah, now I'm expecting the "world economy" and "technology" rebuttals...it's MY wish, let me have it!). My kids WERE kids up until Kindergarten - carefree, loved playing, loved getting dirty, loved discovering things without "official" teaching or pressure by me. Yes, I put them in preschool (kind of by peer pressure - wasn't going to). No, I did not teach them their letters or numbers before Kindergarten (no offense to the previous poster that suggested this) - I feel that is one of the teacher's jobs - and remember, I AM a teacher! Both boys are doing fine in school - both acquire skills at their own pace (one at what is defined as "grade level pace", the other one "behind" - oh wait, yes, they are different kids so thats OK).

1 reply



[mypassion](#)

Score: 0

4:53 PM on July 1, 2011

Come up with and use early-learning and development standards for children,

Standards have already been set. Just check out the song Big School. When I go to the Big School...kindergarten...this is what I should know...so teach me before I go. All of the standards are in the song. Therefore, parents will know what their children should know before entering kindergarten. The CD that this song is on is called Teach Me How to Read...So I Can Succeed. Go to amazon.com or www.readtomeamerica.com

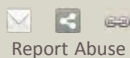


[mso1](#)

Score: 0

5:52 PM on July 1, 2011

Those of us who have been in education or had kids or grandkids know that most all come to kindergarten and first grade excited, enthusiastic learners. If you have watched a true Montessori class, you really get this. By the time many kids in public school reach 4th or 5th grader, they are turned off to school. Learning has lost any meaning, and is replaced by teaching to the tests, because that's how the teacher or school is measured.



What we need to test is the readiness of Arne Duncan and legislators to make good decisions about what is best for children. It truly is a Race to Nowhere.
- Peter Smyth. Teacher and administrator, parent and grandparent.

 1 reply



paulhoss@hotmail.com

Score: 0

6:15 AM on July 2, 2011

Before too many get their shorts in a bunch about this, testing here should be construed as a screening process, to see which youngsters are or are not ready for kindergarten. For those who are ready, good; those not ready, what do we need to do to get them ready. Some of the more rational comments above recognize the importance of this concept with the knee jerk anti-testing reaction so many espouse.

The other good thing about this new round of RttT is again, it's a competition, just like so many things in our lives and our culture. No one will receive the money just because it's there like with so many previous federal and/or state programs. States will have to work to earn this money, which I believe is a good thing.

The NEA needs to stop assigning their so many of their moonbats to these columns to post negative comments about the new direction from the federal government for our schools. Does anyone really believe Barack Obama would want anything but the absolute best for our children, especially the poorest and neediest from our midst?

 3 replies



Report Abuse

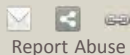


[balt city mom](#)

Score: 0

12:12 PM on July 2, 2011

as a mom with two school-age kids in baltimore city, i see how unprepared many students are for kindergarten, especially those from households that are economically disadvantaged or where english is not the primary language. it sounds as if the tests would simply be an assesment of what skills need to be emphasized and where intervention may be needed, such as reading, where to postpone a crucial benchmark such as that for even a few years would prove to be detrimental to the child's academic success and self-confidence. let's face it--the more money poured into education now the less we'll have to pour into prisons later on.



Report Abuse

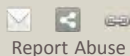


[Nancy Illing MS MEd](#)

Score: 0

4:47 PM on July 2, 2011

How about we put the money into nutrition and health care for families. Head Start has had wonderful success by focusing on families and helping families to better themselves. Simply



Report Abuse

expanding Head Start instead of cutting it would go a long way to close the achievement gap.

I feared this day all of my career, the day we put preschoolers into public schools. Well we did put them into special education in public schools at the age of three back in the 1970's. So far so good until NCLB.

Just as kindergarten chucked the blocks and games for reading and math, preschool will start to look like first grade.

Early Intervention yes, testing NO.

 1 reply



[dasein](#)

Score: 0

7:03 PM on July 2, 2011

If it's NOT a standardized test, it's essentially worthless.

If it IS a standardized test, it's detrimental.

Kids need at that level to learn LIFE lessons, without which, they'll have a difficult time with SCHOOL lessons.

Haven't standardized test in the K-12 system pointed to the major problem being in the middle and high school areas? What's the point or accomplishment in doing something like this? Is there no safe haven left for growing up?

  
Report Abuse



[Yvonne Siu-Runyan](#)

Score: 0

2:56 PM on July 3, 2011

What? Oh my goodness...this is insane.

Yes, they have lost their minds. Answer: Their minds are where the money is. Follow the money.

This goes against everything we know about early childhood education.

  
Report Abuse




[egidseg](#)

Score: 0

11:30 AM on July 4, 2011

At what point will the government realize that its policies are working against all that we stand for as a nation? If we want to prepare young people for an active role in a democratic society we can't do that by forcing them all into the same little educational "boxes" by way of testing. We need thinkers and doers, not sheep, in order to keep our democratic society alive. If we spent these funds on alleviating poverty they would be going a long way towards leaving no child behind. As it is, our government is not of, by and for the people...only SOME people.

 1 reply

  
Report Abuse



[Educate For A Change](#)

Score: 0

2:38 PM on July 4, 2011

  
Report Abuse

Ok... here's the scariest part of this whole deal...

- Come up with and use early-learning and development standards for children, along with assessments;

DEVELOPMENT Standards???? You mean now we're going to start labeling children as defective if they fall in the bottom 50 %-ile for development???? Anyone with half a brain can figure out where this leads to, 20 or 30 years down the road.

For real solutions: www.educateforachange.com



Spaceknight711

Score: 0

2:49 PM on July 4, 2011

I cannot stand to read this article. I stopped after the first 2 paragraphs.

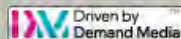
Please don't do this to our kids. They will suffer and we will all pay a terrible price for their loss of innocence and curiosity these tests crush.

I will be protesting in front of my local city hall that day of the Washington DC rally for Save our Schools at the end of July. Please, encourage everyone who feels our schools are being endangered by testing companies trying to make a buck to do the same, if they cannot attend in DC.

<http://www.saveourschoolsmarch.org/>

Report Abuse

Next ▶



Ground Rules for Posting

We encourage lively debate, but please be respectful of others. Profanity and personal attacks are prohibited. By commenting, you are agreeing to abide by our [user agreement](#). All comments are public.

ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT

- Register or Subscribe
- Online Account
- Print Subscription
- Manage E-Newsletters/ Preferences
- Site Licenses

CONTACT US

- Help/FAQ
- Customer Service
- Editor Feedback
- Letters to the Editor

ABOUT US

- Staff
- Work@EPE

POLICIES

- User Agreement
- Privacy
- Reprints

ADVERTISE WITH US

- Display Advertising
- Recruitment Advertising

CONNECT WITH US

- RSS Feeds
- Free E-Newsletters
- Follow Us on Twitter
- Join Us on Facebook
- Join Us on LinkedIn

EDUCATION WEEK PUBLICATIONS

- Education Week
- Teacher
- Digital Directions
- Teacher PD Sourcebook
- TopSchoolJobs