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States Continue Progress During Second Year of Race to the Top

Today the U.S. Department of Education released Race to the Top state progress reports for seven states that received grants in the third round of the program: Colorado, Kentucky, Louisiana, Arizona, New Jersey, Illinois and Pennsylvania. These reports capture the highlights of progress and obstacles that the states encountered during the second year of implementation, from January-December 2013.

“Race to the Top has inspired and empowered local leaders and educators across the country to develop innovative education reform plans and put them into action,” said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. “In the second year of this particular set of Race to the Top grants, states have made important steps toward providing better resources, tools and feedback for teachers to help expand opportunities for all students to be successful in college and careers.”

It is important to note that the year two reports demonstrate a snapshot in time—the progress that states made during that year. A number of states have continued to take steps in the past few months, since the data was collected, to address the challenges that arose during that year and expand upon the progress they have made. The reports detail the progress that each state has made against the plan that its local leaders developed, and states can only be compared to the benchmarks they have committed to in their plans, not to each other.

The Department's Implementation and Support Unit (ISU) has partnered with states to track progress and provide feedback as they continue large-scale reform. Where states encountered delays and challenges, the ISU worked with them on adjustments to help move the work forward, while holding states accountable to their commitments. ISU officials will continue to provide annual updates about states' progress under Race to the Top.

The Race to the Top program, which made its first awards in 2010, has provided 24 states and D.C. with about \$5 billion through three phases of the flagship competition and over \$1 billion to support 20 states during the three rounds of the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge. In 2012 the Department launched the first Race to the Top-District program, which has now funded 21 applicants in two rounds of the competition—representing 80 school districts across 21 states and D.C.—with over \$500 million to support locally developed plans that will prepare every student to succeed in college and their careers. The Department's fiscal year 2015 budget request includes \$300 million for a new Race to the Top-Equity and Opportunity competition to create incentives and provide resources for states and school districts to address persistent opportunity

and achievement gaps. RTT-Opportunity builds on previous Race to the Top competitions and strategies to close gaps for high-need students.

For more information about the Race to the Top program, and to review the state-specific year two reports, visit: <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html>.

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