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Oregon gets huge buy-in for its Race to the Top plan

By **Betsy Hammond, The Oregonian**
January 19, 2010, 2:51PM



Associated Press

U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan and President Barack Obama talked up their Race to the Top initiative at a Virginia elementary school today.

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan made it crystal clear today that two big factors will determine which few states will win a share of his **\$4 billion Race to the Top fund** this spring:

How bold the innovations a state proposes *and* how large and unified the coalition committed to making the innovations happen.

It's unclear how Oregon will stack up on the first criterion. But the application, submitted today by **Gov. Ted Kulongoski** and state schools

Superintendent Susan Castillo, shows Oregon has it in spades on that second factor.

The big victory for architects of Oregon's application is their success in **getting the state teachers union to sign on**. Fewer than 28 states have the full support of their state union, so it's no accident the **Oregon Education Association** is placed first on the list of enthusiastic supporters for Oregon's plan.

But the list runs for three pages and spans the gamut, from the Republican leaders of the state House and Senate to the state PTA and school boards association to national figures such as the National Council of La Raza and the **education leadership program at Harvard University**.

Also lending support to Oregon's bid for the national award: Intel, Nike, **Oregon's charter school association**, **the state's biggest test developer** and the leaders of the state university system.

And then there are the 93 Oregon school districts that signed on to take part, including **Portland, Beaverton, Hillsboro** and North Clackamas. Statewide, three-fourths of schools, serving 77 percent of Oregon students, are in.

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three tenths of schools, serving 77 percent of Oregon students, are in

Duncan's comments today said that huge sign-on bodes well. Forty states applied, and most will lose in the first round, he said. Winners will be announced in April.

"We will be investing in states where all the adults there are working together. We want to invest in places that are collaborating and have a collective willingness to challenge the status quo," he said.

States that get a lot of buy-in by watering down the proposals won't win, however, he said.

"This is not a race to the middle. This is a race to the top. We are convinced we are going to have a set of states that are able to push a very strong reform agenda and also get all the adults working together."

- **Betsy Hammond**

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Posted by **The Daredevil**
January 19, 2010, 3:29PM

Why didn't you provide links to Intel, Nike, National Council of La Raza & Republican in your story? Seems biased.

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Posted by **betsyhammond**
January 19, 2010, 3:44PM

Excellent question!
I provided links to organizations for which I did not provide the proper name, such as Northwest Evaluation Association, the Northwest Center for Education Options or the Harvard Graduate School of Education Doctoral Program in Education Leadership. (I left out their proper names because I thought readers might not be familiar with them or because their names are too darn long.) I did not provide links for Intel, Nike or La Raza because I figured readers know about them already or can easily Google them to learn more, since I provided the correct name.
To be honest, it's also a time management issue (maybe another term for that is laziness). I have other tasks to start, so I don't provide every link possible. Do readers really click through on them?

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Posted by **obamasarmy**
January 19, 2010, 3:50PM

Unions signing up to exploit more money? I can believe this; must be a misprint.

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Posted by **The Daredevil**
January 19, 2010, 3:51PM

Thank you for your answer. Some do. Some readers research things, too.

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Posted by **Resistol**
January 19, 2010, 4:03PM

"Unions signing up to exploit more money? I can believe this; must be a misprint."

You need to move to Texas. Gov. Rick Perry refuses to participate... he says it's all a Federal plot against the state. You two would get along perfectly... two peas in an anti-government pod.

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Posted by **shallowender**
January 21, 2010, 10:59AM

You mean the guy who is trying to deal with a \$10 Billion shortfall for the year and blames it on all the minimum wage jobs that he "created"?

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Posted by **beavswin**
January 19, 2010, 4:25PM

Gee, I thought we had already "reformed" education with the CIM/CAM scam. We aren't at the top yet?

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Posted by **arresteddevt**
January 19, 2010, 4:38PM

Resistol,
You're going to let Washington, DC (more big government) run Oregon education? Be careful for what you ask for, you might get it.

From the Houston Chronicle (what is not printed in The Oregonian):
[Perry said last week that Texas wouldn't compete for up to \$700 million available in the "Race to the Top" fund because the state would lose autonomy in educating children.]

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Posted by **Resistol**
January 19, 2010, 5:00PM

Arrested development:
Yeah. What I said.
Do you know why the Feds are involved in education to begin with? Hint:
Think color. Think poverty.

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Posted by **rykats**
January 19, 2010, 5:29PM

I love the concept that teachers will be fired, removed for poor student scores on tests. I even like the idea that teachers can earn bonus money for doing a great job, but it should be "significantly" great--beyond reasonable expectations for pay received to start with. Unfortunately, we know change will never happen. Administrators will protect their old pals in the classrooms. The tenured faculty will avoid removal by taking a district office job. It's like any other profession, friends and colleagues look out for each other. Teaching is no different. But the new teachers will be targets and scapegoats. These promising stars will be chewed up in a system that will do very little to support them. Newbies and subs will take the blame--out they'll go! Meanwhile, administrators and old-timers will make excuses, print bogus studies and policies that do and say nothing to address the real problems--clearly. Chairs on the Titanic will be shuffled again. This is an endless cycle. Taxpayers take a punch in the gut again. What a waste. The system is corrupt.

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Posted by **obamasarmy**
January 19, 2010, 5:40PM

A girl I know wrote gullible on the ceiling of her school. She kept telling people that the word was written on the ceiling.

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Posted by **baddogcarl**
January 19, 2010, 5:48PM

These comments/questions:

1. Big Coalition! What have they committed to doing, exactly?
2. How many School Districts (the ones that actually have to do something) submitted MOU's by the deadline?
3. What in the application qualifies as a bold innovation? Tracking test scores by teacher? It's toothless enough that the union agreed to it, probably doesn't

register on the 'bold' meter!

It's very disappointing that the Charter Association would support this. It's amazing what people will do in order to try to buy a seat at the table for the next conversation.

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Posted by **bpeterson1931**

January 20, 2010, 9:35AM

Since the 1980s we have had a string of political and economic problems that have affected education. Rather than solve these underlying problems it appears that we are going to pour money into the assessment business, and rely on Federal programs like Race To The Top (RT3). All forms of testing and assessment extract energy and money from the system. In connection with RT3, I would think that distributing Federal education funds based on competition as opposed to need would be unconstitutional. Also RT3 holds children hostage to the nature of a State's political characteristics and to any peculiarities in judging the competition. I would suggest that the first steps in fixing the system would be to insure that every teacher has appropriate sized classes, a first class educational environment, and a reasonable wage. For students I would recommend a TLC environment with proper nutrition, parents with jobs that provide a reasonable income for the hours worked, and a home not in foreclosure.

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