

Race to the Top FAQ's

(This document will be updated as need as more questions come in.)

What is Race to the Top?

The Race to the Top (RTTT) is a \$4.35 billion competitive grant program created by the federal government to encourage school districts and states to pursue education reform measures with four core ideas:

- Enhance standards and assessments
- Create and use data to improve instruction
- Increase effectiveness of teachers and administrators
- Turn around struggling schools

Why did PGCEA sign off on the RTTT application when other unions did not?

By signing the MOU with the State, PGCEA guarantees that our local voice and expertise will be heard. While there are many disagreements with portions of the grant framework, by signing we are given a seat at the table and the opportunity to help shape and develop the programs going forward. The state has made it clear that many of the reforms being proposed will be implemented with or without RTTT. Our position is that we would rather help shape it for our members than have it done to our members. Signing on has the potential to bring significant dollars to the State and to the County. In fact, Prince George's would be eligible for over \$21 million paid out over four years and that number is likely to go up. And lastly, our Board of Directors felt that we could not be viewed as standing in the way of reform. This district is the lowest performing district in the state at this time and the only school district in Maryland that is on corrective action. How could we say no?

Who signed on to Maryland's RTTT application?

22 of the Board's of Education in Maryland signed off on the RTTT application. Two did not; Montgomery and Frederick Counties. PGCEA and the Baltimore Teachers Union (Baltimore City) are the only local associations to sign the application.

If Prince George's County receives funds from the RTTT initiative, will we get a raise?

No. These funds would be used to pay for the initiatives and programs that are outlined in Maryland's RTTT application. But it also means general fund dollars would not be dedicated to designated reforms that may make funding available for other needs.

Does being a part of the RTTT process mean we are giving up our collective bargaining rights?

No. PGCEA has taken additional steps to protect our members against any negative repercussions from the process by developing a separate Memorandum of Understanding that will capture the bargaining

and work relationships required to enter into this type of work in a collaborative manner. The State's application also includes language that protects the collective bargaining rights of the local Associations.

Will RTTT replace our salary scale with a merit pay program?

No. While there is a performance pay program that is part of Maryland's RTTT application, it would not replace salary scales. Any incentive pay programs would have to be negotiated locally between PGCEA and PGCPs and would focus on hard staff schools and positions.

The tenure law changed because of the RTTT application. How am I affected?

As of July 1, 2010 all newly hired employees will have to complete three full years of satisfactory service to attain tenure. This will not affect teachers hired before July 1, 2010.

I hear my evaluation is going to be based on student achievement. How will the new evaluation system work?

New evaluation systems are expected to come online in the 2012-13 school year. New evaluation systems may be created locally and student achievement will be one of multiple measures of a teacher's effectiveness on their evaluation. Scores from standardized tests like the MSA's and HSA's will be factored in. The new evaluation system will be implemented regardless of whether or not the state is successful in winning the grant.

How will teachers who do not teach subjects with standardized tests be evaluated in regards to student achievement?

School districts will be charged with creating new assessments for use in measuring student growth in classes that currently do not have tests.

What happens if Maryland does not receive the RTTT grant?

Many of the reforms will be implemented regardless of success in the Race to the Top process. Some of these reforms were included in the Governor's Education Reform Act of 2010 that passed the General Assembly in April.

You can view Maryland's complete Race to the Top (RTTT) application at:

http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/race_to_the_top