

# *The Public School Forum's Friday Report*

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## **North Carolina Awarded \$400 Million Race to the Top Grant**

On Tuesday it was announced that North Carolina was one of nine states plus the District of Columbia that was awarded Race to the Top Grants in round two of the competition. The successful grant will mean that the State will receive \$400 million for use over a four year period of time.

Nineteen states and the District of Columbia competed for Race to the Top funds in the second round of the competition. In round one only Delaware and Tennessee received awards. Round two winners and the amount they will receive from the award include:

Massachusetts	\$250 Million
New York	\$700 Million
Hawaii	\$75 Million
Florida	\$700 Million
Rhode Island	\$75 Million
Washington D.C.	\$75 Million
Maryland	\$250 Million
Georgia	\$400 Million
North Carolina	\$400 Million
Ohio	\$400 Million

It should be noted that the size of the award was determined on the basis of the number of students served. New York and Florida were two of only three states that qualified for the largest amount of grant funding based on population; California, the third state in that category applied but was not successful in the round two competitions.

The final step in the application process was a face-to-face meeting with representatives from the finalist states and panels of grant reviewers in Washington D.C. Representing the state in that interview were Governor Beverley Perdue, State Superintendent June Atkinson, State Board Chairman Bill Harrison, NC State University faculty member Glenn Kleinman and the Executive Director of the NC Association of School Administrators Bill McNeal.

## NC Wins Race to the Top Competition (cont.)

Members of that team were correct in feeling that North Carolina had fared well in the second round competition. Numbers released by the U.S. Department of Education confirm that the state picked up substantially in round two.

NC Score in Phase One	NC Score in Phase Two	Score Change
414.0	441.6	+27.6

The competition has been arduous. A total of 46 states and the District of Columbia applied for the grants and the competition was keen. The Forum gives a tip of the hat to both the team that represented North Carolina in the final interview and to the dozens of people that worked to frame the final proposal.

See upcoming issues of the *Friday Report* for more detail on what winning the award will mean and how it might impact schools across the state.

## Charlotte Rated Among Best School Reform Cities

North Carolina's successful Race to the Top grant was not the only good news that arrived this week. A just-released study by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute ranked Charlotte among the top U.S. cities for school reform. The study examined the conditions for school reform in the nation's largest thirty cities and ranked them in areas ranging from human and financial capital, to quality control.

While no cities were rewarded an "A" grade in the rankings, nine, including Charlotte, earned a "B" under the Institute's ranking system. Charlotte came in sixth behind New Orleans, Washington D.C., New York City, Denver and Jacksonville, Florida. It should be noted that while the top three cities, New Orleans, D.C. and New York City, have launched major reform efforts, their student performance lags far behind that in Charlotte.

Pulling up the rear in the rankings are cities like Albany, New York, Philadelphia, Gary, Indiana and Detroit. The full study can be read by going to the Fordham Institute website at [www.edexcellence.net](http://www.edexcellence.net).

The report has this to say about Charlotte's high ranking: "Perhaps the biggest surprise on this list is Charlotte, long recognized as home to the accomplished Charlotte-Mecklenberg School District, but which has generally not been considered a mecca for outside entrepreneurs. Charlotte fared best in district support – illustrating how an effective and well-run district can help ensure that nontraditional problem-solvers get a fair hearing and are judged on results."

For the second time in one issue, the Forum gives a tip of the hat. This one goes to Charlotte-Mecklenberg Superintendent Peter Gorman and the team he has assembled plus the Charlotte-Mecklenberg School Board which has focused on creating quality schools for all of their children.

## President of Davidson College Chosen to Lead UNC System

Tom Ross, the current President of Davidson College, has been named the next President of the UNC System at a special meeting of the UNC Board of Governors held yesterday in Chapel Hill. His appointment ends a search process to replace outgoing UNC President Erskine Boyles that began in March.

Ross has been the President of Davidson College for three years. Prior to that he was the executive director of the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation. He has previously served as a Superior Court Judge and the director of the state Administrative Office of the Courts.

Ross is a native of Greensboro who earned his bachelor's degree from Davidson College and his law degree from UNC. He also previously taught at the UNC School of Government.

### Must Reading . . .

#### “Yes We Can: The Schott 50 State Report On Public Education and Black Males in 2010”

This week the Schott Foundation for Public Education issued an exhaustive study documenting the graduation and academic performance gaps between black and white male students. The Schott Foundation, based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, was founded in 1991 with the mission of ending inequities in education and working to support fully resourced schools. In recent years much of its work has focused on resource and performance inequities between schools serving large numbers of minority students and schools serving others.

Geoffrey Canada, President and CEO of the nationally recognized Harlem Children's Zone, wrote the foreword to the study which documents alarming disparities between black and white males. In his introduction to the study, Canada says:

“ . . . While this country's entire education system needs to be reformed, the schools serving poor minority children are in the most urgent need of reinvention. Their failure is literally destroying innocent lives. Disenfranchised youth cannot afford even one bad teacher – their families don't have the resources to compensate for that – yet they routinely get the short end of the stick year after year. . . Everything in my professional career has pointed to the fact that there is no reason that the same Black boys who are heading for prison cannot be heading for college and the workplace . . . it is the responsibility of the adults around them to turn those trajectories around. All of us must ensure that we level the playing field for the hundreds of thousands of the children who are at risk of continuing the cycle of generational poverty.”

## Must Reading . . .(cont.)

The data that follows underscores the urgency of Canada's message. In 2007/08 New York State, for instance, saw only 25% of black males complete high school in four years, while white males completed at the rate of 68%. In Florida the contrast was 37% of black males completed in four years while 57% of white males graduated in the same period. North Carolina in the same year saw 46% of black males and 66% of white males graduating.

Looking at some of the nation's largest school systems, the disparity in completion rates was equally stark. In Buffalo, only 25% of black males completed in four years while 55% of their white counterparts graduated. In Pinellas County (Florida) the contrast was 21% to 50%. Three North Carolina districts were included in the study of large school systems. Guilford County had the highest graduating rate for black males at 48% contrasted with 79% for white males. Wake County had black males graduating at the rate of 44% compared to 79% of white males and in Charlotte, 39% of black males graduated compared to 58% of white males.

The study goes on to look at the gap between black and white male achievement on National Assessment of Educational Progress tests in 2009. Using data from all states participating in NAEP tests and the same set of large school districts, the gap between white and black male performance is as stark as that found in graduation rates.

The Schott Foundation study gets the Forum's recommendations as "must reading" for the week. To access the full report go to [www.schottfoundation.org](http://www.schottfoundation.org).

## Congressional Research Service Veteran to Keynote EPFP Graduation!

The keynote speaker for the graduation event for the 2009-2010 EPFP class is well known to EPFP alum over the past decade! The graduation keynote will be given by Judy Schneider, Senior Analyst, Government & Finance Division, Congressional Research Service, The Library of Congress. Ms. Schneider is no stranger to a large number of EPFP alumni, who learned the rules of Congress from her phenomenal presentation at the Washington Policy Seminar held in the spring of each EPFP seminar year. Mrs. Schneider has kept EPFP Fellows on the edge of their seats reeling with laughter as they learned the intricate "3 Ps" of the congressional process.

In 2004, Judy Schneider was granted Emeritus Membership Status of Women in Government Relations. Previously, only members of Congress have been awarded this honor. She is responsible for "training" new members of Congress in the rules and procedures of the congressional process. She has become a special friend of North Carolina EPFP and for the past two years has joined the class in its meeting with members of the NC Congressional Delegation on Hill Day during the Washington Policy Seminar.

## EPFP Graduation (cont.)

The EPFP graduation will be held on Tuesday evening, October 26<sup>th</sup>, at the Cardinal Club in the Wachovia/Wells Fargo Building in downtown Raleigh. The evening will begin with a reception at 5:30 pm, followed by dinner, the keynote address and awarding of the certificates. Attendance is by invitation only. Watch for your invitation and respond promptly to ensure that you have a seat.

## It Was Only A Matter of Time . . .

Last week the *Los Angeles Times* ran an extensive feature story on the correlation between teachers and student performance that has intensified the national debate about using what is called “value-added” data for teacher evaluation purposes. The *LA Times* story compared by name, teachers and the performance of their students. The lead into the story included the picture of a teacher who, according to the caption, was one whose students would actually lose ground after having been in his classroom for a school year.

While districts have been using value-added data for some time, this may be the first time that a major publication published a story documenting individual teachers by name and analyzing the impact of specific teachers on student performance.

North Carolina is no stranger to value-added data. The “granddaddy” of value-added systems is Dr. Bill Sanders now part of SAS’s educational division located at their home base in Cary, North Carolina. Sanders, an economist by training, first used the approach on a statewide study in Tennessee that tracked student performance linked to individual teachers overtime. His findings continue to reverberate today.

Sanders found a marked difference in how effectively teachers teach. Some can consistently move their students to higher levels of achievement than would have been statistically predicted; while others who are less effective can cause students to perform at lower levels of achievement than would have happened otherwise. Beyond that, his study found that students unfortunate enough to have less effective teachers for two or more years in a row while in elementary school could be set back for the remainder of their academic careers.

While few debate that value-added data can be a powerful tool if used when assigning teachers and students to classes, teacher unions and some academics strongly oppose using the data for evaluative purposes when judging teacher effectiveness. Dr. Sanders, as an example, cautions districts against that and proposes instead that the data gives administrators a road map indicating which teachers need professional development and support in areas they are weak and that the data can be invaluable when assigning teachers and students.

The U.S. Department of Education, however, threw the debate into another level when it decided to award states that use student performance data for teacher evaluations additional points in the Race to the Top competition. As a result of the U.S. DOE’s decision, states across the country, including North Carolina, included proposals to use value added data as part of their teacher evaluation processes in their Race to the Top proposals.

## It Was Only A Matter of Time . . .(cont.)

The debate became shriller when the Superintendent of the District of Columbia recently used student performance data as a basis for dismissing hundreds of teachers – a move that has been loudly criticized by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the union representing teachers in Washington, DC.

Predictably, as states and districts begin using value-added data for teacher evaluation, the proverbial devil is in the details. How much of an evaluation should be based on student test scores? Which scores to use? Can student scores be used as grounds for dismissal?

The *LA Times* story may well have opened the door for similar studies and stories around the country. Given that most of the second round of states to win Race to the Top grants proposed using value-added data for evaluation purposes, the current debate is certain to continue for some time.

## Teaching Fellows Scholarship Application Now Available

The 2010-2011 application for the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Scholarship/Loan Program is now available online at [www.teachingfellows.org](http://www.teachingfellows.org). The deadline for students to return completed applications with the three sealed Reference Forms to a Teaching Fellows Liaison Counselor in a high school is October 15, 2010, by the end of the school day. Please share this information with talented high school seniors who have an interest in teaching as a career.

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