



New York loses education race

April 5, 2010

The Empire State is no match for Delaware and Tennessee — at least when it comes to education.

Despite being named one of the 16 finalists for the federal Race to the Top competition, New York finished second to last and will not receive \$600 million in grants.

The program, which was designed to encourage reform and innovative approaches to the nation's schools, emphasized imposing high educational standards and promoting student achievement. According to the Department of Education, New York failed to meet these requirements.

To many, like Steinhardt assistant professor of educational economics Sean Corcoran, the news did not come as a surprise.

"I didn't expect N.Y. to win. I was even surprised they were a finalist," he said. "They failed to lift the cap on charter schools, and did not change a law prohibiting a link between test scores and teacher tenure — both were critical conditions to win."

And according to Race to the Top officials, the failure to address these issues was the reason why New York lost 30 percent of its points. The state also lost several points for failing to implement a statewide data system, as outlined by the America COMPETES Act — a bill passed by President Bush to strengthen scientific education.

Carl Korn of the New York State United Teachers, which represents teachers and educators in New York, said New York's proposal was strong. But, he said the reason it did not get further was that budgetary problems hindered educators' abilities to consolidate their efforts for the Race to the Top grant.

"My guess would be that most teachers were not aware of the details of the application," he said. "Teachers are in the classroom everyday, performing school miracles, [after all] New York faces a \$1.4 billion budget deficit, and school districts are proposing cuts."

New York State Education Department spokeswoman Jane Briggs said the deadlock in the state legislature was the main culprit.

"The proposed legislation involved lifting the cap on charter schools and linking teacher performance to student achievement," she said. "The state legislature was unable to come to agreement on these issues."

Briggs said the state has taken this into consideration and hopes to improve the state's score for the second round of the competition, scheduled to begin in June.