

Q&A:

New York State's Competitive Grants

Gov. Andrew Cuomo is expanding the use of competitive grants for education. The New York State School Boards Association has provided answers to some frequently asked questions to help you understand competitive grants.

Q: What are competitive grants?

A: Competitive grants are monies awarded to schools that satisfy specific grant criteria and eligibility requirements. Schools must apply for competitive grant funding, and compete with other schools for funding. Over the last few years, Gov. Cuomo has sought to use competitive grants specifically to increase academic performance and operating efficiency. In the 2013-14 state budget, he has expanded the use of competitive grants toward other programs such as pre-K and extended learning time.

Q: What is the difference between competitive grants and other state aid?

A: The main difference is that competitive grant funding is not guaranteed. Schools have to apply and show eligibility for competitive grants. A district may lose out in the application process and not receive funding. By contrast, state aid that is provided to schools through formulas (such as foundation aid) is often based on factors such as a school district's enrollment, wealth and needs. Another major distinction is that competitive grant funds are typically earmarked for very specific programs; they cannot be used for general purpose aid. Therefore, these grants restrict the ways in which schools can use these monies toward specific programs or activities consistent with the purpose of the grant.

Q: What new competitive grant programs for education are in the 2013-14 state budget?

A: The following competitive grant programs are included in the state budget:

- *Full-day pre-kindergarten* (\$25 million) — helps school districts establish new full-day pre-K programs or convert an existing half-day program to full-day.
- *Extended learning time* (\$20 million) — seeks to improve student outcomes by requiring schools to add at least 25 percent more time to the academic calendar, either by extending the school day, the school year, or some combination of both.
- *Community school grants* (\$15 million) — seeks to utilize school buildings as community hubs to deliver co-located or school-linked academic, health, nutrition, counseling and legal services to students and families.
- *Master teacher programs* (\$11 million) — awards monies over four years to high-performing teachers in math and science to improve instructional quality at secondary schools in each of the state's geographic regions outside New York City.
- *Early college high school programs* (\$4 million) — allows students to complete high school while earning an associate's degree or up to two years of college credit.