

Middletown schools get Race to the Top \$19.9 million grant

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Educators nationwide will be learning lessons from the Middletown School District, which was chosen Tuesday as one of just 16 school districts nationwide for a Race to the Top District grant, the [U.S. Department of Education](#) announced Tuesday.

In order to win, the selected districts and consortiums had to demonstrate a track record of success and put forward innovative plans to improve student learning. Middletown will receive \$19.9 million to implement its proposals, which will then be shared in

classrooms across the country.

"We know that these school districts have been hungry to drive reform at the local level. Now they can," U.S. Education Sec. [Arne Duncan](#) said Tuesday.

New York City was the only other district in the state to reach the round of 61 finalists, but failed to make the list of 16 winners, which will share nearly \$400 million.

"I'm ecstatic that we were able to compete nationally. To win this prestigious grant is a true validation that people see what we are doing is successful," said Middletown Superintendent Ken Eastwood.

From 2004 to 2011, the graduation rate in the Middletown district rose from 52 to 83 percent in a district in which 72 percent of students receive free or discounted school lunches.

Requests for the grants, which are spread over four years, ranged from \$40 million (Green River Regional Education Cooperative in [Kentucky](#) and [Puget Sound](#) Educational Service District in [Washington](#)) to \$9.99 million (Galt Joint Union School District in California).



The Middletown district, which has an annual budget of about \$140 million, would use the grant for research-proven initiatives, including a two-year kindergarten for at-risk students, midpoint grade levels for students who don't meet standards in certain elementary school grades and the integration of technology into secondary school classrooms.

"The winners of this competition have shown leadership and vision to move beyond the one-size-fits-all models of schooling," [White House](#) Domestic Policy Council Director Cecilia Muñoz said.

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