

Associated Press story

Duncan: Schools must improve to get stimulus money

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WASHINGTON — Education Secretary Arne Duncan says schools must make drastic changes to get money from a special \$5 billion fund in the economic stimulus bill.

"We're going to reward those states and those districts that are willing to challenge the status quo and get dramatically better," Duncan said Monday at the White House.

Those who keep doing the same old thing, however, won't be eligible for the money, he said.

Schools will be getting tens of billions more dollars through regular channels. On top of that, Duncan will have an unprecedented \$5 billion to award for lasting reforms.

To get an award, schools and states must show they have been spending their money wisely. They are supposed to find innovative ways to close the achievement gap between black and Latino children who lag behind their white counterparts in more affluent schools.

Specifically, states are supposed to:

_Improve teacher quality and get good teachers into high-poverty schools;

_Set up sophisticated data systems to track student learning;

_Boost the quality of academic standards and tests;

_Intervene to help struggling schools.

Applications for the special grants will be available later this spring, and money will be awarded beginning in October. The other stimulus dollars for education will be distributed beginning later this month.

Duncan was meeting with urban school leaders who belong to the Council of the Great City Schools.

"This is the home team; they are fighting for the future of our country," Duncan said of the school chiefs and other leaders gathered behind him on the White House grounds.

Duncan was the CEO of Chicago public schools until Obama chose him to run the Education Department.

At the meeting, which was closed to the media, Duncan focused on reform, said New York City schools chancellor Joel Klein.

"He talked a lot about the need to make sure real reform follows the dollars," Klein said afterward.