



THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION
WASHINGTON, DC 20202

July 27, 2010

Dear Governors:

Thank you for your vision and commitment to improving educational outcomes for children. Because of your leadership, the Race to the Top program has been a catalyst for education reform across the country. This historic program has prompted states to think deeply about how to improve their education system. Through the application process, stakeholders across America worked together to identify what is working and what is not working, and developed bold and creative plans that give us great hope for the future of America.

Today I am announcing the finalists for Phase 2 of the Race to the Top competition. The Department received 36 applications for Phase 2 of Race to the Top. Each application underwent a comprehensive and rigorous review by an expert panel of independent reviewers, and we have selected the following finalists: Arizona, California, Colorado, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and South Carolina.

To the finalists, I congratulate you. The Race to the Top team will follow up shortly with further details regarding the finalist presentation that your team will make during the week of August 9. The purpose of the finalist presentation will not be to offer states the opportunity to provide new material but to clarify the material already provided to the Department and give you a chance to respond to questions from reviewers.

To others who applied, I applaud you for doing so and encourage you to continue your work on meaningful education reform. The Department pledges to support you and your state in this work by sharing the lessons learned and the materials developed through Race to the Top, and by including you in relevant collaborative learning communities. In addition, as you are aware, President Obama has proposed \$1.35 billion for Race to the Top in his fiscal year 2011 budget; we hope to continue this program and its support of education reform across the country.

We will send your application's scores and reviewer comments at the conclusion of the Phase 2 competition. While only the strongest proposals will receive Race to the Top funds, each state that applied is already a winner, given the hard work and collaboration required to develop each proposal. As we move forward, we know that real and meaningful change in public education starts with hard work and high expectations. Through your application for Race to the Top, you have begun that hard work. You are eliminating barriers to reform, aligning federal funds to support comprehensive state reform plans, developing new partnerships, and engaging in candid, forward-thinking conversations with a broad group of stakeholders about improving education. All of this hard work will lay the foundation for transformational change in our education system, help secure our role in the global economy, and ensure that our children share fully in the blessings of a strong and growing America.

If you have any questions, please have your staff contact racetothetop@ed.gov or 202-205-3775.
Thanks again for your hard work to date and thank you in advance for the work ahead.

Sincerely,

/s/

Arne Duncan