



A Union of Professionals

AFT News Release

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Statement by Randi Weingarten, President, American Federation of Teachers, On the ‘Race to the Top’ Grant Finalists

Education Secretary Arne Duncan today announced 16 finalists in the first round of the \$4.35 billion “Race to the Top” federal grant competition program, which rewards states for, among other things, working closely with unions.

WASHINGTON—Today’s list of finalists includes states that took to heart the need for true collaboration among all stakeholders as part of the Race to the Top application process. It also includes states that could have—and should have—done better to work in true partnership with teachers, their unions and other stakeholders.

Talking about reform and collaboration may make us all feel good but if it is not matched by action it does nothing to help students achieve or to provide them and their teachers with the supports they need to succeed. It’s long past time that we walk the walk—not just talk the talk. As the process moves forward, we hope that *every* state will work to ensure that teachers’ participation and input is not simply sought but actually incorporated as an integral part of every stage of this process.

This program’s goal is a good one: to spark smart and sustainable improvements in public education, particularly for struggling schools and struggling students. We and our affiliates have consistently urged states to work collaboratively with teachers and their unions to ensure that educators were full partners in Race to the Top applications and in the process of developing and implementing solid programs designed to help improve teaching and learning. We know that real change can succeed only if teachers and school administrators work together.

In these tough economic times, the infusion of grant funds offered through Race to the Top will be seen as help for states and school districts facing budget shortfalls. However, this money is not intended to be nor should it be a substitute for adequate and sustained funding to support all our students and schools.

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The AFT represents more than 1.4 million pre-K through 12th-grade teachers; paraprofessionals and other school-related personnel; higher education faculty and professional staff; federal, state and local government employees; nurses and healthcare workers; and early childhood educators.

American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO

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