



A Union of Professionals

AFT News Release

Embargoed Until 9 p.m.

November 11, 2009

Contact:

John See

202/434-4694

**Statement by Randi Weingarten, President,
American Federation of Teachers,
On Federal ‘Race to the Top’ Regulations**

The U.S. Department of Education is publishing final regulations for its Race to the Top grants, which are intended to encourage and reward states that are creating the conditions for education innovation and reform.

WASHINGTON—We applaud Secretary of Education Arne Duncan for his efforts to make schools better for students—a goal we share.

The Department of Education worked hard to strike the right balance between what it takes to get systemwide improvement for schools and kids, and how to measure that improvement. (One example of the effort to achieve this balance is in the Race to the Top criteria for teacher evaluation. As we wrote in our comments on the draft regulations, “RTTT is an unprecedented opportunity to ... develop meaningful and effective teacher evaluation systems that can measure teacher performance and inform decisions in a way that helps students and is fair to teachers.” We are pleased the department heard our call for greater teacher involvement in evaluation systems.) Clearly, the department recognizes that schools succeed only where there is a culture of collaboration and all stakeholders work together to improve teaching and learning.

We know that many states have begun the application process, but that not all are involving teachers and their unions in a meaningful way. We take Education Department officials at their word when they say they will look for meaningful collaboration in the state Race to the Top applications.

Teachers and principals are central to any effort to improve schools, but they can’t do it alone. The best Race to the Top grants will develop specific supports for students and staff, such as early childhood education, professional development, and community schools that provide wraparound services for students and their families.

Policy is made in Washington, but reform happens where students are taught—in the classroom. Race to the Top creates a real opportunity, but it will work only if all stakeholders come together to make it work. We are looking forward to what we learn—not only about what works but about what doesn’t—as a guide for federal education policy, including the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

###

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.

If you would rather not receive future communications from AFT, let us know by clicking [here](#).
AFT, 555 New Jersey Ave NW, Washington, DC 20001 United States