



State of New Jersey
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Governor

KIM GUADAGNO
Lt. Governor

BRET SCHUNDLER
Commissioner

August 25, 2010

Honorable Arne Duncan
U.S. Secretary of Education
Lyndon Baines Johnson (LBJ)
Department of Education Building
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan:

On behalf of the State of New Jersey and its Department of Education, I am writing to request that you consider awarding New Jersey the \$75 million in "statewide reform" Race to The Top (RTTT) funding which remains unallocated.

Among states which have not received RTTT grants, New Jersey's application score was the highest, and our state's reform agenda and nearly 1.4 million children would measurably benefit from New Jersey having these funds to support reform rollout.

As you are aware, the Race to The Top program as established by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 was appropriated \$4 billion in funding. Grants announced to date to the twelve winning states of Round 1 and Round 2 of the competition total a maximum of \$3.925 billion. Therefore, \$75 million remains unallocated.

New Jersey would be an ideal and deserving recipient of these funds. New Jersey's Round 2 application score of 437.8 is the highest among states which did not receive funding, and our score trails that of Ohio by just 3 points. Comments from our reviewers include:

- "The application put forth a very straightforward and powerful reform agenda that clearly focuses on students and their educational welfare."
- "The NJ education reform agenda is clear and comprehensive."
- "State leadership for the initiative is strong, and the plans demonstrate a deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities offered by the reform effort."
- "New Jersey has articulated a strong, comprehensive reform agenda"

- “NJ is and has been among the most outspoken state leaders in supporting dramatic reforms over the past decade.”

Further, it was due to a clerical error on our part, not due to a matter of substance, that New Jersey lost 4.8 points and thus did not score above two of the states that won. Our application did not include documentation in Section (F)(1)(i) establishing that New Jersey increased its spending on education as a percentage of total state revenues from 36.9% in 2008 to 39.6.% in 2009 (a fact that was demonstrated in New Jersey’s Round 1 application). In addition, it was confirmed verbally during our August 11 presentation that New Jersey satisfied this criteria. Had New Jersey been able to correct the clerical error, those points would have been earned, and New Jersey’s application would have earned 9th place and full funding rather than 11th place and no funding.

While New Jersey’s education reform agenda would certainly benefit from full funding of its \$399 million RTTT request, a \$75 million grant would still accelerate our efforts to build a web-based statewide longitudinal data system, develop critical new curricular and assessment resources, and train school and teacher leaders in how to train their colleagues on the use of these powerful new tools. These are all one-time costs. Covered once, they will make a permanent difference.

I ask you to provide New Jersey with the requested \$75 million in remaining funds not only for the sake of our children, but so we can more effectively model for all of America’s school systems how significantly our Race to The Top reforms can increase student learning.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Bret Schundler

c: Governor Chris Christie