



CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

MARK K. MCQUILLAN
COMMISSIONER



December 30, 2009

Dear Colleague:

As you are aware, Connecticut is applying for the Race to the Top (RTTT) grant – a competitive \$4.35 billion education reform program enacted as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). It offers an unprecedented level of additional funding to states and their “Participating Local Education Agencies” (LEAs) to implement comprehensive education reform across four key areas:

- Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace;
- Building data systems that measure student success and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction;
- Recruiting, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals; and
- Turning around our lowest-achieving schools.

Guidance from the U.S. Department of Education suggests that Connecticut could qualify for up to \$175 million over four years. Fifty percent of the awarded funds will flow directly to the LEAs that commit to implement all or significant portions of the State’s RTTT plan, based on the LEA’s relative share of Title I, Part A Regular and ARRA allocations for 2009.

Over the past several months, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has developed a RTTT proposal with an overarching goal of:

- Driving substantial gains in student achievement;
- Improving high school graduation and college enrollment; and
- Narrowing achievement gaps.

In order to be a strong competitor for the RTTT grant, **Connecticut is asking LEAs that elect to implement all or significant portions of the State’s RTTT plan (referred to as Participating LEAs), to formally sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlining the LEA’s commitment to implement the State’s plan. The MOU also delineates the general roles and responsibilities for the State and for LEAs, including a preliminary scope of work.** If Connecticut’s application is approved, each Participating LEA will have 90 days to complete a more detailed and final work plan that will be attached to the initial MOU.

The MOU **must** be signed by the Superintendent and, if possible, the president of the local school board and the leader of the local teacher’s union. The more signatures we receive, the more competitive we are in our application, as the signatures demonstrate the extent of leadership support within Participating LEAs. The CSDE will review each MOU submitted and will countersign if the LEA is accepted as a participant.

December 30, 2009

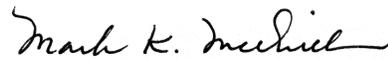
Page 2

Please note that while consistent with the language of the MOU, LEAs may withdraw from the states RTTT reform plan; however, doing so may adversely affect the state application. States must inform the U.S. Department of Education of any changes in their approved grant application, including withdrawal of participating LEAs. Withdrawal of a LEA could result in changes in or possible partial or complete termination of the State's grant. Therefore, please give due consideration to the LEAs ability to implement the state's reform plan as outlined in the MOU.

In order for Connecticut to submit an application on January 19, 2010, to the U.S. Department of Education, **LEAs must submit signed MOUs no later than January 11, 2010.** The MOU is attached and is also available online at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2703&Q=322442> under Participating LEA Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Information. Descriptions of the reform plan elements are also posted at the link above. Signed MOUs should be faxed or e-mailed to Jessica Andrews at 860-713-7004 or jessica.andrews@ct.gov.

If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Andrews, CSDE's ARRA Coordinator, at 860-713-6582 or via e-mail at the above address.

Sincerely,



Mark K. McQuillan
Commissioner of Education

MKM:ja
Attachment