

January 13, 2010

The Honorable Lillian Lowery, Ed.D.  
Secretary, Department of Education  
401 Federal Street – Suite 2  
Dover, DE 19901

Dear Dr. Lowery:

As President of the Delaware State Education Association, I am writing to express support for the goals the Markell Administration has set for Delaware's public schools, which are the foundation for the state's Race to the Top application.

The federal Race to the Top grant program offers Delaware an opportunity to strengthen and enhance our current high-quality public education system. It will aid Delaware in its efforts to strive to enable all students, especially those in low-resourced schools and those with social and economic disadvantages, to reach their full potential and successfully enter the workforce of the future.

The voice and input of educators expressed through their unions and their collective bargaining agreements are an essential and positive part of the process to achieve these goals. The reforms outlined in Delaware's plan represent the months of challenging collaborative work among the Markell Administration, the Delaware Department of Education, and the Delaware State Education Association. We commend your staff for their willingness to listen to our concerns and suggestions and for fashioning reasonable solutions to the issues we have brought to your attention. Should Delaware's application for RTTT funding be approved, successful implementation of the program will hinge upon the continued understanding that key stakeholders must be fully engaged in the conversation and program design. DSEA stands ready to continue that spirit of collaboration.

Several elements of the Race to the Top application and the Delaware Department of Education's Strategic Plan are supported by the Delaware State Education Association Resolutions. They include:

- The implementation of the Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS)
  - A new student assessment system which is both formative and summative using multiple measures and growth model testing to assess student learning
- Providing professional development during the transition to new standards and assessments
- Creating a coherent approach to professional development that links offerings with specific skill and role expectations, and evaluation
- Providing collaborative planning time during the school day
- Training superintendents and principals in evaluations and feedback with audits conducted and calibration of the assessors

- Creating “teacher leader” roles to give highly effective teachers the option of additional responsibilities and compensation
- Developing a plan for “turn around schools” in the Partnership Zone through the collective bargaining process
- Developing a teacher residency program
- Providing schools with data coaches and developmental coaches
- Prioritizing instructional leadership by providing intensive training to school leaders and by redistributing administrative work to school administrative managers (SAMs)

These laudable ideas, as well as others, can make important contributions to the goals that the Delaware State Education Association members have long held as crucial to successful education reform efforts.

The Race to the Top program presents unique challenges and opportunities for Delaware. No education reform effort of this magnitude will succeed without a strong partnership between educators, parents, students, administrators, local school boards, community leaders and state policy makers. DSEA remains committed to partnering with these stakeholders to successfully implement educationally sound programs that will positively impact the learning environment of all Delaware public schools.

Sincerely,

Diane T. Donohue  
President  
Delaware State Education Association