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**OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION**  
**BONNIE REISS**, Secretary of Education  
1121 L Street, Suite 600  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
916-323-0611

May 17, 2010

Dear County and District Superintendents and Charter School Administrators:

### **INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RACE TO THE TOP PARTNERSHIP**

California has a unique opportunity to be part of a select number of states receiving federal Race to the Top (RTTT) funds, which total \$4.35 billion nationwide. RTTT has the potential to substantially assist our state's efforts to improve education for all students. We are writing to invite you to join our effort.

As you are aware, California was not selected as a winner in Round 1 of RTTT. After a careful review of the areas of our application that fell short, we made a decision to take a different approach and model our application after other high scoring states.

For our Round 2 application development, we formed a working group of district superintendents who are knowledgeable on how to make the necessary bold changes while remaining grounded in some of the highest standards in the country. The superintendents in our working group have implemented some of the most innovative school and district practices in the nation, and are developing a plan for California that respects local stakeholders and the collective bargaining process. The plan proposes rational timelines to create fair evaluations using multiple measures of student growth to be used to measure teacher and principal effectiveness.

RTTT envisions a coherent and collaborative system between the state and LEAs. We are asking you to volunteer to become our partners in implementing California's Race to the Top proposal. RTTT provides a significant opportunity for California to receive up to \$700 million in one-time funds to make systemic improvements that have been discussed for many years. Only LEAs that join the state through the MOU process become eligible for RTTT funds if California's application is successful. We know that involvement in RTTT will require bold and perhaps difficult decisions from all of us, but we believe California is ready.

There are certain requirements for LEAs participating in Race to the Top. For example, the state must enter into memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with LEAs that are interested in participating. MOUs must be signed by the LEA superintendent and may also be signed by the president of the local governing board, and the local teachers'

union leader, documenting their agreement to participate and meet the requirements of Race to the Top. As with Round 1, the state application will receive more points if the MOUs are signed by all parties. The equivalent entities may sign the MOU for participating charter schools.

To participate, the LEA must agree to implement all parts of the state's plan in the areas identified here:

- Support the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments
- Use data to improve instruction, including improving the use of local instructional improvement systems, formative assessments, professional development on the use of data, and the availability and access of data to researchers
- Improve teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance including:
  - Measuring student growth
  - Designing and implementing evaluation systems
  - Conducting annual evaluations
  - Using evaluations to inform professional development, compensation, promotion, retention, tenure, full certification, and/or removal
- Ensure an equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals in high-poverty and/or high-minority schools, and/or hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas
- Provide effective support to teachers and principals including quality professional development and/or measuring the effectiveness of the professional development offered
- Turn around the lowest-achieving schools using one of the four intervention methods outlined in the Race to the Top Application Guidance

The MOU is attached for your review. You can find the MOU and additional information regarding RTTT on California's Race to the top Web site at <http://www.caracetothetop.org/> (Outside Source). The deadline for expressing your intent to participate in California's Race to the Top application is **Wednesday, May 19**. Please refer to the MOU checklist at the beginning of the MOU document for directions on how to become a Participating LEA.

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Your LEA may be doing many of the required activities already, putting you in a strong position to participate in Race to the Top. We hope you are interested in this exciting opportunity to receive additional federal support for new programs that foster educational innovation and improvement.

We urge you to join us in this important effort to strengthen California schools. Our students are counting on us. If you have any questions regarding this MOU, please contact Kathryn Radtkey-Gaither, Undersecretary of Education, Office of the Secretary of Education, by phone at 916-323-0611, or Lupita Cortez-Alcala, Deputy Superintendent, Government Affairs and Charter Development Branch, California Department of Education, by phone at 916-319-0654.

Sincerely,



JACK O'CONNELL  
State Superintendent of Public Instruction  
California Department of Education



THEODORE R. MITCHELL  
President  
California State Board of Education



BONNIE REISS  
Secretary of Education  
Office of the Secretary of Education

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Attachment