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PRESS RELEASES

Duncan Offers Stimulus Funds for States to Develop Rigorous Assessments Linked to Common Standards

Secretary Duncan Charts Course for 'Race to the Top'

FOR RELEASE:
June 15, 2009

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In the second of four major policy speeches on the priorities for the "Race to the Top" Fund, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced last night that the Department of Education will commit up to \$350 million of the \$4.35 billion Race to the Top Fund to support states in the creation of rigorous assessments linked to the internationally benchmarked common standards being developed by states.

Secretary Duncan urged the nation's governors and state education leaders to continue the movement toward adopting internationally benchmarked standards for public K-12 education during his keynote address at the 2009 Governors Education Symposium in Cary, NC. He also applauded the 46 states and three territories that agreed this month to develop common standards as a means to prepare American students to compete and succeed in the global market place.

"Perhaps for the first time, we have enough money to really make a difference. We have proven strategies for success in schools all across America. This is where reform will play out. It will filter up from classrooms and schools, districts and localities, but then it will arrive on your desks," Duncan told the governors. "And when it does, I urge you to remember that the truest measure of a society's worth is whether it offers all of our children the opportunity to go where they want to go, do what they want to do, and fulfill their dreams. This is the promise of education. This is my promise. This is your promise. This is the American promise."

Currently, each state sets its own academic standards, and many of those standards fail to prepare children for college or careers. The National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers have committed to leading an effort to create common standards in English language arts and mathematics for grades K-12. These standards will be research- and evidence-based, internationally benchmarked, aligned with college and work expectations, and include rigorous content and skills. Duncan said the Education Department will help states pay for the development of assessments aligned to those standards because that will ensure the success of the effort.

The Department of Education will conduct a national competition among states this year for \$4 billion of the Race to the Top Fund to improve education quality and results statewide. The Race to the Top Fund will support states' effort to drive substantial gains in student achievement. These grants will focus on four reform goals – using data to drive instruction, raising standards, turning around historically low-performing schools, and improving teacher and principal quality – as described in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Additionally, the ARRA allocates \$650 million for the "Invest in What Works and Innovation Fund." The money will be awarded to school districts and non-profit groups with strong track records of results. Guidelines and applications for the competitive funds will be posted on the Federal Register next month.

Race to the Top grants will be made in two rounds. Secretary Duncan laid out a course to the "Race" as follows:

- Late July– The Department will publish a notice of

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proposed rulemaking in the Federal Register, inviting public comment for 30 days on the proposed grant application and the criteria for evaluating them;

- October – Notice inviting applications will be published in the Federal Register;
- December – Phase 1 applications will be due;
- March 2010 – Phase 1 grants awarded, winners announced;
- June 2010 – Phase 2 applications will be due;
- September 2010 – Phase 2 grants awarded, winners announced.

Secretary Duncan will give two more major policy speeches leading up to the request for proposals. He will speak about school turnarounds on June 22 at the National Charter School Conference in Washington DC, and he will discuss teacher quality July 2 at the National Education Association annual meeting in San Diego.

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