

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

Today, U.S. Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan announced the launch of \$4.35 billion in new grants to states and school districts to strengthen education. The funds are part of the department's "Race to the Top" initiative, the department's largest portion of the stimulus, also known as ARRA. This unprecedented level of funding for education is designed to fuel school improvement efforts to ensure that all children reach their fullest potential, do not drop out of school, and are college or career ready upon graduation. The overarching goal of these funds is one we all share: Restore the worldwide competitive position of the United States to provide the best possible education for our children and youth.

Race to the Top encompasses several efforts such as the Teacher Incentive Fund, Investing in Innovation, Educational Technology, Title I School Improvement Grants, and Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems.

The just-released information provides draft guidance for the application process for the disbursement of the Race to the Top funds. You can find details at the department's [Race to the Top press release](#).

We encourage you to take swift action to review and respond to these guidelines. The window for doing so is only 30 days.

As I have been reporting during the past several months, NAESP's advocacy efforts on your behalf are gaining significant traction. In the department, with the Obama administration, and on both sides of the aisle in Congress, we are working to ensure that elementary and middle-level principals' vitally important perspectives are factored into rapidly evolving education policies. A few recent examples follow:

We have helped draft key legislation affecting elementary and middle-level education, we have been invited to participate in small "stakeholder meetings" convened by Secretary Duncan, and we have been welcomed into policy discussions with members of Congress and President Obama's leading consultant on early childhood education.

In this time of unprecedented focus on strengthening education, it is especially important to add your voice to these discussions, help determine the most effective disbursement of these funds, and help strengthen the **power of the principal**.

Please don't hesitate to call on us if we can provide additional guidance or assistance. You may reach us toll-free at 800-386-2377 or via e-mail addressed to me (gconnelly@naesp.org) or any member of our government relations team: Deputy Executive Director Dr. Michael Schooley (mschooley@naesp.org); Senior Associate Executive Director Deborah Bongiorno (dbongiorno@naesp.org); or Government Relations Specialist Abbie Evans (aevans@naesp.org).

As always, please accept our sincere appreciation and gratitude for all you do for our nation's children.

Sincerely,

Gail Connelly
Executive Director