



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
Shepard Building  
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Deborah A. Gist  
Commissioner

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Dear Fellow Educators,

First of all, I'd like to thank you for your commitment to education. Your hard work and dedication, especially in times of uncertainty, shows your deep commitment to our schools and our students.

I am writing today to tell you about our preparation for Round 2 of Race to the Top and to invite your participation in this incredible opportunity. Race to the Top, as most of you know, is an unprecedented competitive federal grant opportunity to help states to improve student achievement by implementing plans in four specific areas – the most important of which is “Great Teachers and Leaders.”

Rhode Island is in a strong position to win Round 2. Although we were disappointed that we didn't win a Race to the Top grant in the first round, we placed 8<sup>th</sup> among the 41 states that applied for funding, and we were ahead of many of the states that were considered very competitive. In Round 1, the “Great Teachers and Leaders” section of our application, worth the most points, received the 2<sup>nd</sup>-highest point total in the country! Additionally, we received almost perfect scores for our state standards, our assessments, and our new educator evaluation standards.

We need to build on the momentum of Round 1 as we develop our Round 2 application, which could bring \$75 million to Rhode Island. Because you are an education leader in your community, we are asking for your help. There is a lot of information circulating about Race to the Top, and there are questions and concerns. I want to be sure you have accurate information upon which to base your feedback.

For example, there are questions about the evaluation process we are developing in our state. I want to assure you that we are committed to a fair, high-quality system—one teachers, principals, and superintendents all have an opportunity to help design. Funding from Race to the Top could help us ensure that educator evaluations across the state are fair to all, that they help educators grow and improve, and that they are designed with the best interests of both students and educators in mind. We can never achieve our vision—to have the best education system in the country—if we do not have an accurate, transparent evaluation system that our teachers and principals trust. We will develop the model for that evaluation system through a collaborative process. I encourage all educators to embrace the opportunity to be evaluated fairly and to take the opportunity to have a seat at the table where we will design and clarify what it means to be an effective educator.

I invite and strongly encourage you to participate as we refine our Race to the Top application for Round 2. Please attend one of our community forums and visit our website to learn more and to submit feedback: <http://www.ride.ri.gov/commissioner/RaceToTheTop/default.aspx>

I am proud of the advances we have made in Rhode Island by working together to create the best possible learning opportunities for all of our students. Our plan for Race to the Top is truly about great teachers and great leaders, ensuring that you are supported and developed as professionals. This grant represents an unprecedented opportunity to bring significant resources to our state to provide you with the training, tools, resources, and support we will need for success. We are working hard to ensure that we submit the strongest application possible, and your involvement will be critical to our success. As always, I thank you for the hard work you do every day on behalf of our students.

Sincerely,

Deborah A. Gist  
Commissioner