



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
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NEWS RELEASE

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School Districts Overwhelmingly Support Race to the Top Proposal

Education Commissioner Deborah A. Gist today (January 14th) thanked the school superintendents and school committees across the state for their overwhelming support for the Race to the Top proposal.

“Rhode Islanders are ready for change, and our Race to the Top proposal can bring vital resources to our state to transform education and prepare our students for success,” Commissioner Gist said. “I am so encouraged that virtually every one of our school districts and all charter schools and state-operated schools have stepped forward to participate in our proposal. Their strong endorsement of this proposal will improve our chance for receiving these funds.”

Every school district in Rhode Island but two (Chariho and Little Compton) has signed on in support of Race to the Top.

All but one of the signing districts and schools agreed to be “participating districts,” which will share in at least half the funds from Race to the Top. Participating districts will work with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE) to develop detailed plans to use these funds for school reform and innovation. (Coventry signed as an “involved” district, which carries no assurance of funding.)

Race to the Top is a competitive grant that could bring as much as \$100 million over four years to Rhode Island to improve education. Commissioner Gist will submit the proposal to the U.S. Department of Education on the January 19th deadline.

“Whether or not we receive these valuable Race to the Top funds, we will move forward aggressively with our strategic plan to transform education in Rhode Island,” Commissioner Gist said. “The need for change is urgent, and Rhode Islanders are serious about building the best education system in the country.”

To seek input and advice during the drafting of the proposal, Commissioner Gist held five public forums, which nearly 500 people attended, and she met with numerous groups of educators, parents, and students. She also convened a steering committee to provide guidance throughout the development of the proposal. Nearly 300 members of the public read a draft of the proposal this week at RIDE and provided feedback, which Commissioner Gist is using as she prepares the final version. She has received more than 50 letters of support from educational organizations and parent, student-advocacy, business, and cultural groups and organizations.

Several foundations have provided support to help RIDE prepare the proposal, including The Rhode Island Foundation, the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

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