



# Illinois State Board of Education

100 North First Street • Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001  
www.isbe.net

Gery J. Chico  
Chairman

Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D.  
State Superintendent of Education

January 24, 2012

Re: Participation in the State of Illinois Race to the Top Phase 3 Plan

Dear Superintendent:

On December 23, 2011, the United States Department of Education (ED) announced that Illinois will receive \$42.8 million as part of the ED's Race to the Top Program to advance comprehensive K-12 reforms aimed at improving student achievement. As a high-scoring finalist in the 2010 Race to the Top competition, Illinois, along with 6 other states, was eligible for a grant award to support a portion of the State's previously established Race to the Top Plan. This round of the competition, known as Race to the Top Phase 3, also included a focus on improving science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education.

As required in phases one and two, at least 50% of the grant award must be allocated to school districts that choose to participate in the State's Plan (Participating LEAs). Based on Illinois' \$42.8 million award, Participating LEAs will be sharing in \$21.4 million in funds, based on each Participating LEA's relative share of Title I, Part A funding. In order to identify the Participating LEAs that will partner with ISBE in the implementation of Illinois' ambitious plan, ISBE encourages all Illinois school districts to carefully review the information below and in the attachments to this letter, and consider serving as a "Participating LEA" in the State's Race to the Top Phase 3 implementation. Any school district may participate, regardless of whether the district participated in Phase 1 or Phase 2 of Race to the Top. ISBE must submit final scopes of work for each Participating LEA to ED by April 2, 2012. In addition to a statement agreeing to implement the key reforms described below, the Participating LEA Scope of Work will include detailed plans that address the LEA's specific goals, activities, timelines, budgets, key personnel and annual targets for key performance measures.

Under Illinois' Plan, Participating LEAs will serve as "reform exemplars" by agreeing to a comprehensive set of expectations designed to accelerate and sustain improved student outcomes as fully described on the *Race to the Top 3, Participating LEA Expectations and State Supports Chart*, attached to this letter for your reference. Key Participating LEA expectations include:

- Full implementation of the requirements of the Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) for teacher evaluations (including the use of student growth as a significant factor in evaluations) one year earlier than otherwise required under PERA;
- Integration of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in Math and English Language Arts (ELA) across the curriculum, as well as integration of the science framework when adopted;

- Development of a local assessment system that includes formative and summative assessments in a coherent framework to support standards-aligned instruction, and where appropriate, measurement of student growth;
- Implementation of STEM Programs of Study consistent with the framework developed through the Illinois Pathways Initiative; and
- Integration with the Illinois Shared Learning Environment (ISLE), as described below, participating in the second phase of implementation after the pilot phase. ISLE is a next-generation instructional improvement system, building off of the State's plan for a "Learning and Performance Management System" in the Race to the Top Phase 2 application, that enables district administrators, principals, teachers, and students to access instructional tools and resources, including high-quality and highly-customizable curriculum and classroom resources aligned to the CCSS.

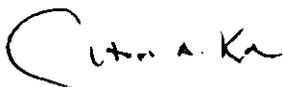
The State's Race to the Top Phase 3 Plan, which fully describes the above expectations and other reform initiatives, is available at <http://www.isbe.net/racetothetop/default.htm>.

The process for becoming a Participating LEA will be a two-step process. Step 1 will involve a statement of commitment by the LEA to the Participating LEA Expectations on the chart attached to this letter and an indication of intent to participate in the State's Race to the Top Phase 3 Plan. This statement of commitment must be executed by the district superintendent and received by ISBE no later than February 29, 2012 (a form for the commitment will be distributed). In addition, the local teachers' union leader must agree to authorize implementation of PERA before the date otherwise required by law.

After ISBE receives this commitment, it will provide each LEA with a tentative award notice indicating the LEA's estimated share of the \$21.4 million to be allocated to Participating LEAs. Step 2 will be the completion and execution of the final Scope of Work, in accordance with specifications set forth by ISBE and ED. ISBE also intends to host informational webinars on the various substantive components of the Race to the Top Phase 3 Plan with the first, an overview and discussion of participant requirements, scheduled February 7, 2012 at 11:00a.m.

Thank you for your consideration of this opportunity.

Sincerely,



Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D.  
State Superintendent of Education