



January 5, 2010

Key Points on Race to the Top

Support for California's Race to the Top application

- California State PTA continues to fully support California submitting a competitive application for federal Race to the Top (RTTT) funds. We believe the opportunity to develop such an application has focused much-needed dialogue on key education reforms that can benefit students, such as improving the state's data system, recruiting and retaining excellent educators and school leaders, and turning around chronically underperforming schools.

Seizing the opportunity requires a long-term commitment to investing in children

- California should take advantage of this opportunity to make positive policy changes. Because many of the decisions made by the legislature will impact schools for years to come and may far outlive the federal funding provided, they need to be made in a thoughtful manner and in the best interests of all California children. We urge state legislators and the Governor to make no further state budget cuts to education and children's programs in the coming year, to further demonstrate the state's commitment to strengthening our public education system and California's most vulnerable population.

Parent involvement is critical

- Debate over federal Race to the Top legislation has brought the topic of parent involvement in education into public focus. Certain legislative proposals have included a "parent trigger," which would enable 51 percent of parents at low-performing schools to sign a petition calling for one of four specific turnaround options to be implemented.

One-time action such as a petition does not go far enough

- A parent-trigger option has merit, especially for some truly struggling schools where it may be a positive first step. But it is not a magic solution. Turning around persistently underperforming schools requires a comprehensive and ongoing commitment to strengthen parent and family involvement in education.
- California needs a system where parent involvement is supported and integrated in everything that is accomplished in our schools. Administrators, teachers and classified staff must be trained on how to work with parents and with our many cultures.
- Parents must have consistent access to good, independent information, and open, inclusive processes that enable them to interact with school districts and make the best decisions possible on behalf of their children.
- Parents must feel welcome on school campuses from pre-school through high school. Information provided to parents must be in languages used in their homes. Parents must be provided with resources to help their students with homework, career path selection and college readiness preparation.
- Race to the Top offers special opportunities for education reform – but none will succeed without parents, students and communities as full partners in the process.

Parents must have choices – and all schools must be held accountable

- We support parental choice within the public school system and the availability of public charter schools, given that they admit students in a fair and equitable manner, preserve diversity in the school districts in which they are located, provide meaningful opportunities for parent involvement and are held to the same accountability standards to which regular public schools must adhere.

The California State PTA has nearly 1 million members throughout the state working on behalf of public schools, children and families, with the motto, "Every child, one voice." The PTA is the nation's oldest, largest and highest profile volunteer organization working to improve the education, health and welfare of all children and youth. The PTA also advocates at national, state and local levels for education and family issues. The PTA is nonprofit, nonsectarian and noncommercial.

For more information about the California State PTA, visit www.capta.org.