



Dear Charter School Leader:

I am writing to update you on the status of Pennsylvania's efforts to secure up to \$400 million for our schools – including a dedicated fund for our bricks-and-mortar charter schools – through the federal Race to the Top grant competition.

As you may already know, all school districts and all charters will benefit from the important resources and tools created with Race to the Top funds, enabling us to continue to build on our academic gains. In addition, "participating school districts" – those that agree to formally adopt the comprehensive system reforms the state is proposing to implement – will receive a direct allocation of some of the Race to the Top funding.

The federal Race to the Top guidelines require states to include charter schools as "participating districts" if state law establishes charter schools as Local Education Agencies (LEAs). Pennsylvania law, however, does **not** establish charter schools as LEAs.

Because charter schools play an integral role in our statewide strategy to improve public education, the commonwealth has a strong commitment to expanding the role of effective charter schools as part of our Race to the Top goals.

Therefore, in our Race to the Top application, Pennsylvania will propose to establish a fund of up to \$5 million dedicated to supporting bricks-and-mortar charter schools that are, or have the potential to be, highly effective in improving student achievement. Specifically, bricks-and-mortar charter schools that currently have "Met AYP" status or have the ability to meet AYP by being in Making Progress, Warning, School Improvement 1 or School Improvement 2, will be eligible to take advantage of the dedicated charter school funding.

Charter schools that choose to take advantage of this dedicated Race to the Top funding must implement all the required activities and meet the measures of progress we will establish in our Race to the Top application.

The Race to the Top application process is extremely rigorous and requires that each planned intervention be supported by extensive research to prove the efficacy of the approach. The strategies that Pennsylvania will employ are intended to transform the

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delivery of education in school buildings. Therefore while cyber charter schools will benefit from the resources offered to all school districts to improve teacher quality, instructional practice and student tracking, they will not be eligible to receive Race to the Top dedicated charter school funding.

Pennsylvania has to file its Race to the Top application with the U.S. Department of Education on January 19. That time schedule will require all of us to work together to ensure that Pennsylvania submits the most comprehensive and competitive application possible.

Here's an overview of the critical next steps, which are more fully detailed within this document:

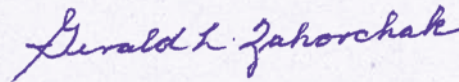
Careful review of expectations for participating charters – Over the next week, you should be reviewing the state's Race to the Top goals and the required charter school Memorandum of Understanding with critical stakeholders.

Mandatory webinars for charters – Because it is important that all those who wish to take advantage of the dedicated charter school funding understand the expectations of Race to the Top, the executive officer of any charter school wishing to submit an MOU **must** participate in a PDE webinar on January 6 or 7. Details on these webinars can be found in this document.

Memorandum of understanding – January 13 is the deadline for any charter school joining in Pennsylvania's Race to the Top application to submit to PDE its memorandum of understanding, signed by the chief executive officer, board president and local teachers' union president (if applicable).

Formal filing of Pennsylvania's application – January 19 is the deadline for PDE to submit the commonwealth's Race to the Top application to the USDE.

Given the enthusiastic interest we have seen thus far in Pennsylvania's Race to the Top efforts, I am confident our final application will reflect broad support among educators like you as we continue to build on our collective successes and create a world-class education system that benefits every Pennsylvanian.



Gerald L. Zahorchak

Our Vision for Race To The Top

Race to the Top is an unprecedented opportunity to accelerate our academic gains and deliver on our commitment that all children in the commonwealth have access to an education that prepares them to be productive citizens and to succeed in a high-skills globally-competitive, knowledge-based economy. To successfully compete and win a Race to the Top award, Pennsylvania must demonstrate that we not only have a plan to effectively use dramatic new resources to implement school-based improvements never before possible on such a broad scale, but that we are prepared to hold ourselves accountable for the results that really matter – greater student achievement.

Pennsylvania's Race to the Top application will build upon the strategies and practices we have been using in our schools that have resulted in the important and significant gains in student achievement of recent years. While we have learned that there is no silver bullet in education reform, we know from our own work that when specific behaviors and practices are implemented and aligned in a comprehensive manner, the result can be the success of every child.

Pennsylvania's Race to the Top application is built around six primary objectives:

- Strengthening and expanding the standards-aligned system (SAS) and developing data systems capable of supporting reform
- Developing a world-class human capital pipeline for teachers and leaders
- Developing a multi-measure evaluation system for teachers and leaders
- Creating a coherent approach to professional development
- Turning around the lowest performing schools
- Evaluating programs to identify and spread best practices

Commitment to Raising Student Achievement

Charter schools that choose to join in Pennsylvania's Race to the Top application will commit to implementing a set of activities and reforms associated with these objectives. Most importantly, these schools must commit to delivering results – results that will be measured and for which schools will be held accountable. The table below describes the levels of student achievement charter schools will be expected to reach by 2014 based on where student achievement is today in each school.

Addendum 3 of this document provides expected charter school-specific student achievement gains. School building and grade level student achievement targets are posted on the PDE Web site at http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/american_recovery_and_reinvestment_act/17696/charter_schools_race_to_the_top/642453.

Delivering Results: Expected Student Achievement Improvement by 2014

Expected Improvement – Math

	If today your achievement level is*...	In 2014, your achievement level will be...
Advanced	>50% advanced	66-90%
	20-50% advanced	53-69%
	<20% advanced	45-53%
Above proficient**	>70% proficient	86-99%
	50-70% proficient	79-92%
	<50% proficient	70-81%
Below basic	<10% below basic	0-3%
	10-20% below basic	2-6%
	>20% below basic	5-15%

Expected Improvement – Reading

	If today your achievement level is*...	In 2014, your achievement level will be...
Advanced	>50% advanced	67-80%
	35-50% advanced	56-68%
	<35% advanced	34-57%
Above proficient**	>70% proficient	86-99%
	60-70% proficient	82-87%
	<60% proficient	66-78%
Below basic	<10% below basic	0-4%
	10-20% below basic	3-7%
	>20% below basic	3-21%

* Based on the district average for the 2009 PSSA

** Above proficient includes both proficient and advanced

Charter schools that only serve grades 9-12 may have slightly lower 2014 performance targets and should refer to the school-level performance targets in Addendum 3.

The Next Steps for Charter Schools

Careful Review of Expectations for Charter Schools

Charter school administrators need to work closely with the president of the school's board of directors and (if applicable) the local teacher's union leader to review the state's Race to the Top goals so that these local education leaders clearly understand the commitment that is being made and the results that are expected.

This review should go beyond simply discussing the mechanics of selected reforms and should also outline the academic gains that are expected because of the reforms. The bottom line for our efforts must be raising student achievement.

Charter schools that wish to share in the dedicated charter school funding must agree to implement a set of reforms that are detailed in Addendum 1. If Pennsylvania receives a Race to the Top award, these schools will have up to 90 days from the date of the award to submit a detailed, final scope of work, along with a detailed budget and implementation plan.

Mandatory Information Sessions

The Race to the Top requirements are serious and extensive, and it is important for those charter schools that wish to take advantage of the dedicated charter school funding to understand the expectations of Race to the Top. Therefore, the executive officer of any charter school wishing to submit an MOU **must** participate in a PDE webinar on one of the following days:

January 6, 11:00 a.m. – Noon

OR

January 7, 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

You may access the webinars through www.pdewebinars.org. Locate the event entitled "Race to the Top – Charters," click on the Webinar Description button, and then click on the Register button. Advanced registration is not necessary.

Memorandum of Understanding

Any charter school that wishes to share in the Race to the Top dedicated charter school funding must submit a formal memorandum of understanding (MOU) to PDE by January 13. The final form of this memorandum of understanding is attached as Addendum 2.

This MOU must be signed by the charter school administrator, the president of the school's board of directors and (if applicable) the local teacher's union leader. The MOU includes a preliminary scope of work (Exhibit 1) that outlines the specific areas of reform the charter school is committed to pursuing.

Remember, **MOUs must be received by PDE no later than 5 p.m. on January 13, 2010**, via e-mail, postal service or private delivery service (FedEx, UPS, etc.). No faxes, please.

MOUs can be e-mailed to RA-RaceMOU@state.pa.us or mailed to:

Jackie Achey, RTTT
PA Dept. of Education
333 Market St., 10th floor
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333

The U.S. Department of Education will consider these MOUs when measuring each state's local support for education reforms. The greater the depth and breadth of local support for a state's Race to the Top reform plans, the better a state's chances are of being successful in securing Race to the Top funding.

The Next Steps for Charter Schools – *continued*

Formal Filing of Pennsylvania's Application

The U.S. Department of Education has set a firm deadline of Tuesday, January 19, for states to file their Race to the Top applications. A charter school's memorandum of understanding must be included in this formal state application.

Because of this, **it is critically important that you submit your MOU to the Pennsylvania Department of Education no later than January 13.** There will be no extension of this deadline.

While the department is committed to working with any interested charter schools in having them become a part of Pennsylvania's Race to the Top application, we will not be able to accommodate any requests to join after January 13 because of the volume of work required to finalize and submit the state's application by January 19. Moreover, because the time frame between January 13 and January 19 includes a weekend and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day, charter schools are encouraged to submit their MOUs as far in advance of the January 13 deadline as possible.

Dedicated Charter School Funding

While every charter school will benefit from the resources and tools PDE will make available using Race to the Top grant funding, only charter schools that submit an MOU as part of our Race to the Top application will share directly in Race to the Top funding in exchange for implementing certain reforms.

The chart below represents approximate award levels if 75 percent of eligible charter schools submit a Race to the Top MOU. Allocation of the dedicated charter school funding will use the Title I Part A funding allocation formula. Award amounts will vary depending on which, and how many charter schools submit an MOU. These estimates are preliminary and subject to change.

Potential award to Pennsylvania Charter Schools if 75% of charters participate in RTTT and PA receives a \$400 million award

Charter School	Minimum	Maximum	Charter School	Minimum	Maximum
Academy CS	\$12,500	\$22,500	Global Leadership Academy CS	\$75,000	\$125,000
Ad Prima CS	\$25,000	\$40,000	Graystone Academy CS	\$12,500	\$22,500
Alliance for Progress CS	\$40,000	\$70,000	Green Woods CS	\$25,000	\$40,000
Antonia Pantoja Community CS	\$100,000	\$175,000	Imani Education Circle CS	\$65,000	\$110,000
Avon Grove CS	\$20,000	\$35,000	Independence CS	\$100,000	\$175,000
Bear Creek Community CS	\$20,000	\$35,000	Khepera CS	\$45,000	\$80,000
Belmont Academy Charter School	\$15,000	\$25,000	KIPP Academy Charter School	\$40,000	\$70,000
Belmont Charter School	\$50,000	\$85,000	Laboratory CS	\$60,000	\$100,000
Boys Latin of Philadelphia CS	\$125,000	\$200,000	Lehigh Valley Academy Regional CS	\$30,000	\$50,000
Career Connections CHS	\$20,000	\$35,000	Lehigh Valley CHS for Performing Arts	\$10,000	\$17,500
Center for Student Learning CS at Pennsbury	\$3,000	\$5,500	Lincoln CS	\$100,000	\$175,000
Charter High School for Architecture and Design	\$75,000	\$125,000	Lincoln Park Performing Arts CS	\$15,000	\$30,000
Chester Community CS	\$350,000	\$450,000	Manchester Academic CS	\$15,000	\$30,000
Christopher Columbus CS	\$100,000	\$175,000	Maritime Academy Charter School	\$100,000	\$175,000
City CHS	\$45,000	\$80,000	MAST Community Charter School	\$175,000	\$275,000
Collegium CS	\$25,000	\$40,000	Mastery Charter High School	\$60,000	\$100,000
Crispus Attucks Youthbuild CS	\$12,500	\$20,000	Mastery CS-Pickett Campus	\$50,000	\$85,000
Delaware Valley CHS	\$85,000	\$150,000	Mastery CS-Shoemaker Campus	\$65,000	\$110,000
Discovery Charter School	\$65,000	\$110,000	Mastery CS-Thomas Campus	\$65,000	\$110,000
Dr Robert Ketterer CS	\$3,500	\$6,500	Math Civics and Sciences CS	\$125,000	\$200,000
Environmental Charter School at Frick Park	\$20,000	\$35,000	Montessori Regional CS	\$12,500	\$20,000
Eugenio Maria De Hostos CS	\$30,000	\$50,000	Multi-Cultural Academy CS	\$20,000	\$35,000
Fell CS	\$10,000	\$17,500	New Foundations CS	\$75,000	\$125,000
First Phila CS For Literacy	\$100,000	\$175,000	New Hope Academy CS	\$40,000	\$70,000
Folk Arts-Cultural Treasures CS	\$60,000	\$100,000	New Media Technology CS	\$65,000	\$110,000
Franklin Towne CHS	\$150,000	\$225,000			
Freire CS	\$55,000	\$95,000			

Dedicated Charter School Funding – *continued*

Potential award to Pennsylvania Charter Schools if 75% of charters participate in RTTT and PA receives a \$400 million award – *continued*

Charter School	Minimum	Maximum	Charter School	Minimum	Maximum
Northside Urban Pathways CS	\$25,000	\$40,000	Sugar Valley Rural CS	\$9,000	\$15,000
Northwood Academy CS	\$100,000	\$175,000	Sylvan Heights Science CS	\$20,000	\$35,000
Nueva Esperanza Academy CS	\$100,000	\$175,000	Tidioute Community CS	\$12,500	\$20,000
Pan American Academy CS	\$45,000	\$80,000	Truebright Science Academy CS	\$25,000	\$45,000
People for People CS	\$75,000	\$125,000	Tuscarora Blended Learning CS	\$7,000	\$12,500
Philadelphia Electrical & Tech CHS	\$85,000	\$150,000	Universal Institute CS	\$85,000	\$150,000
Philadelphia Harambee Inst CS	\$70,000	\$120,000	Urban League of Pittsburgh CS	\$20,000	\$30,000
Philadelphia Performing Arts CS	\$65,000	\$110,000	Vitalistic Therapeutic CS	\$10,000	\$7,500
Planet Abacus CS	\$35,000	\$65,000	West Oak Lane CS	\$100,000	\$175,000
Pocono Mountain Charter School	\$12,500	\$22,500	West Phila. Achievement CES	\$50,000	\$85,000
Preparatory CS	\$85,000	\$150,000	Widener Partnership CS	\$25,000	\$40,000
Propel CS-East	\$20,000	\$35,000	Wissahickon CS	\$55,000	\$95,000
Propel CS-Homestead	\$35,000	\$55,000	World Communications CS	\$65,000	\$110,000
Propel CS-McKeesport	\$25,000	\$45,000	Young Scholars CS	\$25,000	\$45,000
Propel CS-Montour	\$25,000	\$45,000	Young Scholars of Central PA CS	\$2,000	\$4,000
Renaissance Academy CS	\$20,000	\$35,000			
Richard Allen Preparatory CS	\$55,000	\$95,000			
Robert Benjamin Wiley Community CS	\$35,000	\$60,000			
Roberto Clemente CS	\$30,000	\$50,000			
Russell Byers CS	\$55,000	\$95,000			
School Lane CS	\$35,000	\$55,000			
Southwest Leadership Academy CS	\$35,000	\$60,000			

- All brick-and-mortar charters not in Corrective Action are eligible for Race to the Top funding
- Allocation is based on the proportion of Title I Part A funding the school receives
- Charter schools that receive no Title I Part A funding or opened in the 2009-10 school year but do not appear on this list are still eligible to receive some RTTT funds.

The list above does not include:

- 1) Charter schools that are ineligible for Race to the Top funding (cyber charters and bricks-and-mortar charters in Corrective Action)
- 2) Charter schools that opened in 2009-10. (These schools are eligible for Race to the Top funding.)
- 3) Charter schools with < 2% census poor who were not on the state's preliminary list for Title I Part A allocations. (These schools are eligible for Race to the Top funding.)

In addition to the funding received through Race to the Top, charter schools also will be expected to leverage other federal and state funding sources available for the same and/or complementary reform strategies targeted in the Race to the Top.

Statewide Reforms Using Race To The Top Funds

Pennsylvania will use a portion of its Race to the Top award to develop a number of state-level programs, initiatives and strategies that can be used by all schools and districts in the commonwealth, including:

- Funding to support the expansion of Pennsylvania’s regional STEM initiative;
- State-funded professional development for Advanced Placement certification;
- Creation of a catalog of high-quality virtual coursework that will be available to Pennsylvania students;
- Creation of a state-level charter schools office that will establish innovation labs to provide support for highly effective charter schools, help identify and disseminate best charter school practices and assist districts in monitoring performance of charter schools; and
- State-funded professional development for ELL teachers.

Pennsylvania has made tremendous strides in raising student achievement in recent years, and Race to the Top presents us with a unique opportunity to accelerate and expand those gains. But we all must work together to make that happen.

Have Questions About Race to the Top?

The department stands ready to work with you in the next several days to help Pennsylvania put together our strongest application.

Should you have questions or need assistance in your local efforts to join Pennsylvania’s Race to the Top application, please e-mail ra-pde@state.pa.us or contact Jennifer Waltz at (717)214-5708.