



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Suzi Oppenheimer

Landmark Education Reforms Secure New York's Place as Finalist in Race to the Top Competition

SUZI OPPENHEIMER August 4, 2010

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Senator Suzi Oppenheimer (D-Mamaroneck), chair of the Senate Education Committee, today expressed confidence that the sweeping education reforms she sponsored in the Senate have not only ensured New York's inclusion as a finalist for federal Race to the Top funding, but will also make the state a strong contender in the final phase of the competition. At stake is up to \$700 million in federal education dollars.

Race to the Top (RTTT) is a \$4.35 billion incentive program developed by the United States Department of Education to spur progressive reforms in state and local public school education. Thirty-five states and the District of Columbia applied in the second round of RTTT. In addition to New York, the finalists are: Arizona, California, Colorado, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and South Carolina.

In naming New York a finalist, U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan saluted parents, educators, private sector leaders and elected officials for leading a “quiet revolution” of reform. Indeed, it was the willingness of various stakeholders to compromise on critical issues that allowed New York to reach consensus on the sweeping reforms that were enacted. Working closely with the State Education Commissioner and the Board of Regents, Senator Oppenheimer was instrumental in forging common ground between teachers unions, charter school advocates and other key stakeholders. The absence of these reforms was a major factor in New York’s failure to win funding in the first round of the RTTT competition, which took place earlier this year.

New York will now send a team to Washington, D.C. to make the state’s finalist presentation during the week of August 9th. This presentation will allow New York to clarify the materials provided with its application and to answer questions from the federal reviewers. Winners of the competition will be announced in September.

Reflecting on Race to the Top, Senator Oppenheimer stated that while New York is “in it to win it,” the bold reforms already enacted “will have a transformational impact on our schools that will last long after the competition ends. By adopting rigorous teacher evaluation standards, new rules for the financial oversight and expansion of charter schools and a new

system for tracking individual student performance over time, we have put in place a framework that will spur innovation in education and prepare our students to compete in the global economy.”

“The critical objective is not simply a race to be won or lost, but an ongoing pursuit of the best practices that will convey the knowledge and skills our students need to succeed in life. On that score, we are well on our way to victory.”