



Dannel P. Malloy

GOVERNOR
STATE OF CONNECTICUT

October 17, 2011

The Honorable Arne Duncan
Secretary
United States Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary
United States Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Re: Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant

Dear Secretary Duncan and Secretary Sebelius:

As Governor, my vision is that all Connecticut children are given every chance to succeed. The current reality, unfortunately, is that one in four Connecticut children enters Kindergarten without the skills, knowledge, and behaviors needed to succeed – reducing their chances of reaching their educational potential and contributing to the worst achievement gap of any state in the country. With Connecticut's Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge grant application, we ambitiously seek to achieve a dramatic increase in the percentage of Children with High Needs who enter Kindergarten ready to succeed, and to cut in half the percentage of children unprepared for school.

Connecticut has invested billions of dollars in early childhood programs over the years, but educational outcomes for our most vulnerable young children have not materially improved. We have created excellent programs that reach some children during some of their early years, but we have not yet developed an integrated, comprehensive system to reach every high-need child in every setting in every year.

To achieve this vision, we must first transform the early childhood education paradigm to improve academic outcomes for children and their caregivers who have never been part of the publicly subsidized early education and care system. Second, we must expand access to high quality education and care. While Connecticut undertakes our proposed Race to the Top projects to foster a comprehensive system of early childhood care and education, I am committed to fund one thousand new early childhood education slots targeted to high need children.

Connecticut's Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) proposal will enable Connecticut to accelerate ongoing efforts to strengthen state systems and support communities to work collaboratively to better meet the needs of high-need children and families through improved service coordination and quality improvements. Our proposal builds upon years of investment and planning, but at the same time represents a dramatic shift in the way our state coordinates its federal, state, and local resources to produce brighter futures for our children.

To ensure the leadership necessary to change the culture of early childhood systems in Connecticut, I issued Executive Order No. 11 to establish a State Early Childhood Office. This Office will coordinate the efforts of the many state agencies and many more stakeholders who have committed to work together to integrate the transformative RTT-ELC projects into the existing efforts outlined in Public Act No. 11-181, which mandates the continued development of a coordinated system of early care, education and child development through increased collaboration among State agencies.

We must make smart investments to improve Connecticut's high-needs students' education and well-being. That is why I am proud to present to you Connecticut's Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge application. Our RTT-ELC proposal aligns with my agenda to improve health, development and educational outcomes for young children, to reduce the achievement gap, and to build a world-class workforce that will increase Connecticut's global competitiveness. But our vision is about more than outcomes and competitiveness – it is part of our fundamental responsibility to provide a chance for all children to succeed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dannel P. Malloy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "M".

Dannel P. Malloy
Governor, State of Connecticut