

APPENDIX A
STATE LETTER

ED LETTERHEAD

(LETTER BELOW IS STRUCTURED FOR A STATE THAT WAS AWARDED BOTH SIG AND RTT GRANTS. THE LETTER WILL BE ADJUSTED ACCORDINGLY FOR STATES THAT WON ONLY SIG.)

Month XX, 2011

Firstname Lastname
State Official
State Dept. of Ed.
Street Address
City, ST ZIP

Dear Dr./Mr./Ms. Lastname:

Congratulations on being awarded a Race to the Top (RTT) grant and School Improvement Grant (SIG) funds. I am writing to let you know that the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences is conducting an evaluation of RTT and SIG. The evaluation will provide important evidence on how RTT and SIG affect state, district, and school practice and whether they are associated with gains in student achievement.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) included \$7.35 billion for the RTT and SIG programs. These funds are designed to support states, districts, and schools as they identify and implement educational reforms to help struggling schools turn around and improve the academic performance of all students. Determining whether these programs achieve these goals is of paramount importance to educators and policymakers.

We have contracted with Mathematica Policy Research and its research partners, American Institutes for Research and Social Policy Research Associates, to conduct this evaluation, which will include all 50 states and the District of Columbia, approximately 240 school districts, and approximately 1,200 schools. The comprehensive evaluation will examine a broad range of issues including the adoption of new standards and assessments; the development and use of longitudinal data systems; reforms to support principal and teacher effectiveness; strategies to help turn around persistently low-performing schools. Because RTT and SIG aim to support an integrated and intensive approach to reform at every level of the educational system, the evaluation will collect information at the state, district, and school levels. Additional information about the evaluation is provided in the enclosed information sheet.

Your support is important to the success of the study. As you may know, all states and districts that received funding through ARRA grant programs are required under The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (34 C.F.R. § 76.591) to participate in the study. If you receive inquiries from local administrators, we would greatly appreciate your confirming that your state is participating in this important study.

A member of the research team will contact you to tell you more about the study and to discuss your state's participation. If you have any questions, please contact the Project Officer, Thomas Wei at (202) 208-0452 or at Thomas.Wei@ed.gov. We look forward to learning more about the exciting reform efforts underway in your state.

Sincerely,

John Q. Easton, Director
Institute of Education Sciences