

**Education Reform Coalition Urges New York State to Implement its  
Race to the Top Pledges on Teacher Quality and Effectiveness**

**Buffalo ReformED**  
**Civic Builders**  
**Democracy Builders**  
**Democrats for Education Reform**  
**Education Reform Now**  
**Educators 4 Excellence**  
**National Council on Teacher Quality**

**The New Teacher Project**  
**NYCAN: The New York Campaign for  
Achievement Now**  
**Parent Power Project**  
**StudentsFirst**  
**Students for Education Reform**  
**Turnaround for Children**



January 3, 2012

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor of New York State  
NYS State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

We are gravely concerned about New York's credibility when it comes to living up to our promise of providing every child in the state with an outstanding classroom teacher. As you are aware, labor and management from school districts in many parts of the state have so far failed to implement key provisions of the state's Race to the Top laws. These laws passed with bi-partisan support in our state's successful attempt to win \$700 million in federal funds for public schools.

It has been widely documented that one of the reasons New York beat out so many other states in President Obama's RTTT competition was the enthusiastic pledge by leaders of both education labor and management to work collaboratively to implement new teacher evaluations which would highlight the exceptional work done by effective classroom teachers. See video of New York's representatives promising to work together to implement the RTTT plan [here](#).

Like other winning states, New York promised it would implement the reforms that came with the money. Nearly two years later, however, all that the students of New York's public schools have to show for this grand bargain is foot-dragging and politicking by the same grownups who assured the federal government we were serious.

To avert a situation where New York is forced to return hundreds of millions of sorely-needed federal dollars, we urge you to consider introducing "shot clock" style measures to ensure that all school districts will fully implement the state's new teacher evaluation framework in accordance with the Race to the Top timeline.

New York cannot afford to leave federal money on the table at a time when its schools are already facing budgetary hardships. Federal education officials have made clear their intention to hold states accountable to their Race to the Top programs, as seen recently in the case of Hawaii. Hawaii's failure to secure a collective bargaining agreement with its teachers' union contributed to it being placed on "high-risk status," in danger of losing its grant and subject to extensive review and reporting requirements.

Aside from the fact that we believe that implementing these new, modernized teacher evaluation systems is the right thing to do, we are also mindful there are other federal funding streams which could be jeopardized by this high-profile impasse. New York City, alone, has almost \$60 million in federal School Improvement Grants at risk after its negotiations with the United Federation of Teachers around a pilot system for evaluating teacher performance broke down this past Friday. It is also endangering tens of millions of dollars in federal Teacher Incentive Fund grants earmarked for its teachers, because it has not adopted a system which recognizes and highlights great teaching.

To ensure that the City and the state's other districts fulfill New York's promises to its schoolchildren, we request that you introduce a back-stop measure that requires districts to develop teacher evaluation plans by August 31, 2012. Any district that has not successfully negotiated its own plan by that date will have to automatically carry out a "default" plan, to be created by the State Education Department. Those districts would have one year (until August 31, 2013) to install and fully implement their default plan systems.

Governor, we thank you for your efforts to date to strengthen New York's focus on educational measures and accountability, most recently by introducing your School District Performance Improvement Awards program to incentivize districts to make innovative reforms that improve student performance.

Research studies have demonstrated, time and again, that the most impactful factor on the level of learning in a classroom is the quality of its teacher. At this critical juncture when the state faces a key deadline in implementing a teacher evaluation framework that will impact its students for years to come, we ask that you step up again to ensure that the task gets accomplished.

Sincerely,

**Buffalo ReformED**

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