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Christie Administration Submits Race to the Top Application Centered on Improving Student Performance Application In Line with National Education Reform Movement

Trenton, New Jersey- The Christie Administration submitted today its Race to the Top application which focuses on the belief that student performance begins and ends in the classroom. It recognizes that after a child walks through the school house doors, no single factor influences that student's academic success more than the quality of his or her teachers.

This second round Race to the Top submission is far stronger than the first, including aggressive reforms to help turn around the state's failing schools despite the fact that New Jersey is currently the second highest state in per-pupil spending. New Jersey's Race to the Top submission has been endorsed by a unanimous vote in both houses of the Legislature and has been endorsed by dozens of organizations focused on improving New Jersey's public schools, as well as by hundreds of New Jersey's school districts. No single factor influences a student's educational experience and academic achievement more than their teacher. As such, the application includes several bold initiatives to strengthen teacher quality and ultimately improve student performance. These initiatives include elevating the importance of teacher evaluations, while enhancing school districts' capabilities to measure student learning in the classroom and using those measures to evaluate teachers' effectiveness.

Additionally, a merit-pay system will financially reward highly effective teachers and serve as an incentive for adequate teachers to improve their own abilities. It also rewards effective teachers who accept assignments in low-performing schools.

Commissioner Schundler said, "These reforms are the beginning, not the end, to improving New Jersey's education system. This bold reform agenda will continue regardless of whether we receive federal funding. It is critical that we continue to implement good ideas, regardless of special interests, if we are going to improve the quality of education we provide our children."

Application Centers on Shared Belief By Governor Christie and President Obama that the Path to High-Level, Enduring Student Achievement Begins and Ends in the Classroom.

The Governor's reform plans in this application include several programs that emphasize teacher quality through fair and thorough evaluations, including measures to enhance school districts' capability to measure student learning and performance.

- **Incentivizing Quality Instruction with Merit-Pay.** New Jersey will design, evaluate, and implement merit pay programs that pay individual teachers based on student achievement. The system will also reward effective teachers who accept assignments in low-performing schools.
- **Evaluating Teacher Training Programs.** This application proposes to evaluate teacher training programs, so that the most effective programs can be identified and teachers schooled in those programs can be recruited.
- **Putting Educational Effectiveness Over Seniority.** In addition to rewarding and promoting effective teachers, it is necessary to weed-out ineffective teachers. This application also proposes to make it easier for school districts to terminate ineffective teachers, using teacher evaluations based on student achievement as the basis for decisions to grant tenure, promote and develop teachers. In the event of layoffs or a workforce reduction, educational effectiveness will replace seniority as the main factor in determining who to retain.
- **Successful Schools are Led by Successful Principals.** Governor Christie recognizes the role that principals play in fostering a successful, high-achieving education. This application proposes to offer a

financial incentive to effective principals, as it does to effective teachers, to relocate to low-performing schools.

The Governor's cover letter to the race to the top application can be found attached to this release at <http://www.nj.gov/education/arra/grants/060110CoverLetter.pdf>. The full Race to the Top Application will be available online at www.state.nj.us/education by the close of business today.