In an effort to improve education in the United States, the Department of Education is holding a national competition among states for the Race to the Top Fund of $4 billion. States must apply and provide evidence of how the goals of the Race to the Top Fund will be met. The four goals are:

- Adopting rigorous standards that prepare students for success in college and the workforce;
- Recruiting and retaining effective teachers;
- Turning around low-performing schools; and
- Building data systems to track student achievement and teacher effectiveness.

Secretary Arne Duncan has given three speeches, with one more scheduled on July 2, to define the priorities of the Race to the Top Fund. On June 8, Duncan spoke at the Fourth Annual Conference of the Institute of Education Sciences to encourage the efforts to build warehouses of data.

“Hopefully some day we can track kids from pre-school to high school and from high school to college and college to career. Hopefully we can track good kids to good teachers and good teachers to good colleges of education.”

On June 15, at the Governors Education Symposium, Duncan held his second speech in the series to recognize the importance he places on rigorous standards, especially the recent movement toward common standards across states.

“Once new standards are set and adopted, you need to create new tests that measure whether students are meeting those standards. Tonight I am announcing that the Obama administration will help pay for the costs of developing those tests…The administration will dedicate up to $350 million…to help develop new assessments.”

Duncan gave his third speech on June 22 at the National Charter School Conference. He urged charter school leaders to lead the effort in turning around low-performing schools, noting the need for aggressive actions for such a difficult task.

“We need everyone who cares about public education to take on the toughest assignment of all – and get in the business of turning around our lowest-performing schools: that includes states, districts, nonprofits, unions, and charter organizations.”

The final speech will be held on July 2 to the National Education Association and will focus on the fourth goal – improving teacher quality.
News from Around the Natural State

School Choice Deadline July 1
July 1 is the established deadline for turning in school choice transfer applications. Under school choice, students can attend school in another district without permission from the home district provided they meet the deadline.

News from Around the Nation

Court Confirms Reimbursement for Special Education
In a decision that could help students with disabilities obtain needed services and cost school districts millions of dollars, the Supreme Court ruled on Monday that parents of special-education students may seek government reimbursement for private school tuition, even if they have never received special-education services in public school.

Report: Expectations Gap Divides Educators from Students
A new report that explores the views of teachers and principals about the nation’s dropout crisis finds an “unsettling” gap with the expectations of achievement held by students and parents.

Site Seeing

The Department of Education has a blog written by education staff and have covered Secretary of Education Arne Duncan’s latest speeches and events. To follow Duncan and the latest issues in education (and leave your own comments) visit http://www.edgovblogs.org/duncan

Mark Your Calendar

There are several workshops and conferences being held this summer for educators. Visit the ADE calendar to view topics and dates.

Final Thoughts

“Education reform is not about sweeping mandates or grand gestures. It’s about systematically examining and learning, building on what we’ve done right, and scrapping what hasn’t worked for kids.” Secretary Of Education Arne Duncan, Fourth Annual Conference of the Institute of Education Sciences
Thanks for reading! See you next week!

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