



Statement of Robin Steans, Executive Director of Advance Illinois

Congratulations to Illinois for being named a finalist in the \$4.35 billion “Race to the Top” competition. Illinois should be proud it produced such a strong application, which earned national recognition for its ‘groundbreaking’ supporting legislation, ‘standout’ support from stakeholders and a thorough plan. State leaders are already preparing for their interviews in Washington. We stand ready to help them. We are eager to continue the work that has gotten us this far toward a statewide education system that prepares every student to be world ready.

The U.S. Department of Education asked for a tremendous amount of work in a very short time. Those who put together our application deserve the thanks of every Illinois citizen.

Race to the Top gives the state an opportunity to articulate a vision for our children and our schools, with the promise of early funding to make it a reality.

- **Students** deserve an engaging and stimulating education that prepares them for what lies ahead – where they are held to high expectations on relevant curriculum, given the support they need to succeed and are connected to the real world.
- **Teachers** deserve to be well prepared for the classroom, to be respected and supported, and to be given the tools and data they need to succeed.
- **Families and Communities** deserve to be involved in their schools and to receive meaningful and accurate information about how their children are doing and how local resources are being used.
- **School leaders** deserve more support as they begin their careers, greater flexibility and adequate resources from the state so they can best serve their students and empower their teachers. They should also be held accountable for student achievement and success – not for complying with mandates.

In this time of fiscal challenge in Illinois, we now have an opportunity to win more than \$400 million (or if the state wins its full request, \$510 million) in discretionary funds to drive improvement throughout the state. Whether we win in this phase of the competition, or later this year, being named a finalist is a testament to the hard work and smart thinking of our state’s education leaders, and brings renewed energy to their efforts to keep up the momentum toward better schools for all of our children.

Advance Illinois, is an independent, objective voice to promote a public education system in Illinois that prepares all students to be ready for work, college and democratic citizenship. It is co-chaired by former Illinois Governor Jim Edgar and former U.S. Secretary of Commerce Bill Daley.

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