



# Louisiana Federation of Teachers

## American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO

Steve Monaghan, President • Joe Potts, Executive Vice President

9623 Brookline Avenue Rouge, LA 70809

T: 225/923-1037 • F: 225/923-1461 • 1-800-634-0589 • <http://la.aft.org>

## Statement on Race to the Top

The Louisiana Federation of Teachers has spent many long hours in civil, frank, and spirited conversations with Superintendent Paul Pastorek and his Race to the Top team concerning the development of Louisiana's Race to the Top application.

We engaged in this dialogue because we understand not only the opportunity that the Race to the Top Program may offer as a potential "game-changer" for both Louisiana students and teachers, but also because many of the reforms that have been discussed within the context of this competitive grant proposal *are* and *will* continue to be discussed with or without this federal grant proposal.

**The fact is: LFT was invited and welcomed to the table, and we accepted that invitation.**

Initially, LFT approached these discussions only with a fervent belief that engagement is far better than disengagement, and that dialogue is better than silence. However, we stayed engaged in the discussions because of the Superintendent's willingness to consider all aspects of the proposal as *organic --- as an opportunity to try properly resourced reforms, modify these efforts, and even change direction if necessary*. Discussions throughout the process centered on the possibilities and not on any entrenched positions.

Since the official public launch of the Louisiana R<sup>2</sup>T campaign on December 22, 2009, these good faith exchanges between the Federation and the Superintendent increased dramatically. The Federation submitted numerous recommendations and suggestions for modification to the state's proposal throughout the process. These recommendations were offered in good faith and in the best interest of students, teachers, and the future of our public schools. While some of our recommendations were not accepted, the body of work that represents the proposal does contain a significant number of these recommendations.

We're respectful of the great need that exists in many schools and school districts. We are also aware of the opportunities that possibly hundreds of millions of dollars supplied by a successful grant application will offer to thousands of Louisiana children currently bound by the shackles of intergenerational poverty. We also recognize that as in all such matters there are no guarantees. Whether R<sup>2</sup>T actually does produce hope and new opportunities for success for students and teachers lies not only in the success of the grant application. Success also depends on the inclusion of teachers in the development, monitoring, and honest assessment of these reforms.

As a good steward of our profession and as a strong advocate for public education, we recognize our obligation to maintain our full engagement. We embrace that responsibility.

In closing, while we certainly do not universally agree with or accept all of the ideas and policies contained within the proposal, we do agree that too many children and teachers deserve much better than what they're now receiving.

Steve Monaghan, President  
Louisiana Federation of Teachers