

Race to the Top Data Talking Points **August 18, 2009**

Background: Recently, the Department of Education, President Obama and Secretary Arne Duncan announced the criteria for the “Race to the Top,” competition for \$4.35 billion in grants. The goals are for states to use funds to drive reform in four main areas: teacher effectiveness/distribution, standards and assessments, data systems, and struggling schools. One specific tenet of the plan says states must have no “legal, statutory or regulatory barriers to linking data about student achievement or student growth to teachers for the purpose of teacher and principal evaluation.” Secretary Duncan has wrongfully attacked California’s law.

Talking Points:

- CTA shares the Obama Administration’s commitment to providing quality data systems to help improve student learning, instructional strategies and professional development. Unfortunately, it appears Secretary Duncan is confused about how data systems work in California.
- California law does not prohibit linking student and teacher data. In fact, **the data is already linked at the local school level.** This data is available to teachers and school officials to analyze, evaluate and report progress to parents. Local schools and school districts are held accountable for using these data reports to revise and improve school plans for program improvement.
- There is no need to create another level of state bureaucracy to link student and teacher data. All the data functions that are being requested already exist at the local school level, where they belong. NCLB taught us that one-size does not fit all. The federal government should let states and local school districts determine how best to meet the needs of their students.
- California law also does not prohibit the use of student assessment results in the evaluation of teachers. Many districts include it as one component of the evaluation. *Current California law states that each school district “shall evaluate and assess teacher performance as it relates to the progress of pupils toward the state standards and, if applicable, the state adopted academic content standards as measured by state adopted criterion referenced assessments.”* Decisions about teacher evaluations are bargained at the local level.

- CTA, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the California Secretary of Education all agree that the evaluation of teachers should and must remain at the local level. That is a function of the local school district – not the state legislature.
- **CTA strongly objects to the use of a single test score to pay or evaluate teachers.** Students are more than one test score and so are educators. There must be multiple measures in determining student achievement, as well as evaluating educators. President Obama said the same thing in his speech on July 24.
- There is no research or evidence that paying teachers based on student test scores improves education. In fact, all research shows that the practice leads to narrowing the curriculum and teaching to the test. Basing educator pay on how well students fill in multiple-choice test bubbles will undermine school reform – not advance it.
- California lawmakers should not rush to change laws that are working in California just to appease Secretary Duncan, who does not understand how our policies work.