



Fall 2009

On Tuesday evening October 6th, I participated along with Rick Longhurst (Assistant to the President), Maria DeWald (Immediate Past President), and Catherine Romano (Presidential Assignee - via conference call) in a meeting with Chancellor Meryll Tisch; Commissioner of Education, Dr. David Steiner; new Deputy Commissioner, John King and several key New York State Education Department staff members. The meeting topic addressed the SED's plans for the use of the federal Race to the Top money, and we were being asked for our feedback and assistance.

The SED is committed to developing a common core curriculum, improving teacher preparation, improving data systems and improving or closing failing schools but having viable alternatives in place. We all agreed that the devil is in the details as to how it gets done. Applications for this money had not yet been received, but they are clearly thinking and planning ahead.

We provided them a copy of the letter PTA National President, Chuck Saylor and Byron Garrett, CEO jointly sent to Arne Duncan, Secretary of the US Department of Education delineating PTA's position regarding the areas for use for the Race to the Top money. Two of the items we specifically discussed were our position on charter schools, for which we provided them with written materials, and Family Engagement, which was the primary focus of our comments. It was emphasized that use of research-based family engagement tools will ensure the success of the plans they have. We will be following this up with a letter to each of them and include additional materials regarding Family Engagement. We have also pledged to maintain communications and collaboration.

Two final points, Chancellor Tisch commented that she was pleased to see us, as we were the group that truly wants what they want, and that is, to improve the education of all our children. After our meeting, we agreed that this meeting had a very different feeling than others we have attended, and we are hopeful that this is a sign of good things to come. We look forward to working with the Chancellor, the Commissioner and the State Education Department (SED) to ensure that every child's potential becomes a reality!

Susan Lipman
NYS PTA President