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Race to the Top Grant

Hello, I'm Del Burns, superintendent of the Wake County Public School System.

This month, the state of North Carolina applied for a significant federal grant from the Race to the Top initiative. Race to the Top is a competitive grant program designed to encourage and reward states that are implementing significant reforms in public education. Today I want to share some information about Race to the Top and, although it's very early, talk about its potential impact on our schools in Wake County.

On January 5, our board chairman Ron Margiotta, Wake NCAE president Jennifer Lanane, and I signed off on our collective support for Race to the Top. In doing that we joined our state's other 114 school systems in committing to continuously improving our schools. It's an opportunity not only to attract more resources to schools that need them, but also to strengthen the way those resources are used on behalf of our 140,000 students.

The federal government is putting forward \$4.35 billion -- over a four-year period -- to states who are competing in four key education reform areas. Those include:

- * Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy.
- * Building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction.
- * Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are most needed.
- * And turning around lowest-achieving schools.

The state's Race to the Top application has three main priorities. First, comprehensive education reform to increase achievement, decrease gaps, and increase graduation rates. Second, emphasis on science, technology, engineering and mathematics to improve our nation's competitiveness. And third, improving early learning outcomes.

These are all important reforms and priorities, and they line up very well with the Wake County Public School System's strategic directives and our state's emphasis on 21st-century education.

Our state applied for \$469.5 million. Half of that funding must go to districts, based on Title I funding formulas. Of that, the Wake County Public School System could potentially receive \$3 to \$4 million.

Our state's application describes a number of ongoing initiatives that support the Race to the Top objectives, and for which additional funding is sought. These include areas such as technology,

standards and assessments, curriculum monitoring, teacher and principal evaluation, virtual public schools, district and school transformation support, and more.

If North Carolina's Race to the Top application is approved, it will be a tremendous help for schools and school districts across our state during a very challenging economic time. But it will also be a validation for the hard work our state -- and your Wake County Public School System -- have been doing for years in order to systematically focus on learning and teaching for all students. We are proud to support our governor, state superintendent, and state Board of Education, in this endeavor, and we are hopeful for good news when the grant awards are announced this spring.

Thanks, and I'll talk to you again soon.