Dear Colleague:

It's that time of year when your students may be writing in each other's yearbooks: "Stay in touch." I'm writing you and other school district leaders across the country with the same request—and with some information that I hope will be useful to you, your staff, and your community.

First, though, as another school year comes to a close, I want to thank you for your leadership and commitment to your students and fellow educators. The progress we have been able to make together is due in large part to the guidance, ideas, and support that we have received from state and local education leaders like you.

Second, I wanted to be sure you were aware that the Department recently announced two grant competitions for school districts. The Race to the Top District (RTT-D) competition specifically invites school districts and district consortia to create plans for individualized classroom instruction. The Department plans to release the application in July with an October submission deadline. Please watch the Department's website for application details. The Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) competition includes a new focus for 2012 on supporting evaluation systems that reward success, offer greater professional opportunities, and drive decision-making on recruitment, development, and retention of effective teachers and principals. Applications are due July 27, and winners will be announced in September. In addition to Race to the Top and TIF, we are using unprecedented federal resources to build a foundation for improving and transforming public education through such federal programs as School Improvement Grants, Investing in Innovation (i3), and Promise Neighborhoods.

Third, I wanted to be sure you knew that our new Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education is Deb Delisle. Deb began her career as an elementary teacher and has been a principal, a superintendent, and a state chief in Ohio. I'm delighted to welcome her on board, and I know she looks forward to working with you.

Finally, as you know, we rarely send you e-mails. Given the glut in your inboxes, I appreciate the time you've taken to read this one. We'd like to be able to communicate with you more effectively when we have relevant announcements and ask that, if you're interested, you sign up for e-mail updates from us. We invite you to join thousands of school leaders, teachers, parents, and other education stakeholders who are keeping current on new federal resources, grant programs, and policies. We also think that teachers in your district might be interested in our Teaching Matters newsletter, a periodic newsletter created by teachers at the Department, offering resources, highlighting news, and providing links to teacher-recommended reading. Please forward the sign-up link to them.

I am honored to have partners like you working across America to provide our nation's students with the opportunity to receive a world-class education.

Have a great summer.

Best wishes.

Arne Duncan U.S. Secretary of Education

P.S. Don't forget to *click here to receive* the latest information and resources from the U.S. Department of Education. As a former district superintendent, I know Washington can seem pretty distant, but I hope e-mail can help us stay in touch.