

December 6, 2012

The Honorable Arne Duncan
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education,
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan:

I am writing to support the application submitted by Guilford County Schools (GCS) under the Race to the Top-District (RTT-D) funding opportunity. The requested funds will stimulate a new era of student-led learning in Guilford County schools.

As you know, GCS is one of 61 finalists for the RTT-D funding opportunity. GCS is the state's third-largest district and is among the 50 largest districts in the country. The district serves 72,585 students, more than half of whom qualify for free or reduced price lunch. The GCS student population is quite diverse, representing more than 140 countries and 174 languages and dialects.

GCS seeks RTT-D funds to implement its \$30 million Personalized Achievement, Curriculum and Environment (PACE) Schools Project, which will accelerate 21st century personalized learning across county schools. The requested funds for the PACE Schools Project will finance the purchase of technology; training and support to students, families, teachers and principals; and the addition of coordinators in middle schools to lead a teaching and learning transformation. Under the PACE Schools Project, nearly 17,000 students in the district's 24 middle schools will receive tablet computers to work at their own pace, using personal learning "maps" that show the students their progress in mastering new concepts.

Funding for the PACE Schools Project will allow GCS to extend its strong track record of innovation and implementation of accountability measures. In recent years, GCS policies have resulted in significant improvements in the district's lowest-performing schools and have broken down the traditional walls between departments, schools, and even classrooms. The district holds the highest graduation rate among North Carolina's five largest districts, and the state has designated more than one-third of GCS schools as Honor Schools of Excellence, Schools of Excellence, or Schools of Distinction. An award under the RTT-D program will facilitate continued excellence in learning outcomes among middle school students, which will complement the district's successful reforms at the elementary and high school levels.

With this in mind, I encourage the full and fair consideration of the Guilford County Schools proposal as expeditiously as possible, consistent with your statutory and regulatory guidelines. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact Chris Sgro of my staff at (336) 333-5311, extension 27.

Sincerely,

Kay R. Hagan
United States Senator