

What *Race to the Top* Is & Why You Should Oppose It

Race to the Top (RttT) is Pres. Obama's and Ed. Secretary Arne Duncan's initiative to push states to adopt education policies that encourage the **private management** of public schools, **punish educators** at schools with low scores on **standardized tests**, and undermine stable, collectively negotiated teacher salaries.

RttT is administered as a competitive grant program in which **states vie for desperately needed federal funds**. They compete through grant applications and by passing laws to demonstrate their commitment to **charter schools, standardized testing, and differential pay** for teachers. This “business model” of education is not surprising given the record of **non-educator Arne Duncan** – whose Renaissance 2010 program caused untold damage to Chicago's students, including the **horrific violence** at “turnaround” Fenger HS.

Together, Tennessee and Delaware won a meager \$600 million in RttT's first round – less than the claimed **deficit** in this year's proposed CPS budget. That's why the nation's **leading civil rights organizations**, like the NAACP, the Urban League and Rainbow PUSH recently **condemned** RttT's priorities. The RttT Fund currently impacts only 2.5% of the students in the United States eligible for free and reduced lunch, 3% of the nation's Black students, and less than 1% of Latino and Native American students.

Yet, as Duncan bragged, “There's been this extraordinary movement in the country **before we spent \$1.**” For example, Illinois rammed through changes to testing and evaluation law **literally** overnight as part of RttT. This hyper-focus on standardized tests will **limit the opportunities** of ALL students to benefit from non-testable teaching such as civics, art, PE, etc.

Race to the Top is an ineffective, destructive policy that hurts children.



Support Chicago's Teachers as We Fight to Change the City's Priorities

It would be difficult for any observer of State and City politics to miss the current showdown between the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) and the Chicago Board of Education (the Board). Chicago Public Schools (CPS) CEO Ron Huberman has declared a budget shortfall of \$600 million with a **threat to lay off some 2,700 teachers**. After the State coughed up a portion of the money it owes, CPS's declared deficit fell to \$270 million. CPS then stated it would not raise class size in the elementary grades, although they **actually laid off over 400 elementary school teachers**.

CPS now says CTU **might** prevent some 1,000 layoffs by reopening our contract to give back the 4% raises the Board agreed to three years ago. CTU's new leadership (led by members of CORE) insist that our collective bargaining agreement is essential and **CPS cannot renege on its agreement**. We have pointed to more savings CPS can make in other areas as well as insisting that the City resolve the budget crisis by tapping the **\$1.2 billion TIF fund** – some \$250 million of which came from education tax waivers.

But the State is in Fiscal Crisis! Shouldn't Teachers Give?

The State of Illinois is, indeed, in massive debt. But no one can seriously argue that the debt results from too much education spending – Illinois ranks **near last in state spending on education**. The budget crisis is due to a regressive “flat tax” and federal cuts because of the **enormous bailout** of “too big to fail” banks. When will education and other public services be “too big to fail”? In fact, **teachers have given back** in both good times and bad. For the past ten years, CPS has gotten a pass on teachers' pensions.

Other public workers have given back. Why not teachers?

Some in the public sector have given back. However, Huberman's claim that giving back a small portion of his \$230,000/yr salary as he buys a million dollar house doesn't count. Yet, garbage workers and other City employees **do** pay a price for the crisis. **Teachers believe this is unfair**. TIF money should go to restoring City services, not to real estate schemes. We hope to lead the way and **reverse the flow of money** – back to ordinary people, not to corporations and real estate moguls who caused the crisis.

Where's the conflict at now? How can I keep informed?

CPS and CTU are in talks. On **CTU.net.com** you can read updates.