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For Immediate Release

AQE CALLS ON U.S. EDUCATION SECRETARY ARNE DUNCAN TO TAKE ACTION TO ENSURE NEW YORK PARENTS ARE NOT LEFT OUT OF *RACE TO THE TOP* DECISIONS REGARDING LOW PERFORMING SCHOOLS

Albany—The Alliance for Quality Education hand-delivered a letter to U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan at an event in Albany today calling on him to, “take immediate action to require meaningful parent and community participation in transforming or turning around low-performing schools.” Interventions to reform low performing schools are a central part of the *Race to the Top* grant program—Secretary Duncan was in Albany to award \$700 million in *Race to the Top* funding to New York State. Currently New York has no process to require parent and public input and participation in decisions regarding strategies for transforming the state’s lowest performing schools despite a large body of research identifying parent buy-in as an essential component to improving these schools. In fact a proposal by AQE to provide parents and communities with information and opportunities for meaningful input in these schools was rejected by the New York State Education Department earlier this year.

“It is a great day for school funding in New York when the U.S. Secretary of Education delivers \$700 million to our State Education Department, but now we need to make certain the money is invested in research-backed best practices,” said Billy Easton, Executive Director, Alliance for Quality Education. “Study after study shows that parent and community participation and support for school reform are essential to successfully improving low-performing schools. Unfortunately, policy makers too often have a habit of calling for parent involvement, but a practice of doing nothing to help parents get involved. Right now New York State has no policy to encourage or require parent involvement in decision-making about improving low performing schools despite all the research that shows the critical importance of parents to successful school reform. Today is an opportunity for the State Education Department to take immediate action to ensure parents have a seat at the table, we are asking Secretary Duncan to make certain this happens.”

AQE's letter to Secretary Duncan called for, "school-based planning teams with adequate parent representation, public meetings in order to meaningfully inform and engage parents and the community, and a yearlong planning process in order to facilitate meaningful engagement and enable well informed, evidence-based decisions regarding turning around our lowest performing schools."

Click [HERE](#) to read the letter

AQE is part of a national coalition of parent and community organizations, *Communities for Excellent Public Schools* (CEPS), which recently published a comprehensive analysis of the federal government's policies regarding school turnaround—including the only comprehensive national data base of these schools that has been published to date. In addition CEPS published its own proposals for *Sustainable School Transformation* which draws extensively on the most up-to-date research on the subject. Copies of both are available at: <http://www.ceps-ourschools.org/>.

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