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**CONTACT:**  
GOVERNOR'S PRESS OFFICE, (850) 488-5394  
DOE PRESS OFFICE, (850) 245-0413

**FLORIDA ANNOUNCED AS FINALIST IN  
\$4.35-BILLION RACE TO THE TOP COMPETITION**

*~ One of only 16 finalists invited to present its application in Washington, D.C. ~*

TALLAHASSEE – Governor Charlie Crist today announced that Florida has been named a finalist in phase 1 of the \$4.35-billion federal Race to the Top education reform competition. Florida was one of only 16 finalists chosen from a pool of 41 applicants to proceed to the next stage of the competition. Race to the Top winners will receive funding to implement comprehensive education reform plans designed to accelerate student learning and improve the quality of education.

“I commend the Florida Department of Education, our school districts and the countless individuals and stakeholder organizations who have worked tirelessly to support our efforts to win this competition,” said Governor Crist. “This unprecedented opportunity will strengthen our students, our teachers and our schools, and I’m confident that our bold application will bring us victory in this critical race.”

As part of the finalist process, representatives from the Florida Department of Education will explain Florida’s application to federal officials and engage in an interview session currently scheduled for the week of March 15, 2010. The presentations will be videotaped and posted online for viewing after the competition winners are announced. At the conclusion of the finalist presentations, the reviewers will meet again to discuss each application, finalize scores and comments, and submit them to the U.S. Department of Education for final decisions.

“This is exciting news for Florida, and I’m thrilled that we have been invited to present our innovative reform plans to our federal partners,” said Education Commissioner Dr. Eric J. Smith. “Florida has been on the forefront of enacting meaningful changes in our schools that have truly benefited our children, and our work through Race to the Top would carry those efforts to the next level.”

Through the federal Race to the Top competition, the U.S. Department of Education has challenged all 50 states to propose bold education reforms focused on helping struggling schools, elevating the effectiveness of teaching professionals and education leaders, building internationally recognized education standards and assessments, and improving state education data systems. Fifty percent of a state’s total award will be distributed to



participating school districts according to a federal funding formula, and the remaining 50 percent will fund state-level projects designed to benefit all school districts statewide. Winners of the competition are expected to be announced in early April.

For more information about the Race to the Top competition, visit <http://www.fldoe.org/ARRA/RacetoeTop.asp>.

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