



August 28, 2009

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

Docket ID: ED-2009-OESE-0006

Dear Secretary Duncan,

In order for children to receive a well rounded educational experience, we as youth development professionals must be visionary. I believe, to truly advance a child's ability to learn in a healthy and positive manner, we must include summer camp experiences along with school based education. On behalf of the American Camp Association (ACA), I would like to thank you for allowing us to be a part of your commitment to quality education.

Through the coalition of United Voices for Education, a partnership has already formed with DOE by including ACA in your recent H1N1 discussion. We were pleased to participate as a partner in the collection of important information which will benefit schools all across the country. As two American traditions (camps and schools) who have served children for generations, this kind of partnership should be the norm, not one limited to crisis.

As proponents of "Race to the Top", it is imperative that year round educational opportunities, like summer camp, be formally recognized. For the first time in an official construct, we must proactively seek to include the emotional, social, and nature deficit disorders plaguing our children today. Because quality camp programs already include these vital educational components, it is critical we consider creating a formal camp/school partnership duplicating the best practices of both school and camp. The camp model has both research and best practice offering efficacy in replication. Camp is a viable partner for schools and adds value to the challenges, at hand.

To accomplish our end result, we must strive to graduate well educated men and women who are ready to make a positive impact on their respective communities. This can be accomplished by carefully constructing a curriculum which promotes the advantage of STEM while equally recognizing the value of emotional and social development. A whole-child approach to

education should be reflected in both Federal Education Policy and fund allocation which will serve as new guidelines for school accountability.

As you set forth the priorities for educational goals and the criteria by which these are measured, please recognize ACA and the camp community are committed to providing valuable support to character education. We know many schools and camps which promote a creative environment with the inclusion of character education and produce aspiring leaders with an acute understanding of critical thinking, problem solving, and resiliency. The ACA would be glad to help in this just cause by offering measurement standards and data collection statistics for the accredited summer camp population.

Camp is one of the oldest and finest community based experiential education and development models in America. The camp community has a long, well proven history of promoting healthy risk-taking in a controlled environment. Quality camp/school partnerships fully supported and funded, will achieve our goals of producing graduates who become productive, contributing citizens. Based on Race to the Top guidelines, we believe ACA and the camp community can be an integral part of the type of change the Department seeks.

Sincerely,

Greg Cronin, CCD
Member of the American Camp Association