

RUSH HOLT
Twelfth District, New Jersey

1019 Longworth Building
Washington, D.C. 20515
202-225-5801
Fax 202-225-6025

50 Washington Road
West Windsor, NJ 08550
609-750-9365
Fax 609-750-0618

website and e-mail:
www.house.gov/rholt



Congress of the United States

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Committee on Education
and the Workforce

Permanent Select Committee
on Intelligence
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Intelligence Policy

Co-Chair
Children's Environmental Health Caucus
Member
Congressional Arts Caucus
Internet Caucus
Law Enforcement Caucus
Historic Preservation Caucus

Ms. Lucille E. Davy
Acting Commissioner
New Jersey Department of Education
100 River View Plaza
Trenton, New Jersey 08611-3418

Dear Commissioner Davy:

I am writing today regarding a report issued by the Office of the Inspector General of the U.S. Department of Education on September 22, 2006 about the Reading First grant program.

As you may know, the Inspector General's investigation was conducted in response to numerous complaints of favoritism in the grant award process for the Reading First program. The report concluded that Department of Education officials violated conflict of interest rules by stacking grant application review panels to favor certain reading programs and publishers. As a result, local school districts were told that they either could not or should not use the curriculum they preferred, and were instead steered toward vendors selling curricula that did not appeal to them originally.

I am concerned that New Jersey Reading First grant applications may have been victimized by these unscrupulous actions, and I am writing to request any information you may have that would indicate that this was the case. I believe that all of our children should have the opportunity to learn how to read, and that local education officials are best able to determine the curricula that are most appropriate for their students. New Jersey's reading programs should not be forced to accept second or third choice options at the hands of unethical U.S. Department of Education officials.

I know that you, the New Jersey Department of Education, and our school districts share my commitment to reading programs, and I want to investigate any wrongdoing that may have affected New Jersey's grant applications. As a former educator and a member of the House Education and Workforce Committee, I stand ready to help New Jersey's reading programs in any way possible. I appreciate in advance your review of this matter.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

RUSH HOLT
Member of Congress

RH/ch