



American Statistical Association

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July 1, 2009

The Honorable Arne Duncan
Secretary, Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan,

As president of the American Statistical Association (ASA), with its 18,000 members, I write to urge you to recommend a nominee for National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Commissioner to President Barack Obama as quickly as possible. In doing so, the ASA would appreciate your giving serious consideration to individuals who have strong management and scientific skills, experience with the federal statistical agencies, familiarity with NCES and working knowledge of its products and broader relevance, visibility in the statistical community, an ability to interact effectively with Congress and senior Department of Education staff, and an understanding of the National Academies' *Principles and Practices for a Federal Statistical Agency*.

The fourth edition of *Principles and Practices for a Federal Statistical Agency* was released this spring and represents years of accumulated wisdom and experience observing, advising, and interacting with the federal statistical agencies. This document lays out the four principles required for an effective statistical program: (1) policy relevance, (2) credibility among data users, (3) trust among data providers, and (4) a strong position of independence. We also encourage you and your staff to review and support the guidance of this document.

The National Center for Education Statistics plays a vital role in the Department of Education, especially in this administration with its emphasis on evidence-based, data-driven decisionmaking. We believe a commissioner confirmed soon and with the above qualities, along with adherence by the department of the guidance of *Principles and Practices for a Federal Statistical Agency*, will help NCES fulfill that role.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sally C. Morton".

Sally C. Morton

Cc: John Q. Easton, Director, Institute for Education Sciences