



MEMORANDUM

December 11, 2009

To: Local Association Presidents
OEA Board

From: Gail Rasmussen
OEA President

As you know, the federal Department of Education has issued the RACE To the TOP Grant application. OEA has been working with the Governor's office and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to craft an application that will highlight the great work of educators in Oregon and the challenges we face to have a great public school for every student.

As your President, I have served on the grant Design Team along with OEA members Michael Geisen and Dena Hellums. In addition, Courtney Vanderstek, OEA's Assistant Executive Director for the Center for Teaching and Learning has also been on the design team as well as the subcommittee on Effective Teachers and Leaders and the grant writing advisory team. Other OEA members also served on sub committees. (Attached)

I believe a strong message that will be woven through the grant is the importance of the instructional core which we define as the interaction between student, teacher and content. This will mean that creating systems of support for educators in order that they can be successful in helping every student achieve success. We have worked to integrate OEA's core values of equity, access, high quality professional development, and support for the collective bargaining process into the grant.

Throughout this process we have continued to reiterate OEA's positions and have offered our OEA resolution language throughout the discussions.

The Oregon Design Team and grant writers are fully aware of OEA's position against tying student test scores to evaluation, transfer, and or dismissal. This was communicated as per the Board's action at the October 2009 Board meeting (Board business item from October.) I believe that many on the design team agree with this position because they recognize that such practice doesn't contribute to student achievement. When the final grant draft is available it will be posted on OEA's website.

Although the process is not yet complete, we already know that Oregon cannot meet some of the grant's criteria such as "alternative routes to certification." We will not forfeit best

practices for the sole purpose of meeting grant criteria. We want the grant to be created based on sound research, not silver bullets.

Why does any of this matter to you?

In the event of a successful application, 50% of the grant funds will flow directly to the participating school districts based on Title I formulas. Of the remaining 50% of the grant, at least half of the funds will also be distributed to participating districts according to the terms of the application.

If Oregon is awarded a grant in either Phase 1 or Phase 2 of the competition, the state and the participating districts will have 90 days to develop more detailed plans and performance targets based on this preliminary Statement of Work.

Toward that end, your Superintendent may be coming to you to ask for your local association's support for the grant. For participating districts, there is a Memorandum of Understanding that is a required document that asks for the signature of the Local Association President. *Local Associations are not required to support the district's pursuit of the grant.* However, **lack** of the Local Association's support will impact the amount of points awarded during consideration of the application.

It's important to note, OEA advocated for including specific language which asserts that "no provision of the application will violate the collective bargaining agreement and that no language in the MOU explicitly overrides existing contracts or agreements." This change has been accepted by the Governor and others

Additional frequently asked questions are attached for your review and will be posted on the OEA website on Monday.

You may be asking why should we even try for this grant, since the competition is steep and the actual dollar amount is relatively small? (\$60 – \$175 million)

There are opportunities for interested affiliates to advocate for significant positive measures including:

- Input on several aspects of achieving "Great Teachers and Leaders" criterion, including teacher recruitment, retention, promotion, professional development, mentoring, support
- Increased input on the development and use of high-quality standards, assessments and data systems for instructional purposes.
- Input (**required under RTTT**) on how teacher and school leader evaluations are conducted; there also is opportunity to use the process to help develop, strengthen, or improve implementation of the evaluation system.
- More resources for Science Technology Engineering and Math teachers and instruction (see competitive preference priority)

- More attention to early learning, school learning conditions and other priorities. (see invitational priorities)
- New resources and reforms for teachers and ESPs in low-achieving or priority schools.

The timeline for all of this is incredibly short as the final application packet has to be mailed on January 14, 2010.

Your District's participation is voluntary and so is the local association's. If you choose not to sign on, your District can still agree to be part of the state plan (but, again, the application will lose points for lack of your signature.)

If you have questions, please don't hesitate to contact or me.

Thank you for all you do for the students of Oregon and please have a joyous holiday season.