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TO: Members of the State Board of Education
FROM: Nancy S. Grasmick *Nancy*
DATE: March 23, 2010
SUBJECT: Race to the Top

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this item is to continue to provide updates to the Maryland State Board of Education regarding Race to the Top, a competitive federal grant program designed to encourage and reward States that are creating conditions for education innovation and reform.

BACKGROUND/HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:

On February 17, 2009, President Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). The ARRA lays a foundation for educational reform in four areas and provides \$4.35 billion for the Race to the Top Fund. This grant rewards states for implementing ambitious plans in four core educational reform areas:

- Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in a global economy.
- Building data systems that measure student growth and success; and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction;
- Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed the most; and
- Turning around our lowest-achieving schools.

The Maryland State Department of Education is submitting an application during the second round of competition, due on June 1, 2010. Maryland's application for the grant is part of an overall reform effort that will continue with or without the Race to the Top funding. However, an award of funds would enable Maryland to accelerate its reform efforts. Maryland's vision for reform has the following elements which are aligned with the four areas of reform identified by United States Department of Education:



- Revise the Maryland State PreK-12 curriculum, assessments, and accountability system based on the Common Core Standards to assure that all graduates are college and career ready;
- Build a statewide Technology Infrastructure that links the current data system elements with analytic elements and the Online Instructional Toolkit to monitor and promote student achievement;
- Redesign Maryland's model for the preparation, development, retention, and evaluation of teachers and principals; and
- Expand implementation of Maryland's innovative statewide system of support with the Breakthrough Center approach for transforming low-achieving schools and LEAs.

Maryland's vision of reform is based on a foundation of reform in Maryland that began with the Sondheim Commission Report (1989) and continued through a second wave of reform which began with the Report of the Visionary Panel (2002). These previous reforms resulted in such actions as the Voluntary State Curriculum, the Maryland School Assessments, and the consolidation of early childhood programs. At the same time, the Maryland General Assembly increased funding for public education by \$1.3 billion over 6 years.

These reform efforts have earned Maryland the number one ranking on overall education quality by *Education Week Quality Counts* for both 2009 and 2010. Additionally, Maryland has been cited for first place ranking in the nation by the College Board for the number of students participating in and earning passing scores on Advanced Placement Exams by *Newsweek* magazine (June 2009) for the number of rigorous programs offered in high schools. The State recognizes, however, that there is still room for improvement in order to meet the needs of all Maryland students and prepare them for college and the workforce in the 21st century.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Maryland has engaged the services of Education First, a national consulting firm, to assist in the development of its application for the Race to the Top grant program. The Board will receive an update on the activities of staff and Education First in preparation for the submission of the Race to the Top application.

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ACTION:

This report is for information only.

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