

House of Representatives

State of Tennessee



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Special Session Education Changes

Dear Business Leaders:

The General Assembly began yesterday with a call for a special session by the Governor to expedite a series of law changes in order for Tennessee to compete for a federal grant potentially worth \$485 million dollars. The past three days have produced a series of meetings to discuss these proposed changes. While limited, below is a summary of the details we have at this point regarding the changes affecting K-12 education.

Unless you indicate that you would like updates along the way, this will be the only update I send regarding this issue.

Thank you for the privilege of representing Rutherford County.

Sincerely,

Donna Rowland

Race to the Top Summary to date

Please accept my apologies for sending a general summary; however, we are in between meetings regarding this issue and I am trying to respond promptly to yours and other's inquiries while staying abreast of the ongoing debate.

I know you are watching with intense interest, the ongoing discussion regarding education changes proposed by the Governor in an effort to win federal grant dollars; also known as the "Race to the Top". Since Monday, I have attended several meetings regarding the "details" of this new initiative. Earlier today, we were told that all interested parties (TEA and the Governor's administration) were very close to an agreement on those details. Below is the most recent proposed details. I would very much welcome your input on this proposal. Please understand that with each passing meeting, the details may change and I will do my best to keep you informed.

1. Changes to teacher evaluation:

A new formula will be utilized in evaluation - 50% will be based on imperial data. Of that 50%, 35% will be from TVAAS (pre and post test) or TVAAS type (TCAP) tests; the remaining 15% will be from other student driven data (yet to be determined)

50% will be based on other criteria that will be recommended to the State Board of Education by a newly created 15 member commission on education.

2. Following is a summary of the distribution of grant dollars should TN become a grantee. The Governor's office is hoping for \$485 million, the federal government has classified the state as a class 2 (or \$150 - \$250 million level grant) but has encouraged the state to ask for more.

1/2 of the grant amount will go to the participating school districts. All TN school districts have agreed to participate. Those dollars will be distributed utilizing the same funding formula as for Title 1; however, the dollars do not have to spent on Title 1 activities. The school district will have to submit a plan for spending those dollars. They must be on one time expenses or at least expenses that will cease after the 4 year grant term. If the local school district wants to continue the program after the grant term, they must have a signed agreement from the local funding body (county commission) for a guarantee of the program's continued funding. It will not be funded from State dollars.

The remaining grant amount will be used by the State for the following activities:

a. Placing failing schools in a special school district and taking over the operation of said schools. There is currently 13 failing schools in Tennessee; however, this summer, the state will adopt an enhanced evaluation based on National Standards and it is expected that 35 more schools will be categorized as failing schools. The BEP funds for these failing schools will be held in escrow while these schools are under this special school district.

b. Statewide programs (yet to be determined).

While this summary is devoid of specific rules and regulation, the Commissioner of Education does not plan to have the rules and regulations ready until 90 days after the legislation is voted on and the application submitted.

If you have specific questions, please feel free to submit those and I will attempt to obtain answers. Once again, it has been stated that representatives from the involved parties are close to reaching an agreement. Your input is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Donna Rowland