

**FAIRVIEW AREA SCHOOLS' BOARD OF EDUCATION  
SPECIAL BOARD MEETING  
RACE TO THE TOP GRANT PROGRAM  
DECEMBER 17, 2009**

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A special meeting of the Fairview Area Schools' Board of Education was held on Thursday evening, December 17, 2009 in the elementary media center.

Board President Beth Miller called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Diana Danhoff, Beth Miller, Chris Neff, Dan Smith, Anne Tompkins

ABSENT: Kirk Peterson, Merianne Tappan

- I. **Approval of Agenda**
- II. **Public Comment** - None
- III. **OLD BUSINESS**

- A. **Race to the Top Grant Program**

In a memo dated December 15, 2009, Thrun Law Firm, P.C. stated the following:

As you are aware, the State of Michigan is in the process of preparing an application and plan seeking to receive substantial grant funding through the federal Race to the Top ("RTTT") Program. If Michigan's RTTT application is approved, funds will be disbursed only to those Michigan school districts, public school academies, and intermediate school districts that have become "participating LEAs" by submitting a signed *Michigan's Participating LEA/ISD Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)* by January 7, 2010.

At this time, the State does not anticipate having a finalized RTTT application in place by the January 7 deadline. If the District wishes to become eligible to receive disbursements of the RTTT funds, it must sign the MOU and indicate its commitment to implementing a plan that is not yet finalized and for which the specifics of remain uncertain.

The Board was asked to carefully review the information presented to them this evening and to make a decision regarding Fairview Area Schools' intention to participate or not in the federal Race to the Top Grant Program. A SPECIMEN Race to the Top Board Resolution was provided in template form for consideration by Thrun Law Firm, P.C. If the Board accepts the tonight's resolution, the template document will be modified to include reference to Fairview Area Schools and signed by the Board.

If the Board decides to adopt the resolution to participate in the RTTT Program, the original MOU will be executed by the Board this evening but forwarding of the document to the State will be delayed until the first week in January. This will allow the State time to finalize the framework of the application, which would then be presented to the Board and the Local Teachers' Union President in its completed state for reassessment.

**III. OLD BUSINESS, (Con't.)****A. Race to the Top Grant Program, (Con't.)**

Smith/Danhoff That the *Michigan's Participating LEA/ISD Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)*, indicating Fairview Area Schools' intention to participate in the federal Race to the Top Grant Program, be executed as presented. Upon adoption, the Board will also sign the original resolution provided by Thrun Law Firm, P.C.

The Board discussed the following pros and cons about signing the Race to the Top agreement.

Pros:

1. Some form of assessment tool is needed for the teachers and this agreement promises to provide such a tool.
2. Updated universal data systems will be developed.
3. Professional development to promote effective teachers and leaders.
4. Support for struggling schools and districts.

Cons:

1. No specific framework is in place.
2. Concerns about how to finance the programs after they are established and the grant money has been expended.
3. No way to know what the true costs are.
4. Mandates could change at any time.
5. Giving up too much local control.
6. Mandates may be more suited for larger districts.
7. Not enough time for the State's finalized version to be reviewed.
8. One payment of \$41,000.00 for a four-year grant period.

Dan Smith excused himself at 6:30 p.m. from the remainder of the meeting due to another obligation.

President Beth Miller acknowledged Mr. Steve Gusler, Local Union President. Mr. Gusler relayed the concerns of the teachers regarding teacher assessments, tenure, and other unanswered questions. At this time, the Union is not behind supporting the grant program due to the amount of unknowns surrounding the issue, but would be willing to reevaluate the program if a specific plan is provided by the State before the January 7 deadline. At this time, the State is projecting that a finalized plan will not be completed before the deadline.

The Board proceeded to the vote:

Ayes – 0; Nays – 4 (Danhoff, Miller, Neff, Tompkins)

Motion not approved.

The *Memorandum of Understanding* will be sent, unsigned, to C.O.O.R. ISD with the above – stated reasons attached along with a copy of the minutes from this evening's meeting stating the Board's intention to decline participation in the Race to the Top Federal Grant Program.

**IV. Board Comments, Communications, and Closing Public Comments**

Board Comments

Mr. Kirk Peterson was unavailable to attend tonight's meeting, but contacted Mr. Wilcoxon earlier today to express his opposition to the program.

Although the Board defeated the motion based on the above-mentioned concerns, it was agreed that calling a special meeting would be considered if a finalized plan becomes available from the State before the January 8, 2010 deadline.

Public Comments

Mr. Gusler reiterated that the Union would be willing to reevaluate the program if a finalized plan was presented by the State before the January deadline.

The president adjourned the meeting at 6:40 p.m.

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Diana Danhoff, Secretary