



November 20, 2009

Delaware Dept. of Education seeks leaner budget for 2011

Request down \$3.68 million from fiscal 2010

By JENNIFER PRICE
The News Journal

DOVER -- Secretary of Education Lillian Lowery asked state budget makers Thursday for \$3.68 million less than she received in this year's budget to run the state's public education system in the next fiscal year.

The Office of Management and Budget asked Cabinet departments and state agencies to prepare zero-growth budgets. For fiscal year 2011, Lowery requested \$1.17 billion, which includes \$27.5 million in federal stimulus stabilization funds.

"The department focused only on funding core services," Lowery said.

Lowery said her department has realigned responsibilities and has "worked diligently ... to truly do more with less." In the past year, the department has not filled 11 positions after employees have resigned or retired.

"We will continue to look for ways to streamline the department," Lowery said.

She said the department also plans to do an internal review of school district consolidation options and apply for the federal Race to the Top Fund, which could bring as much as \$75 million to Delaware.

Lowery requested \$9.7 million more than last year for enrollment increases. There are about 1,368 more students this year -- a 1.10 percent increase from last year's enrollment. Appoquinimink, Indian River and Smyrna are all experiencing high growth. She said there are areas across the state where districts are seeing an influx of students who previously attended private school.

Ann Visalli, OMB chief, said she wants to make sure there is no overlap with existing education programs.

"I want to make sure we're using best practices," she said.

Lowery's operating budget request also includes \$4 million to fund the new Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System, which will replace the Delaware Student Testing Program next fall.

The education department's capital budget request was more than \$31 million less than what was funded this year for construction and renovation projects. Lowery said she requested funding only for projects that were a result of population growth, safety issues and the implementation of full-day kindergarten.

The \$106 million capital budget request for fiscal year 2011 includes projects in 10 school districts as well as the state's three vocational districts.
