



# \$100 million not likely to ease state budget problems

By J.L. MILLER • The News Journal • March 30, 2010

DOVER -- The four-year commitment of \$100 million in Race to the Top money that Delaware secured Monday is a boost for schools but won't be of much help in balancing the state budget.

The money also is unlikely to ease pressure on the state Education Department's proposed \$1.13 billion budget, a plan that contains proposed cuts to school transportation and nurses in private schools, among other programs.

"I think the monies that we're getting here are a little bit different from the stimulus package, where we were able to backfill some of the programs we had," said Rep. Joe Miro, R-Foxfire and a member of the budget-writing Joint Finance Committee.

"I do not think that it's going to really impact the budget, because this is added money," Miro said. "It's not going to backfill a heck of a lot -- if any."

Federal stimulus money helped the JFC plug holes in the budget in 2009 for the current fiscal year, but that money wasn't being handed out for a narrowly focused purpose.

The Race to the Top money is supposed to be used to help turn around failing schools, beef up standards and assessment, support quality teachers

performance.

The use of that money is limited to "those programs that were identified in the application," said Ann Visalli, director of the state Office of Management and Budget.

Although the money won't help balance the budget, it could offset money the state would have spent to bring poorly performing schools up to where they should be, Visalli said.

While JFC will not have free rein with Race to the Top money, Miro called it "a very positive step for the state of Delaware."

"This money would supplement programs and really help bring those schools that have been in the category of underperforming, or schools that have not had the same success rate as some of the other schools throughout the state," Miro said.

"I hope one of the main pieces that comes out of this is to increase the parent involvement in those buildings because that to me is a significant part of the ingredient of the success of the students," said Miro, a retired teacher.

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