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GRPS Sticks to MESSA, Won't Look at Cheaper Insurance Options

Amid rising health care costs, Grand Rapids School won't reconsider its insurance agreement.

Smita Kalokhe | News Reporter
November 16, 2009

Video 



11/16/09 GRPS Insurance

(1:54)

GRAND RAPIDS - State funding is down and so are enrollment numbers. So, leaders at Grand Rapids Public Schools are looking to get creative with the budget. Tonight, a watch-dog group is suggesting the district re-think its insurance program.

It's not the first time an outside organization has tried to get district to move away from MESSA, the union-affiliated insurance program. Critics have called it the 'Cadillac' of insurance, but say it's expensive and getting pricier.

At Monday's school board meeting, the Education Action Group asked the school to consider an alternative. The EAG pointed to the Flint School District, which found a provider who said it would offer the same services as MESSA, but for \$3-million less. Here in Grand Rapids, the idea got a chilly reception.

"The coverage is only the same on paper," said Paul Helder, GREA union president. "It had nothing to do with their service model. It had nothing to do with how often claims were honored. They had no data on any of this, and those companies, historically have vastly underestimated the cost."

Even though the board isn't willing to look at health insurance plans just yet, it is evaluating its financial future. The district has invited the public to participate in a forum this Saturday. It's at Ottawa Hills High School and starts at 9 a.m.

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