

News Release

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Reinvesting in our schools through Fair Funding

MADISON — State Superintendent Tony Evers stressed at a news conference in West Allis today that Wisconsin can reinvest in its schools and fix its school finance system while protecting property taxpayers by enacting his “Fair Funding for Our Future” plan.

“We can do right for our kids,” Evers said. “This Fair Funding plan is a realistic and ready first step that provides solutions that are good for education and our economic future.”

The Fair Funding plan is part of the Department of Public Instruction’s 2013-15 state budget request. The proposal would increase general and categorical school aid by 2.4 percent in the first year of the budget and 5.5 percent in 2014-15 to provide state support for education and property tax relief. Those funding levels and the plan’s proposal for predictable growth in state aid create a pathway to restoring the state’s two-thirds funding commitment to education by 2017. The plan would provide a guaranteed amount of funding to school districts for each student (\$3,000) regardless of where they live. It incorporates a poverty weighting factor of 30 percent into the formula to account for family income rather than just a district’s property values. The plan would direct all state aid to school districts, folding in the school levy and first dollar credits.

“We owe it to taxpayers to bring truth to budgeting,” Evers said. “Fair Funding for Our Future makes Wisconsin’s school funding formula more fair, sustainable, and transparent. It maximizes existing resources and sets the stage for greater state support for education in future years.”

The plan restores revenue limit authority to all districts. It calls for an increase in the per pupil revenue limit to \$225 per student in the first year of the budget and \$230 per student in 2014-15. To assist rural schools, the department’s budget request seeks full funding for the sparsity categorical aid program to support about 130 districts that have small student populations and large geographic boundaries. Changes to transportation aid and the addition of a new high-cost transportation aid program would further support rural districts that must transport children significant distances to school.

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“More than 40 percent of our students live in rural areas,” Evers noted. “Fair Funding investments along with collaboration among districts and appropriate technology will ensure that kids in less populated parts of the state have access to a rigorous, well-rounded education that prepares them for college and careers.”

The Fair Funding plan would hold the line on net property taxes and result in a gross property tax decrease of more than 18 percent. All school districts would have increased (402) or the same (22) state school aid. The department’s budget includes seven new categorical aid programs to focus decisively on Agenda 2017: Every Child a Graduate, College and Career Ready. (See news release on “[New aid builds for the future](#)” for additional information.)

“Education paves our way to prosperity. If we invest in our students and their schools, Wisconsin will have a brighter future,” Evers said. “Fair Funding for Our Future reforms school finance, protects taxpayers, addresses significant educational needs, and builds a stronger foundation for education in Wisconsin.”

The department’s budget also requests funding mandated in statute to support the parental choice programs and independent charter schools in Milwaukee and Racine. The budget seeks an additional \$59 million for the Milwaukee choice program, a nearly 20 percent increase from the previous two-year budget, and \$5.6 million for the Racine school choice program, an 87 percent increase. These increases compare to an overall 5.3 percent increase in school aid and credits requested in the 2013-15 budget for the state’s 424 public school districts.

Both choice programs and private schools throughout the state would benefit from the proposed increase to school breakfast reimbursement, from 9 cents to 10 cents per breakfast. The budget also requests \$23.5 million in additional aid for the 21 independent charter schools in Milwaukee and Racine, a 19 percent increase from the previous budget. Changes to the transportation aid program would make independent charters school eligible for that categorical aid for the first time in the 2013-14 fiscal year.

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NOTES: This news release is available electronically at http://news.dpi.wi.gov/files/eis/pdf/dpinr2012_122.pdf. Visit the Fair Funding for Our Future website, <http://fairfundingforourfuture.org>, for additional background information and a district-by-district list showing the fiscal impact of the Fair Funding for Our Future plan.