

News Release

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Evers announces 2017-19 budget proposal

MADISON — State Superintendent Tony Evers submitted his 2017-19 budget request to the governor and Legislature today, outlining key fiscal priorities for students and schools in the upcoming years.

“This budget is about the state partnering with schools to prepare students for college and career,” said Evers. “From Winter to Waukesha, a greater state investment is the best way to demonstrate our shared commitment to kids and tackle persistent achievement gaps.”

The 2017-19 budget proposal represents an increase in funding of 2.7 percent in the first year of the biennium and another 5.4 percent in the second. The larger increase in the second year of the budget would bring equity to school funding through an updated version of the previously introduced [“Fair Funding for Our Future.”](#) The funding reform proposal requests additional spending authority for all school districts to catch up with inflation and increased aid to hold property taxes flat. Fair Funding guarantees a minimum amount for every student (\$3,000), incorporates a poverty factor for aid distribution (a 20% weight for impoverished students in the general aid count), and moves the School Levy Credit, First Dollar Credit, and High Poverty Aid to general aid to pay these funds directly to schools. While roughly 94 percent of districts benefit under the proposal, a hold harmless provision is included to ensure that all districts would receive the same dollar amount as under current law.

2017-19 Budget Priorities Fund Our Schools Meet Mental Health Needs Support Rural Schools Expand Summer Learning
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Additionally, Evers’ proposed increases in special education funding, expands supports for English learners and targets resources for rural schools. Finally, Evers recommends weighting the per pupil categorical aid to account for students in poverty, students learning English, and students in foster care.

“Over the past four years, we have seen an increased reliance on referenda to help keep the lights on,” Evers continued. “Around the state, local communities have taken the lead on funding reform through the ballot box, but the state has to be a good partner and do our share to help small town schools.”

(more)

The budget proposal targets funding to increase school-based mental health, including funding for mental health and social workers in schools; grants for school-community collaborations around mental health services in schools; and training of educators and school staff in Mental Health First-Aid, Trauma Sensitive Schools, and school-based Screening, Brief Intervention, Referral and Treatment (SBIRT).

The budget includes proposals that will support rural schools and communities across the state. Evers is asking for a new teacher retention program that would provide funds for districts that qualify for sparsity aid to use for recruiting and retaining staff. Changes to the Sparsity Aid program are also included to alleviate the fiscal cliff districts face when their enrollment hits the program's participation cap. New dollars for transportation funding, which disproportionately impacts small districts with long bus routes, are included as well.

"In talking with legislative leaders, the governor, and my fellow agency heads in Wisconsin, I am optimistic that we can work together to ensure every small-town kid has access to a quality education and to improve mental health service to our youth," said Evers.

Finally, Evers' budget continues the commitment to summer learning so districts large and small can expand summer programming to give gifted students more opportunities to accelerate their learning and to help struggling students catch up to their peers. The proposal will allow districts to count students enrolled in summer school in a similar fashion to regular school year counts and increase the transportation reimbursement for summer learning.

"Changes to summer school counts and transportation build on the work we began with our administrative rule changes," said Evers. "Districts are looking to innovate and lead in exciting ways, and I am committed to clearing any administrative hurdles that stand in their way. Summer school programming is moving in exciting directions and is a powerful approach to help all kids reach their full potential."

In total, the Department of Public Instruction 2017-19 budget request amounts to a \$707 million increase in funding over the biennium, not including statutorily constructed increases for all parental choice program and independent charter school payments. Over \$500 million of that figure goes toward general school aids to provide property tax relief and to implement the Fair Funding for Our Future finance reform plan. The remaining roughly \$200 million is targeted toward programs that directly impact the needs of students.

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NOTES: A video message from State Superintendent Tony Evers and a copy of the [department's full 2017-17 budget proposal](http://dpi.wi.gov/budget) can be found at <http://dpi.wi.gov/budget>. This news release is available electronically at http://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/news-release/dpinr2016_113.pdf.