



School District of Iola-Scandinavia

"Dedicated to Excellence"

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May 4, 2021

Dear Members of the Joint Finance Committee:

We are writing to express the need for financial support for public schools in Wisconsin as part of the upcoming biennium budget. This has been a difficult year for all of us, but we appreciate the trust and support of our staff and community. We have worked diligently to have students back in our schools with face-to-face instruction options available the first day of school. In order to do so, much work had been done to provide as safe a learning environment as possible. We added technology to meet our student's needs, increased our cleaning and sanitization processes, added on-site nursing services, increased support service time to stagger recess and lunch times to keep our students in their cohort groups, added classroom furniture to keep students at safe social distance, and so much more. In addition our teachers were asked to simultaneously teach virtual and in-person learners, which was a challenging task but one they did to support their students' needs. All of these things were done prior to any federal funding to offset these costs. When ESSER money became available, most of it was used to support programs and projects in place to allow us to begin the 2020-21 school year.

Per Pupil Revenue Limit Increases

Revenue limit increases are necessary for school districts throughout the state to be able to fund the inflationary increases our budgets face. We are in favor of the Governor's proposal to increase the revenue limit by \$200 per pupil in 2021-22 and by \$204 per pupil 2022-23. Being a low revenue district we are also in support of increasing the Low Revenue Ceiling to \$10,000 in 2021-22 and to \$10,500 in 2022-23. These increases will help low revenue districts like ours have a more equitable opportunity to fund educational programs in our district.

Special Education Categorical Aid & Equalization Aid Increases

We are strongly in favor of increasing the Special Education Categorical Aid funding rate. The number of students in our district requiring special education services is growing on a continual basis and these students are our most vulnerable learners. Increasing this funding source would provide financial resources to all of the students in our schools, not just those receiving special education services. In the most recent school year, our district transferred \$593,998 from our General Fund into Special Education. If the Governor's proposal was approved, increasing Special Ed Categorical Aid to 45%, the aid impact would be an additional \$108,000 that would directly decrease the amount of the transfer from fund 10, providing more resources to all of our students.

With the increased challenges our district faces we are in favor of increased funding in the general aid formula. This provides ongoing financial support to allow the district to maintain and support programming now and into the future.

School Mental Health Categorical Aid

Mental health and student wellness has been a priority and focus throughout the state, and the urgency to provide support and resources has been heightened as a result of the pandemic. Being a small rural district, Iola-Scandinavia has had difficulty accessing and implementing mental health resources to support students. The Governor' budget proposal includes implementing a Mental Health and Student Wellness Categorical Aid program that would reimburse districts 10% of costs for pupil service categories like school counselors, nurses and psychologists. In Iola-Scandinavia this would provide approximately \$30,000 in categorical aid to address student mental health and wellness. Although this would not be enough to fully fund the programs and resources we feel are necessary, it is a step in the right direction to meet our students' needs.

We appreciate the opportunity to share the local impact of the upcoming budget. Our kids are our greatest resource and we need to work together to find ways to meet their ever-changing needs. We understand the difficulties that our elected leaders face, but we ask that funding for K-12 education be a priority in the next biennial budget to help districts meet the needs of all of the kids in our communities. If you have questions please contact us or we invite you to visit to see what education looks like in our district.

Sincerely,



Raymond Przekurat
District Administrator
Iola-Scandinavia School District



Sarah Thiel
Business Manager
Iola-Scandinavia School District