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School Funding Reform Could Mean Millions to Local Schools

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By Molly Hendrickson

Monday, State Superintendent Tony Evers rolled out a plan he says will make the school funding system fairer, guarantee state funding for every student, and hold the line on property taxes.

His new formula calls for adding \$420 million in funding while ensuring no school district receives less money than it currently does.

The current system has long been criticized for not taking into account additional money needed to educate low-income students and penalizing areas with high property wealthy, like some vacation areas up north.

Currently, state funding depends on three factors: The number of students in the district, the amount of property value per student, and expenditures.

Districts with declining enrollment and high property values were receiving less state aid.

Evers's plan would ensure every district receives at least \$3,000 per student.

General aid would increase by two percent in the first year of the budget and four percent in the second year.

A district would receive another \$600 for every student who qualifies for a free or reduced-price lunch.

It would also increase funding for each student living in poverty by 20 percent.

"When you have a high rate of poverty in a district, there are additional services you need for the families and the students where there's poverty," Ashwaubenon Assistant Superintendent Keith Lucius said.

The state superintendent says a lot of the funding would come from rolling roughly \$900 million in property tax credits and other credits into the general aid formula in 2012-13.

Evers says giving schools more money means fewer deficits and fewer property tax increases.

Green Bay Assistant Superintendent Alan Wagner said, "It's a plan that pretty much treats everybody fairly. There are no losers in the plan. Districts who again have been getting reductions in their state aid and having to increase their tax levies, it does affect everyone positively."

The plan must be approved as part of the 2011-13 budget process.

On Action 2 News at Six, we look at exactly how much of an increase our local school districts would see.





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