

News Release

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There was and is a better way to hold the line on property taxes

MADISON — State Superintendent Tony Evers issued the following statement regarding news today that the statewide property tax levy for school districts declined by 1 percent.

“Limiting property tax increases in this economic climate is an important goal. That is why I introduced my Fair Funding for Our Future plan to reform the way we pay for our public schools, while holding the line on property taxes. To be clear, the Fair Funding plan would have held the line on property taxes without cutting investments in our children’s schools. The 2011-13 biennial budget resulted in cuts to education at a time when we are asking more from our schools, teachers, and students to build future economic prosperity.

“Survey data from the Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators (WASDA) has been updated to include 371 school districts, which is nearly 90 percent of the state’s public school districts. The final WASDA report shows that 59 percent of districts increased class sizes for some grade level, kindergarten through 12th-grade, to balance their budgets. Staffing cuts fell most heavily in special education, library and media center, school counseling, and at risk youth and drug and alcohol abuse programs, essential services that help students succeed. Many districts used federal Education Jobs money to ward off even deeper cuts, and 65 percent of districts expect to have the same or greater cuts to their budgets next year in response to the \$749 million cut in school aid, 5.5 percent reduction in revenue limit, and cuts to revenue limit exemptions and categorical aid programs.

“While some like to flip the WASDA data to show a more positive picture, staffing cuts and course reductions happened and are limiting opportunities for Wisconsin public school students. These cuts impacted students across the state and hurt the quality of their education. It’s a dangerous path to argue that this state budget was OK because only some students have been disadvantaged.

“There was and is a better path to our shared goal to hold down property tax increases. Fair Funding for Our Future shows how we can invest in the education of our children while protecting property taxpayers.”

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NOTE: A copy of the final report on the Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators survey and accompanying maps is available on the department’s budget web page http://dpi.wi.gov/pb/11-13_budget.html. Additional information about Fair Funding for Our Future is available at <http://fairfundingforourfuture.org/>. This news release is available electronically at http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpinr2011_131.pdf.