

News Release

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New aid builds for the future

MADISON — The school finance budget request State Superintendent Tony Evers introduced today in West Allis includes changes to categorical aid programs to focus decisively on his 2017 Every Child a Graduate Agenda.

Evers' 2013-15 state education budget request includes seven new categorical aid programs that will increase graduation rates; help rural districts; fund services for students learning English; expand career and technical education (CTE) and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education; and support career readiness, educator effectiveness, and accountability efforts. Categorical aid totaled \$653.9 million for the 2012-13 fiscal year. For the 2013-15 budget, total categorical aid funding would increase by \$47.5 million over the biennium. The changes in categorical and general school aid are a 2.4 percent increase in the first year of the budget, the same as the Consumer Price Index, and 5.5 percent in 2014-15 and would start the state on a path to the return to two-thirds state support for total school costs.

“My budget aligns resources so every child has an opportunity to graduate ready for college and career,” Evers said. “Education funding has experienced major cuts during the economic recession. It’s time to reinvest in our schools to build a brighter future for our kids.”

The new Graduation grant program would provide \$4.6 million in competitive grants in 2014-15 targeted to school districts with persistently low graduation rates and high dropout rates or numbers. The new STEM grants would support expansion of programming across disciplines. A statewide STEM Advisory Council would advocate for STEM education and partnerships as well as leverage private and nonprofit funding to support STEM education. The council would be made up of representatives from public and private education, research institutions, private companies, and nonprofit groups.

Evers has previously requested that the WorkKeys assessment be part of a high school testing package that includes the PLAN, EXPLORE, and ACT to provide growth and career readiness data. Additionally, new CTE Incentive grants of \$3 million in the second year of the budget would build capacity for high school students to earn an industry recognized certificate in a high-need occupation before graduation. Evers already worked with

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University of Wisconsin Colleges and the Wisconsin Technical College System (WCTS) to smooth students' ability to earn college-level credits while in high school. The DPI would work with the Department of Workforce Development and WTCS to identify occupations that are facing the greatest skilled worker shortages in the state. Those occupational certificates would qualify districts to receive CTE Incentive grants for each student who graduated with one of the high-need certificates. High schools and local technical colleges would work together to provide student training.

“A bachelor’s degree is not the only path to a family-supporting career,” Evers said. “Reinvigorating CTE and investing in STEM training must be part of the message that diploma and apprenticeship programs, technical college degrees, and industry certifications are viable routes to a good life and successful, rewarding career.”

To support the more than 40 percent of students who live in rural areas throughout the state, the DPI’s 2013-15 budget requests \$3,300,500 each year to fully fund sparsity aid. The new high-cost transportation aid program would reimburse per pupil transportation costs that are above 150 percent of the statewide average. A modification to the transportation aid formula would increase reimbursement for transporting students 12 or more miles to school.

“To improve graduation rates and our ability to compete in the global economy, we must keep our rural schools strong,” Evers said. “Rural school districts share a similar set of challenges that include the lack of economies of scale, large geographic boundaries, low median income, and declining enrollment. Funding sparsity aid, instituting a new high-cost transportation aid program, and modifying transportation aid will help our rural districts provide a solid education for their students.”

An increase to Bilingual-Bicultural aid would maintain the state reimbursement rate at 8 percent in the first year of the budget and increase the rate to 12 percent in 2014-15. The aid supports partial costs for districts that have concentrations of students of a given language that are required to provide a bilingual-bicultural program. Because more than 40 percent of Wisconsin’s 50,000 English Language Learners (ELLs) are not enrolled in a mandatory bilingual-bicultural program that is eligible for current aid, a new supplemental aid program would provide \$100 to districts for each of those students.

Evers is requesting additional special education categorical aid to maintain reimbursement rates in the first year of the budget and to increase the rate to 28 percent for the 2015 fiscal year. Because federal and state aid for special education has not increased at the same rate as costs, districts have been forced to shift funding from regular education to pay educational costs for students with disabilities. States must meet maintenance of effort in their funding levels for special education to qualify for federal matching funds. The 2013-15 budget also seeks an

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additional \$1.5 million each year for high-cost special education aid to meet the needs of students with severe disabilities whose educational costs exceed \$30,000 per year.

Educator Effectiveness grants would provide \$80 per educator to support evaluation systems. The request will provide funding to fulfill statutory language that created a new educator effectiveness system. Additionally, the department budget request proposes a high-need teacher recruitment scholarship in the Higher Education Aids Board to support training of teachers in shortage areas or for school districts with above average poverty rates.

The department's request for new School Support grants would support accountability by providing funding for high-performing schools to disseminate their best practices and to pay for reading and math coaches in low-performing schools. Those schools have been identified in the state's new school report cards. The budget seeks full funding for the Student Guarantee in Education (SAGE) program at \$2,250 in aid for low-income students in SAGE classrooms in 2014-15. Due to increasing numbers of eligible students and insufficient funding, aid has been prorated for several years.

Evers' September budget request included \$27.9 million for Public Library System aid to support library services. He also requested \$22,700 in each year of the budget for library service contracts that provide special services through the Milwaukee Public Library, Wisconsin Library Services, the Wisconsin Talking Book and Braille Library, and the Cooperative Children's Book Center.

"Budgets are about priorities," Evers said. "Where we put our money shows what we value. I am calling for investment in our students and their schools so young people gain the knowledge and skills they will need for success in our increasingly competitive and internationally connected world."

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NOTE: This news release is available electronically at http://news.dpi.wi.gov/files/eis/pdf/dpinr2012_123.pdf.