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Schools anxiously await Walker's first state budget

By Adam Wise • Daily Tribune Staff • January 7, 2011

The coming year could be crucial for public education in Wisconsin, and a couple of local school officials are hopeful for a positive outcome.

All eyes are on Gov. Scott Walker as he settles into his position, with public school employees and advocates waiting to see how Wisconsin's new leader will fund schools the next two years.

"I'm very cautiously optimistic, and I don't think we have a choice, but we have to remain optimistic," said Nekoosa School District Superintendent Wayne Johnson. "I hope the balance between management and labor gets balanced out a little bit more fairly. I know we have issues with school funding, but I also realize he doesn't have any money (in the state budget)."

Last year, as part of his submitted public schools budget, state School Superintendent Tony Evers called for funding reform, submitting a proposal that included moving nearly \$900 million in school tax levy credits into general school aid funding.

Ron Boettcher, an Adams-Friendship Area School Board member, thinks the Evers proposal can be successful, but first, state representatives must get behind the notion.

"If they can just look at the equity fact, giving every kid an opportunity rather than just saying, 'Because your property taxes are so much higher, we're not going to give you so much money because you're a rich district,'" Boettcher said.

Walker will reveal his 2011-13 biennial budget later this year, and many school district administrators, like Johnson, will anxiously await its release.

Nekoosa's superintendent plans to update School Board members regarding the district's budget next week, a presentation he says will detail some of the challenges.

"We will end this fiscal year in the black (avoiding a shortfall), barely," Johnson said. "The problem isn't so much this year; it's where we're headed the next couple years. We're planning on minimal to no

increase in state funding. I think (we), along with 90 percent of the other school districts, are going to be looking at more cuts."

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NO, I have some rules!

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