

Guest column: Cuts are not what's best for students

Written by

Tony Evers

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This is high school graduation season in Wisconsin's public schools. Students, their parents, families, friends and educators will celebrate accomplishing one of the major steps toward a productive and successful life. Graduating from high school in Wisconsin is something we are known for nationally.

A quality public education system has been a foundation of our state's success and will ensure our future economic prosperity. This is a commitment that generations of Wisconsin leaders have made to our children — in good times and bad. However, as a result of the proposed state budget, parents, students, educators and school board members of our public schools are facing massive cuts to education **funding**. The estimated reductions in funding and resources from current law to a few school districts in the Green Bay region are: Ashwaubenon, West De Pere and Shawano losing up to \$5 million each; De Pere, Pulaski and Howard-Suamico losing between \$5 million and \$10 million each; and Green Bay losing more than \$30 million. At the same time the 2011-13 budget delivers historic cuts to

public education, proposals to expand publicly-funded vouchers to private schools are being floated around the state, including in Green Bay.

In the end, cuts to education funding are about what it does to children in our public schools. As a result of the proposed state budget, school administrators report our children will have fewer educational opportunities and supports. School administrators forecast dramatic increases in class sizes, as well as reduction or elimination of programs like Advanced Placement, music and art classes, foreign languages, school nursing services, athletics and more. The cuts in this proposed budget come after 18 years of revenue limits on public schools that have required sacrifices year after year. The 2011-13 proposed budget places undue burden on our children whose education today is an **investment** in a better tomorrow. Our children didn't cause the economic downturn; they shouldn't disproportionately suffer the consequences of it.

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One step we can take to build a better future for education is to improve the fairness of our school finance system. It is broken. Though resources are scarce, we can do better at allocating state funding for public schools. With changes to this budget, the state Legislature could make our school funding more transparent by adopting my "Fair Funding for Our Future" recommendations. Even in these tough times, we can protect students and fix our school finance system while holding the line on property [taxes](#).

Parents, educators and Wisconsin citizens support our public schools, which stand at the center of our state's communities and constitution. We can and must do better for the children in our public schools.

Tony Evers is state superintendent of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

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