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Local Schools Welcome Changes to State Funding Formula

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By Molly Hendrickson

The state superintendent Monday rolled out a new proposal aiming to reform state public school funding.

It calls for adding \$420 million in funding while ensuring no district gets less money than it currently does.

State Superintendent Tony Evers said, "This is the lowest increase that we've requested in over a decade. We believe with the proper work and effort we can make this work, absolutely."

Evers says the plan would ensure every district receives at least \$3,000 per student. General aid would increase two percent in the first year of the budget and four percent in the second year.

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

Evers 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.

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

Early figures suggest most local districts would only see state funding increases of five-percent or less, with the Green Bay school district seeing a 1.2-percent increase.

"If this plan had been in place for 2010-11, we would have seen an increase of \$1.7 million equalized state aid, and in kind that would have lowered our tax levy amount by \$1.7 million in the Green Bay school district," Green Bay Assistant Superintendent Alan Wagner said.

The De Pere school district would see a nearly five-percent increase.

The West De Pere district would see about a 7.5-percent increase.

The Ashwaubenon school district would see no increase at all but it also would not see a decrease in funding -- something the superintendent says has happened the past two years.

"I think the school funding formula has been needed to be reviewed for a long time. I think this is definitely an improvement. I don't think it's a final answer. I think we need to keep looking at ways we can continue to make it better," Ashwaubenon Assistant Superintendent Keith Lucius said.

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



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