



Wisconsin school funding changes proposed by state superintendent Tony Evers

Proposal provides \$3,000 per student

By Patti Zarling •
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Wisconsin Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Evers wants to see a major overhaul of the way the state pays for education.

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Evers is rolling out a plan he says will hold the line on property taxes while guaranteeing state funding for every student, strengthening rural schools and ending a "school-funding shell game."

His "Fair Funding for Our Future" proposal calls for a number of funding changes, including:

- ◆ Providing a minimum of \$3,000 a year in aid for each student.
- ◆ Giving additional aid dollars for each student living in poverty.
- ◆ Increasing general state aids by 2 percent in 2011-12 and 4 percent in 2012-13, for a total of more than \$400 million.
- ◆ Shifting away from using school levy credits.
- ◆ Ensuring no school district loses more than 10 percent of state aid in a year.
- ◆ Allowing predictable growth in state aids.

He also wants to include a \$7 million hold-harmless provision in 2012-13 so that every school district

would receive the same amount of total state support it would have received without the proposal.

"I've known the funding formulas were broken for 35 years," Evers said at a recent meeting with the Green Bay Press-Gazette's editorial staff. He traveled the state touting the plan last week, but the announcement was embargoed for release today.

Local school district officials have not seen numbers attached to the plan, but most local districts would see increases of less than 5 percent, according to early figures released by the state. The Green Bay School District would see a 1.2 percent increase in state aids, according to the DPI. Most Door County school districts would see increases of 10 to 20 percent. The Ashwaubenon and Howard-Suamico school districts would see no change.

A main part of the plan would shift focus on funding from property values to the number of students living in poverty within school districts. Evers' plan would increase funding for each student living in poverty by 20 percent.

"They tend to have more needs," Evers said. Weighting those students better reflects people's ability to pay and should bolster rural districts, he said.

It also calls to shift school levy tax credit and other credits to the general aid formula. School levy credits show up on property owners' December tax bills. School districts, though, must increase their property tax levies to cover costs, thus offsetting the tax credits.

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"It's a politically popular thing to do," Evers said. Using tax credits rather than sending funds directly to school districts also allows state lawmakers to put off payments to the next state biennium budget, he said.

"It really is a state aid, but school districts have to levy to get it," he said. "Then you've got school districts saying 'Our levy really isn't that high.'"

He also proposes changes to the way categorical and competitive aids are distributed. Changes would take place in the second year of the biennium.

The state currently covers about 62 percent of total school spending. The DPI estimates changes would increase state aid to about 64 percent. State aid to schools accounts for more than 37 percent of the state budget — the single largest expense.

— The Associated Press

Additional details

State schools Superintendent Tony Evers plans to present details about his "Fair Funding for Our Future" school finance plan at 9:30 a.m. Tuesday during a press conference at Green Bay's Chappell Elementary School, 205 N. Fisk St.

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The advertisement features the USA TODAY logo at the top left, followed by the word "AutoPilot" in a large, bold, black font. To the right of "AutoPilot" is a blue airplane icon. Below the main title, a smartphone is shown displaying the app's interface, which includes a "USA TODAY Meeting" section with a date, a flight status section for "A6 BNA to IAD Landed" with a time, and a weather section for "Washington (IAD)" showing "Partly Cloudy" and a temperature of "73°". Below the weather is a link to "View a Flickr gallery of Washington" and an article preview for "Hotel Check in Hilton Hotels plucks". To the right of the phone, the text reads "The new travel app for iPhone® and iPod touch®". Below this is the "Presented by:" logo for Hampton, which is a red and white crest with the word "Hampton" in a script font. At the bottom right of the ad is a blue button with the text "SEE HOW IT WORKS »".

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