



New funding formula would boost school aid

All area districts would get ubcrease under DPI head's plan

By Dan Benson • Sheboygan Press staff •
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State **funding** for every school district in Sheboygan County would increase under a plan proposed by state Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Evers.

Evers says his "Fair Funding for Our Future" plan would increase state aid by 2 percent in 2011-12 and by 4 percent in 2012-13 for a total cost of about \$420 million. It would be paid for by shifting about \$900 million in **school** levy tax credits to school aid.

"No matter where you live or work in our state, if we are to build and sustain Wisconsin's economic future, we must do better for our public schools," Evers said Tuesday in Green Bay to promote his plan. "Our current school **finance** system is broken. We can do better. We must do better."

Some legislators, facing a \$2.7 billion shortfall in the next biennial budget, pronounced Evers' plan dead on arrival even though they admire the effort to reform a funding system that's largely recognized as being broken.

"The state funding formula is flawed," said Howards Grove Superintendent Chris Peterson. The Howards Grove School Board increased spending 1.85 percent for this school year, "which is peanuts," Peterson said. But the district's levy rose almost 10 percent and the tax rate jumped almost 18 percent because of what Peterson called a "perfect storm" that saw state aid drop more than 4 percent and property valuations plunge more than 6 percent.

State aid would automatically increase at least 2 percent a year and would change from 15 percent to 10 percent the amount of change in aid any district could receive year to year.

The Kohler and Elkhart Lake-Glenbeulah school districts currently have their state aid reduced by the maximum 15 percent every year because they are deemed "property-rich" districts with few **students** living in poverty.

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.

Other elements of Evers' plan calls include providing a minimum of \$3,000 a year in aid for each **student**; and increasing aid for each student living in poverty by 20 percent.

If applied to their 2010-11 budgets, every district in Sheboygan County would have seen an increase in state aid from what they're getting this school year, according to figures released by the state Department of Public Instruction.

The biggest percentage increases would be in Random Lake, up 5.9 percent, Howards Grove, up 5.6 percent, and the Sheboygan Area School District, up nearly \$3.93 million, or 5.2 percent.

The smallest percentage increase — just 1.9 percent — would be in the Kohler School District,

Nearly every **school district** in the state would see an increase in funding under the plan.

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 told the Green Bay Press-Gazette. Weighting those students

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better reflects people's ability to pay and should bolster rural districts, he said.

The Associated Press and Green Bay Press-Gazette contributed to this report. Reach Dan Benson at dbenson2@sheboyganpress.com and 453-5125.



State School
Superintendent Tony Evers

Fair Funding

Here's what state School Superintendent Tony Evers' plan would mean for Sheboygan County school districts:

Cedar Grove: up \$172,957, or 2.5 percent
 Elkhart Lake-Glenbeulah: up \$32,649, or 2.0 percent
 Howards Grove: up \$373,348, or 5.6 percent
 Kohler: up \$29,437, or 1.9 percent
 Oostburg: up \$246,154, or 3.9 percent
 Plymouth: up \$481,113, or 3.4 percent
 Random Lake: up \$337,899, or 5.9 percent
 Sheboygan: up \$3,926,581, or 5.2 percent
 Sheboygan Falls: up \$459,678, or 4.0 percent

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