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Local schools open to Evers' funding plan

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Local school administrators are lauding a school **funding** proposal that would boost state aid for nearly every Wisconsin school district.

The plan, unveiled Monday by State Superintendent Tony Evers, also is being received warmly by state **Republican leaders**, despite concerns over its cost.

State aid to schools is the single largest expense in the state budget, accounting for more than 37 percent of the total. Evers' plan would increase the state's share of education spending by \$420 million, and that's a tough sell to legislators facing a \$2.7 billion budget deficit.

The plan would be paid for largely through eliminating the roughly \$900 million that currently shows up on home owners' bills as a property tax credit. For the first time, the formula also would take into **account** how many students are in poverty, and not just local property wealth, to determine how much aid a district receives.

"We've needed reform like this for a long time," said Cherna Gorder, assistant superintendent of business for the Wausau School District. "(Evers') plan looks like it provides greater fairness and a sustainable way to **fund** schools."

None of the state's 424 districts would receive any

how bad the budget situation is, I don't want to make any promises."

Republican Gov.-elect Scott Walker's spokesman, Cullen Werwie, applauded Evers for recognizing the need for funding reform, but said, "True funding reform means focusing on how to better spend the dollars we have today."

Brent Zimmerman, business manager for the Mosinee School District, is waiting to see how the proposal will fare.

"At the end of the day, I think this is a great idea," Zimmerman said. "But you have to say, 'How do you pay for it?'"

Jack Stoskopf Jr., assistant superintendent of business and personnel services for the D.C. Everest Area School District, said the state would be on the hook for upping school funding under the current funding system anyway.

"There would be no greater increase than in any other year," Stoskopf said. "This is the first major (Department of Public Instruction) led proposal to change things to make it more equitable."

-- The Associated Press contributed to this story.

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