

wausaudailyherald.com

Our View: School-aid idea deserves a fair hearing

November 18, 2010

Wisconsin Superintendent Tony Evers' new proposal for [funding](#) public schools is big, exciting news, even if it sounds bureaucratic and boring.

This is not a wholesale endorsement of his "Fair Funding For Our Future" plan -- that might come later, after further analysis -- but it is wholehearted support for coming up with a new idea to provide property tax relief and preserve the [quality](#) of education for our kindergarten through 12th-grade students.

Evers also is serving as the champion for a proposal that has been well-researched and articulated. Those two things have been lacking in Wisconsin for years -- a solid idea with a credible promoter.

The problem that Evers and others want to fix is that school districts get almost all of their money from two sources -- state aid and local property [taxes](#) -- that are set up for conflict and can vary widely from one community to another and from year to year. As the state pulls back on school aid, districts are forced to cut budgets or raise taxes, with strict limits on how much they can do either.

Evers' proposal is intended to stabilize funding from the state, make it more evenly distributed among districts, adjust for the local rate of poverty and not only slow the increase in property taxes but drive down those bills.

The plan, according to Evers, would:

- Guarantee a minimum of \$3,000 in state funding for every student, providing more resources to the 54 school districts that currently receive little or no state aid.
- Incorporate a poverty factor into the formula that [accounts](#) for how much money people earn in a district, not just how much property they own.
- Make the growth in state aids more predictable for districts.
- Maintain the current growth in property-tax revenue limits for districts at an additional \$200 per pupil, which would provide a modest increase in school spending while

- End the "school funding shell game by redirecting the school levy tax [credit](#), which does not directly pay for one child to be educated, into general school aids, increasing transparency and directing state support back into the classroom."

The results, according to Evers:

- All school districts would receive more state aid, which would reduce their gross tax levy.
- [Homeowners](#) would receive an even bigger school property tax reduction than when the state instituted two-thirds funding in 1996. Here's the rub: The proposal would cost the state more than \$400 million over the next two years to implement in the 2012-2013 school year. Nearly half a billion dollars will be a tough pill to swallow for a Republican Legislature and governor elected in part to get state spending under control. However, Evers notes that this would be the Department of Public Instruction's lowest budget increase requested in more than a decade. Also, even the most conservative budget hawks have to be interested in an idea that reduces property taxes without harming education. We ask that our local legislators -- state Sen.-elect Pam Galloway, state Reps. Donna Seidel, Jerry Petrowski and Tom Tiffany -- as well as Gov.-elect Scott Walker give this proposal fair and genuine consideration and quickly. Unless they can find a more equitable plan that eases property taxes and the pain of school cutbacks, lawmakers should move on this in

Advertisement

Mom Dilemma #36:
Your daughter insists on wearing her princess costume to the grocery store. Allow it or not?

YES, at least she's dressed!

NO, I have some rules!

momslike.me.com
where local moms meet

Print Powered By FormatDynamics™

wausaudailyherald.com

the next legislative session.

Advertisement



Mom Dilemma #36:
Your daughter insists on wearing her princess costume to the grocery store. Allow it or not?

YES, at least she's dressed!

NO, I have *some* rules!

momslike.me.com
where local moms meet

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™