

News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DPI-NR 2010-144

Monday, November 15, 2010

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Evers presents ‘Fair Funding for Our Future’ plan

Holds the line on property taxes

PRAIRIE DU SAC — “We can protect students and enact school finance reform, while holding the line on property taxes even in difficult economic times,” said State Superintendent Tony Evers in announcing the “Fair Funding for Our Future” plan to reform how Wisconsin funds its public schools.

The “Fair Funding for Our Future” plan

- fixes the school funding formula,
- holds the line on property taxes,
- guarantees state funding for every student,
- strengthens rural schools and schools with declining enrollments,
- accounts for family income and poverty,
- ends the school funding shell game, and
- provides predictable growth in state 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. “Our current school finance system is broken. We can do better. We must do better. We must take a first step.”

All “Fair Funding” changes to the school aid formula are in fiscal year 2012-13, the second year of the biennium. In the plan, which must be approved as part of the 2011-13 budget process, Evers requests that public school districts receive a minimum of \$3,000 in general school aid for each student. The plan includes a weighting factor in the proposed school aid formula of 0.2 for students who are eligible for free or reduced-price school lunch, moving the state away from considering only property wealth in the distribution of state school aid. General school aid would increase by 2.0 percent in the first year of the budget and by an additional 4.0 percent in the second year. In 2012-13, the School Levy Tax Credit and the First Dollar Credit, currently funded at \$897.4 million, would be folded into general school aid, ensuring that state education dollars are directly spent on educating children. According to aid projections, implementing the “Fair Funding” plan would result in 93 percent of districts receiving an increase in state aid and no districts experiencing a decrease in their level of state support.

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“This plan holds the line on property taxes by providing additional state resources for schools and by maintaining current revenue limits,” Evers stressed. “My plan also directs school levy tax credits toward educating children, ending the shell game that has been played for years with school funding.”

The plan also ensures that no district loses more than 10 percent of its state aid in a single year and makes changes that support declining enrollment and negatively aided districts. For future budget years, “Fair Funding for Our Future” helps local communities and school districts plan and budget by proposing a predictable increase of 2 percent or a rate equal to the Consumer Price Index in state support for schools, whichever is higher.

“Even in difficult times, we must invest in our children’s education,” Evers said. “They are the future workers and leaders who will keep Wisconsin and our nation strong.”

In addition to changes to the school aid formula, “Fair Funding for Our Future” proposes consolidating some categorical aids to fund areas of greatest need. The plan would increase transportation aid for districts that transport students over long distances and maintain state sparsity aid to support rural schools. Sparsity aid helps small, rural districts that have fewer than 10 students per square mile provide educational services to their children.

The plan consolidates 11 of the 32 state taxpayer-funded categorical aid programs as well. The plan will redesign peer review and mentoring to support teacher effectiveness; propose new census-based bilingual aid for children not currently served in a required program; propose new aid to support voluntary use of college, and career-ready assessments; and provide competitive grants to increase graduation rates and reduce dropouts. (See sidebar on “[Innovation in Education](#)” for additional information.)

“Fair Funding for Our Future is a comprehensive plan to improve the way our state finances its public schools,” Evers said. “It reforms school finance, protects taxpayers, addresses significant educational needs, and builds a foundation for the future.”

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NOTE: This news release is available electronically at http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpinr2010_144.pdf. Visit the Fair Funding for Our Future website at <http://www.fairfundingforourfuture.org> for additional background and a district-by-district list showing the fiscal impact of the “Fair Funding” proposal.