



# Elk Mound Area School District

Elk Mound, WI 54739

March 17, 2015

Dear Elk Mound Parents, Guardians and Community Members:

As our informational video on our webpage states, being in Elk Mound, "... is like going back in time." When I made this statement, I was referring to the values and the strong bond that our families hold for the good of all of our *kids*. The proposed state budget for education threatens to undermine these child-centered values. If passed as proposed by the governor, this budget will take us back to where we were about six years ago in funding. Maintaining a high quality school system works well if we are grounded in the values from the past. Operating a school system with budget numbers from the past, however, threatens the future of our children and the quality of their lives.

The proposed budget was released in early February by the governor. The structure of Wisconsin school finance is complicated. We are funded from three main sources; through federal aids, state aids and the local taxpayers. As visualization, imagine filling up a glass coin bank model of an imaginary Elk Mound student with the money needed to educate him or her. You could see that we get aid from the state from their feet to their chin; from the local taxpayers from their chin to their eyebrows and from federal aid from their eyebrows to the top of their head. This may be a bit simplistic, but I think you get the picture. Most of our funding comes from state aids.

The governor's budget, as proposed, freezes the revenue limit, the maximum amount of revenue that may be raised through state general aid and local taxpayers. Up until this recent proposal, the revenue limit has been increased each year since its inception in 1993 to account for inflation. To increase the revenue limit, a dollar increase per student would need to be applied to the revenue limit formula. Not only does the governor's budget propose a freeze in the revenue limit, it eliminates a \$150 per student categorical aid that has been used in the past in lieu of increases in state aids. This double whammy means that we not only will have a frozen revenue limit for next year but will lose \$161,950 in revenue next year.

We receive a modest amount of money per student compared to the other public elementary and secondary schools in the state. In the most recent Department of Public Instruction comparison of public school revenue, we rank 35 from the bottom of the 423 Wisconsin public schools in revenue per student.

We have a history of being very careful in spending for equipment, maintenance and staffing. Due to our conservative spending, well-managed debt and increasing student enrollment we are in a more advantageous position than most school districts to handle this budget decrease in the short run. But it would mean cutting back on some of the tools and services that help make our schools the great places they are for learning and growing.

Horace Mann stated that, "The public school is the greatest discovery made by man." The governor's budget undermines this belief by expanding the school voucher program in Wisconsin so that state money, which could go to public schools, will be diverted to private schools. This siphoning away of public dollars to support non-public school students demeans and demoralizes the students and families who value and depend on public education.

## **Dr. Ronald J. Walsh**

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## **Mr. Paul Weber**

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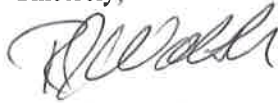
Our children are our future. They deserve the level of support from our state that gives them best hope for future success. Please share your concerns and questions with our governor and legislators.

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Sincerely,



Ronald J. Walsh  
Superintendent

On Behalf of the Elk Mound Area School District School Board