



February 26, 2015

Dear Wisconsin Legislators,

Lakeland Conference Superintendents Group

Josh Robinson, President
Matt Spets, President - Elect
Cathy Shimon, Treasurer
Brandon Robinson, Secretary

The Lakeland Conference is a large athletic conference of 21 rural school districts in Northwest Wisconsin. The communities served by our school districts have individual and unique needs that are met through our respective school systems. Each community has high expectations for quality educational programming for its students and community members. The communities in Northwest Wisconsin thrive when their school systems are strong and able to provide the quality programs that keep the communities vibrant. All the superintendents in the Lakeland Conference agree that the education of our children is of paramount importance when considering state fiscal matters, and our rural communities depend upon strong public school systems. In many communities, the school district is the largest employer.

With respect to the Governor's 2015-2017 State Budget Proposal, we respectfully request that you reconsider the elimination of the per pupil categorical aid. In addition, the proposal to maintain current law by providing \$0 for the per pupil adjustment for revenue limits in 2015-16 and 2016-17 should be carefully considered. In light of increased costs, inflation, and unfunded mandates, it can be argued that both of these provisions should be increased, not reduced or eliminated altogether. Adequate inflationary growth is minimally necessary to maintain and grow our educational programs.

The aid reduction and lack of a per pupil adjustment to the revenue limit will have serious budgetary implications for schools. For many of our schools, the consequence will be reduced programming and staff reductions. With school districts operating leanly and efficiently in the wake of recent budgets, these changes will only serve to negatively impact programming for students and our communities. Our communities have come to depend on the exemplary educational opportunities that we offer and will not be able to readily replace these programs outside the school setting. If districts have to reduce staffing as a result of the budgetary proposal, not only do students lose, but also unemployed staff members.

Regarding school accountability, one assessment system will provide the most effective way to determine long-term academic growth. One assessment system lends reliability and validity to school accountability. More than one assessment system, or optional assessment systems, will only serve to reduce the efficacy of the accountability system.

Additionally, the current school and district report card system has been functioning successfully for two years. The addition of an A-F rating system will over-simplify the current rating system. The current ratings are numerical and offer a clear distinction between ratings and subsequent school districts. The current report card system has more to offer parents and community members in an analysis of a school district than a



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simple letter grade. Letter grades do not tell the whole story of our school districts, especially the meaningful roles they play as community learning centers and as excellent employers within our communities.

Let's work collaboratively for the students in Wisconsin and our communities that depend upon quality public education. Please contact any of us to discuss how the proposed budget will impact our school districts and the children that we serve. We know that effective collaboration will help us achieve great things for our students and our communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Frank Helquist, Birchwood
Joni Weinert, Bruce,
Joe Leschisin, Cameron
Cathy Shimon, Clayton
Bradley Ayer, Clear Lake
Paul Schley, Cornell
Matt Spets, Flambeau
Josh Robinson, Frederic
Joni Burgin, Grantsburg
Jeff Mastin, Lake Holcombe
Rick Palmer, Luck
Brian Henning, New Auburn
Jean Serum, Northwood
Patrick Olson, Prairie Farm
Glenn Martin, St. Croix Falls
Jim Connell, Shell Lake
Scott Johnson, Siren
Morrie Veilleux, Turtle Lake
Brandon Robinson, Unity
Jim Erickson, Webster
Kurt Lindau, Winter