

March 18, 2015

Good morning. We represent the Pulaski Community School District administrative team. My name is Pam Kercheval, I am the Director of Business Services and I am here with Jenny Gracyalny, Director of Learning Services, and Lisa Misco our Director of Student Services.

We are speaking in regards to the proposed budget and the negative implications it has on education. We are strongly opposed to a \$150 per pupil aid adjustment cut and the freeze of the \$75 per pupil revenue limit increase, elimination of Badger Exam 3-8, and A-F grading scale on School/District Report Cards and expanding school vouchers in Wisconsin.

The budget impact to the Pulaski Community School District of a \$150 per pupil aid adjustment cut is devastating to our district and is estimated to be over \$550,000. The freeze of the per pupil revenue limit has an additional financial impact of over \$280,000 to the our district. In factoring in other rising costs of student learning for our district's Learning Services Department such as curriculum adoptions for Career and Technical Education, Science and Social Studies as well as yearly consumable costs, professional development and working to improve 21st century skills and technology integration for our students, we simply cannot face another budget reduction of nearly \$1 million. We continue to provide top-notch quality education with highly qualified staff but cannot continue with these divisive cuts to education. Considering that health insurance increases are projected to be about 8-12% for our district and our hope is to increase salaries for our employees by the cost of living increase, our district's projected deficit could be over \$1 million with the proposed budget. Over the past five years, during a period when our enrollment has remained substantially unchanged, our district has increased total salary costs by less than 1%. Over the same five year period, we have reduced fringe benefit costs by 13.4%. While the Consumer price index has increased 8.3% over that five year period, salary increases to our staff have not kept pace with the cost of living. Our employees deserve a cost of living increase. Our district's total spending has increased by only 1.6% in five years. We are all aware the utility costs, insurance costs and maintenance services have increased much more than 1.6%. We have nothing left to cut without impacting programs for kids. Governor Walker's proposed budget would cripple public schools. Please "Pay the Kids First" and put the money into our students and public schools!

Please also stand up for consistent accountability measures and assessments for Wisconsin children. We have spent professional development time and money preparing our students for the new state assessments such as the Badger Exam 3-8, ACT and ACT Aspire. Rather than "teaching to the test", we have focused on true authentic classroom assessment practices that would help prepare our students for their future. We understand that Governor Walker has issues with the Common Core State Standards but this is not a reason to pull an assessment only after its first year of administration. The Badger Exam 3-8 is a much better assessment than the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concept Examination (WKCE). It provides students with a more authentic application and demonstration of their learning through the performance tasks, classroom activity and computer adaptive tests. It is time to allow educators to do what is best for their students and to stop being barriers to our teachers and students.

We are also opposed to using a grading scale of A-F on the state's School and District Report Cards and imposing sanctions including privately-run charter schools to take-over failing schools. School districts are

moving away from such grading scales for student learning and utilizing other scales that show growth of learning through standards based and proficiency scales. Over time, evidence has clearly shown that grades are an insufficient way to evaluate the academic performance of children. By extension, if the objective of the school report card is to increase the public's understanding of how schools are performing, then grades are an inadequate means of meeting that objective as well.

Additionally, we oppose the expansion of school choice vouchers. If implemented this proposal divides an already strained budget to pay for multiple education systems. Wisconsin has always been well known for the high quality of educational programming offered in our public schools. Rather than supporting a second educational system, we urge that you keep the available funds in the public schools system so that we are able to provide our public school students with the instruction and supports that will prepare them to be productive, contributing members of our Wisconsin economy. Thus far, Wisconsin's taxpayers have already made a significant financial contribution to private school vouchers and currently spend \$212 million dollars on its three private school voucher programs. We have done this despite evidence from across the country shows that voucher schools students are not performing any better in reading and math than public school students. Further expansion of school vouchers in Wisconsin siphons resources away from public schools and will diminish educational opportunities for Wisconsin public school children.

We would like to extend an invitation to visit the Pulaski Community School District and our classrooms to learn more about how the budget cuts impact our 3,700 plus students. Please do not hesitate to contact us to schedule a visit to our district or to answer any questions you may have regarding how Governor Scott Walker's budget proposal impacts the Pulaski Community School District. We look forward to working with you on behalf of our students. Please stand up for Wisconsin school children.

Yours in Education,

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