

ST. CROIX CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



Tim Widiker
Superintendent
twidiker@scc.k12.wi.us
Ext. 2373

Jen Kleschold
Business Manager
jkleschold@scc.k12.wi.us
Ext. 2372

Pam Katner
Administrative Asst.
pkatner@scc.k12.wi.us
Ext. 2371

Elaine Starck
Human Resources
estarck@scc.k12.wi.us
Ext. 2370

Sandy Slick
Bookkeeper
sslick@scc.k12.wi.us
Ext. 2374

P.O. Box 118 • 1295 Vine St. • Hammond, WI 54015 • 715-796-2256 • Fax: 715-796-2460 • www.scc.k12.wi.us

Members of the Joint Finance Committee: Thank you for making time to listen to the concerns of public school leaders throughout the state. I am Tim Widiker, Superintendent of the St. Croix Central School District located in Hammond and Roberts.

The St. Croix Central Board of Education passed a resolution last week highlighting many of the same concerns you have heard today and will hear in the upcoming weeks. I have provided copies of that resolution for you to look over. In the spirit of avoiding redundancy, I would like to focus on our story.

St. Croix Central's District Report Card score is 76.1 which places us in the Exceeds Expectations range. Our high school Report Card has a score of 83.5 which is in the Significantly Exceeds Expectations range and places us in the top 3% of all high schools in the state. Our ACT composite score average the last two years is 22.8, which is also above the state average of 22.2. We received the Pacesetter Award for our AP Exam participation and passing rates last year. In addition to a culture of academic success, we take pride in offering our students unique extra-curricular opportunities because we not only educate ALL children, we believe in educating all styles of learners. In the last two years alone we have added Science Olympiad, a Robotics team, a Trap Shooting Team and National Archery in the Schools Program. These programs all have the same thing in common; they are not funded. All of these programs are run by teachers who volunteer their time and fund raise from the community. We offer these opportunities because they are good for kids. But how can the legislature expect us to continue to achieve above-average results with below average funding?

In spite of reduced funding, revenue caps, unfunded mandates, and preparing for ever-changing standardized tests, we still provide an outstanding education for our students. The quality of the education we provide will most certainly decline if the legislators in the state of Wisconsin continue to devalue public education by underfunding public schools. Wisconsin is still 2nd in the nation in graduation rates and 17th overall on the ACT Composite Score. We are a proud state and a leader in public education.

Because we are so near the border, we are very susceptible to losing our quality educators to Minnesota. Minnesota is able to pay their teachers more because their legislature supports public education by making it a priority in their budget.

I would like to briefly address the accountability bills that are currently being considered in the legislature as it applies to the State budget. I am concerned that the proposed funding model for voucher expansion is using public tax dollars to support private institutions. This is

"Be A District Respected By Others As A Model of Excellence in Student Achievement"

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fundamentally contradictory to using public funds to fund public entities. Additionally, the bill would allow these same private institutions to choose their accountability measure. We just ask that the accountability bill measures apples to apples with the same measuring device.

I understand the challenge of balancing a budget, but I can't think of a better investment in our state than public education. I aspired to be a school leader for the same reasons you all aspired to be a politician; to be in a position to make decisions that positively impact society. Please make the right decision for the students of St. Croix Central and our proud state of Wisconsin. Thank you for listening.