

2015-17 Biennial Budget Highlights

General Equalization School Aids and Fair Funding for Our Future

Increase general school aids by \$453 million over the biennium to implement Fair Funding for Our Future, which includes provisions for property tax relief (increases of 2.5 percent in 2015-16 and an additional 4.9 percent in 2016-17).

Includes the following changes to the state general school aid formula in 2016-17 to implement Fair Funding:

- Guarantee a minimum level of state funding for every student (\$3,000)
- Incorporate a poverty factor in general aid formula (30 percent) to account for families' ability to pay
- Protect taxpayers by ensuring no district could lose more than 10 percent of its state aid in any year
- Transfer the School Levy and First Dollar Tax credits and High Poverty Aid into general aid formula
- Make other changes to protect rural, declining enrollment and negatively aided districts
- Include a hold-harmless provision to ensure all districts receive the same amount of state support under Fair Funding as they would otherwise receive under current law

Revenue Limits

Increase the annual revenue limit adjustment to \$200 per pupil in 2015-16 and \$204 per pupil in 2016-17 (current law is \$0 per pupil in 2015-16 and thereafter). These figures represent a roughly 2 percent annual increase in revenues for the average school district and are consistent with changes in the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Increase the low revenue ceiling from \$9,100 per pupil to \$9,400 in 2015-16 and \$9,700 in 2016-17, which would allow 40-60 districts to narrow the gap in resources with higher spending districts.

Categorical School Aids

Recommendations for the following existing categorical aid programs:

Investing in Rural Schools

- **Sparsity** — Request \$8.4 million to fully fund program for 130+ districts in 2015-16 and 2016-17
- **Transportation Aid** — Request \$250,000 to make independent charter schools eligible for aid in both years and increase the over 12 mile reimbursement rate by \$25 per pupil (9 percent increase)
- **High Cost Transportation** — Request \$5 million to increase reimbursement rate from 33 percent to 50 percent
- **Open Enrollment Transportation** — Request \$3.1 million to fully fund transportation costs of economically disadvantaged students participating in the open enrollment program

Supporting Special Education Students

- **Special Education** — Request \$85.8 million to increase state reimbursement for children with disabilities from 26 percent to 28 percent in 2015-16 and 30 percent in 2016-17
- **Special Education (High Cost)** — Request \$14.4 million to increase state reimbursement for children with disabilities from 45 percent to full reimbursement in 2015-16 and 2016-17

Advancing Targeted Learning Opportunities

- **Gifted and Talented Grants** — Request \$1.5 million to further support grants for gifted and talented students throughout the state and make all school districts eligible to receive them

- **Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)** — Request \$500,000 to continue to provide grants to districts to support STEM projects and establish a statewide PK-12 STEM Center
- **Student Guarantee in Education (SAGE)** — Request \$11.2 million to fully fund program at \$2,250 per eligible student in 2016-17
- **Tribal Language Revitalization Grants** — Request \$400,200 in 2016-17 to initiate a young learners initiative to improve academic and achievement gaps for Native American students

Public and School Libraries

- **School Library Aids** — Increase funding by \$6 million to reflect a re-estimate of Common School Fund interest earnings
- **Public Library System Aid** — Request an increase of \$13,879,500 in 2015-16 and \$14,168,400 2016-17 to fund public library system aid at a 13 percent index level
- **BadgerLink** — Request \$551,000 over the biennium to maintain the current level of services through BadgerLink and increase funding for the contract with the Wisconsin Newspaper Association.

Other Categorical Aid

- **Bilingual-Bicultural Aid** — Request \$8.2 million to increase state reimbursement from 8 percent in 2014-15 to 12 percent in 2015-16 and 2016-17 for the roughly 60 districts required to have a program
- **School Breakfast** — Request \$935,000 million to maintain reimbursement for public and private schools at 9 cents per breakfast in 2015-16 and 2016-17

Recommendations for New Categorical Aid Programs (All in 2016-17):

- **Supplemental Bilingual-Bicultural Education** — Request \$2.3 million to provide \$100 per student to all districts with English language learners, not just those required to have a program
- **School Safety Grants** — Request \$2 million to provide grants to districts for safety purposes and establish a Wisconsin School Safety Center
- **Electronic Publications Grants** — Request \$1 million for matching grants to school districts for electronic publications, including digital content and software. The department's 2015-17 budget request also includes \$1 million annually for electronic publications for public libraries.

Career Readiness for All Students

- **Career Pathways** — Request \$4 million for students to learn occupational skills to succeed in their careers in the workplace
- **Better Bottom Line-Transitions** — Request \$5.8 million to provide districts with incentive payments to provide services to students with disabilities to improve their postsecondary outcomes
- **Better Bottom Line-Job Development Support** — Request \$1.5 million to invest in programs that assist in integrating students with disabilities into the workforce and higher education

Voucher and Independent Charter Schools

- **Milwaukee Parental Choice Program** — Increase funding \$44.8 million over the biennium (7.7 percent in 2015-16 and an additional 7.5 percent in 2016-17)
- **Racine Parental Choice Program** — Increase funding \$8.6 million over the biennium (13.8 percent in 2015-16 and an additional 27.3 percent in 2016-17)
- **Wisconsin Parental Choice Program** — Increase funding \$910,000 over the biennium (4.3 percent in 2015-16 and an additional 3.7 percent in 2016-17)
- **Independent Charter Schools (2R)** — Increase funding for independent charter schools in Milwaukee and Racine \$16.3 million (6.7 percent in 2015-16 and an additional 9.1 percent in 2016-17)