

A message from WAUWATOSA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Dear Wauwatosa School District Families,

I am writing to you to share some information and ask for your help. The Governor's 2015-2017 budget proposal has been released and contains some provisions that are of great concern to me in regard to the future of public education in Wauwatosa and the State of Wisconsin.

Over the past four years the landscape of public education in Wisconsin has changed, quite dramatically in some cases. We have maintained a balanced approach to those changes and have handled those changes well. But, the cumulative effect of the changes is now becoming more evident. In the past I have said, "we can work through the next couple of years but the concern for the long term is real." We are now starting to see those effects.

Education is a people business. Seventy-five percent of our budget pays for "people." We have invested in new and improved facilities and continue to maintain our aging buildings with the other 25 percent. To maintain our great schools we need great teachers and staff. We are now in a situation in which we are competing for those employees, not with other school districts, but with other career fields. Universities and colleges of teacher education have seen a significant reduction in applicants therefore reducing the pool of quality educators going into the field. Even the Governor's proposal to let those holding bachelor's degrees in other fields pass a proficiency test to teach in grades 6-12 is a testament to that shortage of quality educators. Our high school students may not see the impact of the latest budget proposal, but my real concern lies with our younger students and families.

The proposal to cut \$150 per student will reduce our revenue by \$900,000. Three years ago we cut \$6 million from our operating budget, primarily by reducing employee compensation. We need to attract and retain the best staff, and good salaries and benefits are major components to accomplish this. Some would argue that we should not invest in facilities or technology, but I feel we need a balanced approach to our spending. Our schools are aging and some facilities are outdated and require a significant investment each year to keep them viable learning environments and safe for students and staff. Each year we make many difficult choices about how to spend our available dollars, similar to any business, but the challenges are becoming increasingly difficult. With significant tax dollars being funneled to private voucher schools, which are not accountable in the same manner as the Wauwatosa School District schools, there is a fundamental shift in the foundation of public schools that will negatively impact our schools and the students they serve permanently.

I am reaching out to you as a leader, a parent and a primary caretaker of our District Mission: "United with parents and the community, the Wauwatosa School District delivers an outstanding education that equips and inspires our students to conquer their challenges now and in the future." I am asking you to partner with me and our elected School Board by looking through the components of the State budget on public education in [this link](#) and consider what impact this could have on the education you want for our children and our community. The impact of our system goes well beyond the doors of the schools and has a

profound impact on home values, economic development and the very fabric of the exceptional quality of life in the City of Wauwatosa.

Please consider contacting your legislators to let them know how you feel about the impact of the proposed budget on the Wauwatosa School District. As I speak to our lawmakers, I am asking that there is a reasonable increase each year in the revenue cap. Previously, State law provided us a yearly increase over \$250 per student. While we are not asking for anything near that, given the state's current budgetary concerns, we believe an increase of at least \$100 per student is both a reasonable and responsible way to provide the best quality education to our students and best return on investment for Wauwatosa taxpayers. We constantly seek continuous improvement in our schools and refuse to settle for the status quo, and your advocacy now will demonstrate this principle!

The following links provide more information on the budget as well as contact information for legislators:

[Contact information for Legislators](#)

[Comparison of the request of Department of Public Instruction and the Governor's proposal](#)

Thank you very much.

Phil Ertl

Superintendent of Schools