

To the Residents and Parents in the School District of Mondovi:

Last fall the Mondovi community supported a referendum to maintain educational programs and opportunities for all students attending Mondovi public schools. Your support ensured that students in our schools would continue to receive the education they need to be successful citizens and adults. Budget proposals currently being debated in Madison, however, will have significant and lasting negative impacts on the School District of Mondovi and all public schools in the state of Wisconsin. I believe it is important for information about these proposals to be brought to your attention.

Below is a brief summary of eight things you should know:

1. **FUNDING** – For the first time ever, Wisconsin will fall below the national average in per-pupil spending. While most states have been increasing spending on public education at an average of 4 percent per year, public school funding in Wisconsin is essentially flat. Minnesota is considering how to spend an ADDITIONAL \$525 million for public schools next year, while Wisconsin may be adding nothing.
2. **VOUCHERS** - The School District of Mondovi, and public school districts across the state, will have their state aid cut to allow for voucher expansion; these are public tax dollars used to pay for a student's private education. Voucher expansion reduces funding for students in all public schools, including ours.
3. **COST OF VOUCHERS** – A total of \$6,635 follows a public school student who enrolls in another public school under open enrollment. Under the legislation being proposed in Madison, \$7,210 will follow a voucher student enrolling in a non-public school in Kindergarten through Grade 8, and \$7,856 will follow a high school student. Therefore, non-public students are eligible for 18 percent more state aid funding than public school students.
4. **TEACHER LICENSES** - The new law eliminates many standards for licensing teachers, with no bachelor's degree needed to teach our students in multiple subject areas. This reduction in standards would mean Wisconsin would have the lowest entry standards for teaching licensing in the entire country. While the School District of Mondovi does NOT intend to hire non-certified teachers or teachers without a college degree, as citizens we should all be concerned about the de-professionalization of teaching in Wisconsin.
5. **GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS** - The new law would allow "learning portfolios" to replace up to one-half the credits needed to graduate from high school. Concerns include the likelihood that the rigor needed to earn a high school diploma will be significantly reduced, jeopardizing both in and out-of-state college acceptance.
6. **EXTRA – CURRICULAR PARTICIPATION** - The new law would allow home schooled students and virtual school students to participate in any extra-curricular or athletic team our district offers. Students from area private schools would also be eligible to participate on our school teams in certain sports. This raises a multitude of eligibility questions and the potential for different eligibility requirements for members of the same team.

7. SPECIAL ED. VOUCHERS - The proposed law allows students in special education to use \$12,000 in publicly funded annual vouchers to attend private and parochial schools. In these schools special education students would not be guaranteed the legal rights and protections afforded to them by federal law. At the same time the legislature is allocating money for special education students in private/parochial schools, it has not increased funding for public school special education students in eight years.

8. TESTING - The standardized state tests that students are required to take will be different for the third consecutive year. Districts will not be required to take the same test; making district-to-district comparisons very difficult. Our students do extremely well on the standardized test they are given and we welcome the opportunity to compare ourselves to any competing school. Common sense tells us adequate comparison can only be made when students in each district are taking the same standardized tests.

Please continue your support of public education in Mondovi by contacting your legislators to learn more about how the items being proposed in the 2015-2017 state budget will impact our schools. Your voice in support of public education in Mondovi and throughout the state is needed!

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Sincerely,

Cheryl Gullicksrud
Superintendent of Schools
School District of Mondovi