



April 24, 2019

We represent the Pulaski Community School District administrative team. We are grateful for the time that you have put into serving on the Joint Finance Committee and we appreciate your willingness to listen to our thoughts on the next State budget.

In the Pulaski Community School District, we work hard to know each student as an individual and provide the best education possible to meet their unique needs. Our promise to students and our community is to find ways to ensure a high quality educational experience that prepares them for their future by supporting each individual student academically, socially, emotionally and physically.

Imagine getting a phone call from a county agency letting you know that you will have a transfer student coming into your district. The caseworker informs you that the student has not been in a school setting for over a year because they have been in residential treatment. Academics had been put on hold because the student had experienced a traumatic life event. He also shares that the student needs physical, occupational, and speech therapy, counseling, and one-to-one support to keep both him and others safe. The school district quickly begins planning and preparing for the student and attempts to hire just the right person to provide the additional one-to-one support. All indications are that the student will not be emotionally stable enough to be integrated into a regular classroom settings and will need to be in a smaller environment at this time.

The student starts attending school and struggles; despite the best efforts of his teachers and parents, he earns poor grades and nearly fails most of his classes. The school looks at alternative programming that includes more specific mental health services in a different environment. The school is a lifeline for the student's emotional and academic well being. The teachers and paraprofessionals meet with the student on a regular basis, advocate and communicate needs for him at a time when he cannot do so himself and helps the family establish a relationship with a mental health provider.

Slowly, the child begins to speak to his teachers about his work and is willing to accept both positive and constructive feedback. He begins thinking about his goals and can visualize success after high school. With support from outside counseling, school teams, his mother, medication, flexible teachers and really, really hard work on his part, he is experiencing success and is ready to become more integrated within the school setting. The story of this

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young man is the story of a specific individual but could be a story from any of our great public schools across the state.

Now imagine this happening with five to ten students a year. How does a school district adequately budget for these unexpected costs when they have no idea that the student may be transferring to the school district? In order to help ALL students be successful, there needs to be adequate resources to assist all types of students and the proposed education funding supports our needs.

We ask that you support and fund the following items:

- Increase the per pupil revenue limit adjustment to provide an additional \$200 per pupil in FY 20 and \$204 per pupil in FY 21.
- Increase the 2019-20 Base Revenue per Member to \$9,700 for low spending districts and to \$10,000 for 2020-21.

Granting both of these items related to per pupil spending to low spending districts will help narrow the gap between low and high spending districts, creating greater equity for all Wisconsin public school students. Pulaski Community School District has a current maximum revenue per member of \$9,561 while other districts are almost \$16,000. This is a difference of over \$6,000 per student. Students in Pulaski deserve the same educational opportunities as their peers throughout the state.

Please note that it is critical for these two items to be included on the revenue limit worksheet. If the increase is included in equalization aid but not also in revenue cap, it will not allow any additional revenue for the district to meet student needs. Adding it to the equalization aid provides property tax relief but NO additional revenue to the school districts.

- Increase special education categorical aid to 30% in FY20 and to 60% in FY21.

Increasing the special education categorical aid will result in having to transfer LESS from fund 10 to cover fund 27 expenses which will free up those funds to spend on general fund expenses which support the learning of ALL students. With our 602 students with special needs in our district, we have transferred an average of over \$4.2 million from fund 10 to fund 27 each of the last five years.

- Support the elimination of current restrictions for hiring retired educators.
- Support paying districts equalization aid payments in 12 equal payments or 4 equal quarterly payments.
- Increase the funding for school-age mental health.

Our district, as well as many districts in the state, have placed an emphasis on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) as part of our curriculum. SEL is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to understand and manage emotions, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. These “soft skills” or executive functioning skills developed by social and emotional learning are exactly what 59% of hiring managers surveyed looked for in new hires. For the 2019-20 school year, we have invested district resources into having a part time Social and Emotional Learning Coach for over 3800 students. We support the governor’s proposal to increase aid for school mental health services and to include expenditures for other student services professionals such as school counselors, nurses and psychologists.

We appreciate the investment in public education shown through the last biennial budget and urge you to continue to invest in our students by providing additional resources to public schools.

We would like to invite you to the Pulaski Community School District to see the work that our great staff does to prepare students for their future. Our commitment to our children, the future workforce, and communities, is unwavering and we ask that you support additional funding for public education as you work through the biennial budget process.

Yours in Education,



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