



April 15, 2019

Dear Members of the Joint Finance Committee,

My name is Patrick Olson and I am the District Administrator at the School District of New Richmond. On behalf of all 3,463 students, 426 staff members, and our Board of Education, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to address you today. Your task of reviewing all state appropriations and revenues is not an easy one. As you approach the Wisconsin 2019-21 Executive Budget, I would like you to keep in mind our core purpose at the School District of New Richmond, which is to inspire every student to learn to his or her potential.

- As a District, we fully support at least a \$200/pupil general revenue increase in each year of the biennium. These increases are crucial for our District to maintain our high level of educational opportunities for the students we serve. In addition, rising health care, product, and service costs continue to outpace the needed revenue in our pursuit of the educational excellence our students deserve.
- As a District, we fully support the governor's proposed increase in funding for special education. This year we have to transfer \$4,124,832 from Fund 10 (General) to Fund 27 (Special Education) just to cover what the state and federal government does not. As a District, we are experiencing a 1.2% student enrollment increase. Along with this student enrollment increase comes additional needs. Without an increase in the reimbursement percentage, we are not able to fund additional staff to support our students increasing needs.
- Our community has faced its share of student tragedies, which includes five student deaths last year alone. As a community and a District, our TEAM of staff members has responded to each challenge with care, patience, and togetherness while rallying around one another. As a District, we have been fortunate to have received grants and programming such as the Trauma Sensitive training. However this is not enough. As said best by Theodore Roosevelt, "In any moment of decision, the best thing you can do is the right thing, the next best thing is the wrong thing, and the worst thing you can do is nothing". As a community, we fully support the governor's proposed increase in funding for school-age mental health. Each day, I could not be more proud of our TEAM and how they address the vast array of needs our students have on a daily basis. In these times of need, our staff put aside their own personal and family struggles so they can help our students through another day and for that, I am grateful. However, educators are not currently equipped to handle the increase in mental health needs.
- As a District, we fully support eliminating current restrictions on hiring retired educators to fill key positions. I recently had the pleasure to sit in on a Wisconsin Economy Discussion with University of Wisconsin Madison Economics Professor Dr. Noah Williams. In his presentation, he outlined both the facts and rationale around the worker shortage we are all feeling. As we all know, this concern is not going away and our students deserve the best human being in front of them providing direct instruction and what a better pool of qualified individuals than retired educators to help fill these voids. They have worked hard and have earned every penny throughout their dedicated years of public service. Please help us utilize this important resource to best serve the educational needs of our students.

Each day I have the pleasure of working with highly skilled and professional staff members that care about students and work tirelessly to help them reach their potential. I personally get to see the difference that our TEAM of staff, parents, and community collectively make for each child that walks through our doors. It is well documented that the quality of public education in the state of Wisconsin is second to none and I would hate to see that change due to a lack of resources.

In the end, the Joint Finance Committee will be in charge of making decisions that will affect thousands of students across the state of Wisconsin. Before making a recommendation please ask yourself that all-important question, "Is this what's best for ALL students?" On behalf of the students, staff, parents and community members of New Richmond, we thank you for your time and your willingness to listen.

Respectfully,

Patrick B. Olson
District Administrator

Cc- Senator Patty Schachtner, Representative Rob Stafsholt