

To Governor Scott Walker and the Wisconsin Legislature,

February 17, 2015

Too often taxpayers, parents, politicians, and educators talk about what they dislike or what they are against. As leaders of school districts in and around Dane County, we are compelled to speak out about what we need to maintain and improve our already excellent schools. We are united in the mission of working for excellence for all of our children.

It is also important for the public, the legislature, and Governor Walker to advocate for both policies and budgets that make sense, while also resonating with parents, grandparents, the business community, and the voters of Wisconsin. It is in this spirit that we submit this letter. It is in this spirit that we call upon our state representatives to act to support our schools.

What are we for?

We are for one assessment system that will measure achievement and growth with reliability and validity. An accountability system consisting of different assessments will create confusion, and not allow for relevant comparability. We must be accountable. One system will accomplish this.

We are also for accountability and transparency. Our current school report card system is clear and concise. It provides five measures to determine whether a school or school district is meeting expectations or not. People know which districts/schools are excelling and which are struggling. We believe that an A-F rating system will denigrate our outstanding public schools inside and outside of Wisconsin.

We are for a consistent funding plan. We understand that state resources are tight, but the current proposal cuts categorical funding by \$150 per student for 2015-16, then adds \$165 per student the next year. We believe inflationary growth is a minimum necessary to maintain and grow our educational programs.

We are for retaining our excellent faculty and staff. Without great teachers, Wisconsin will not have great schools. We believe that our teachers and other staff need to keep up with cost of living increases in order to recruit and retain quality faculty/staff. Last year that was 1.46%. Our teachers are the most important factor in student success. Few, if any, districts will be able to offer staff raises over the next two years without cutting programs.

We are for well-prepared teachers at all levels. Our colleges and universities prepare faculty very well. Our system of teacher preparation works. We are all for getting more experts in our schools, but it takes special training to be a teacher, just like it does to be a doctor, lawyer, plumber or electrician.

We are for taxpayers supporting public education. Expanding vouchers takes public tax dollars and sends it to private, for-profit schools, or religious institutions that are not held to the same high standards as public schools. Expanding vouchers will take resources away from public education. We believe that public money should be committed to public institutions.

Let's work together to develop a plan that is fiscally prudent but helps our great public schools continue to educate tomorrow's leaders and workers. We call on Governor Walker, the legislature, and the voters of Wisconsin to be advocates FOR our children.

Please join us in our efforts FOR the children of Wisconsin.

Sincerely,

Superintendents from Dane County and Adjacent Counties

Don Johnson-Middleton-Cross Plains

Randy Guttenberg-Waunakee

Brian Busler-Oregon

Michelle Jensen-Deerfield

Pam Yoder-Belleville

Barb Sramek-Marshall

Mark Elworthy-Wisconsin Heights

Dean Gorrell-Verona

Dan Olson-Monona Grove

Sue Borden-DeForest

Jerry Roth-Evansville

Dennis Pauli-Edgerton

Bernie Nikolay-Cambridge

Connie Schiestl-Waterloo

Deb Klein-Mt. Horeb

Tim Culver-Sun Prairie

Scott Brown-McFarland

Tim Onsager-Stoughton

Jen Cheatham-Madison