



Oregon School District

123 East Grove Street, Oregon, WI 53575

608-835-4000

www.oregonsd.org

March 3, 2015

Dear Oregon School District Parents & Guardians,

We are writing to provide you with important information about the Oregon School District and **to ask for your help.**

Over the past four years, the State has made significant changes in terms of how Wisconsin public schools operate. We have worked diligently to incorporate the state-mandated changes that have been part of the last two state budgets. Thankfully, the Oregon School District has a tradition of success and has been well supported by the greater Oregon community, as evidenced with a 62% passage rate of the \$54.6 million capital referendum in November of 2014.

However, we are at a cross roads with Governor Walker's K-12 Education budget proposal that is part of the 2015-17 state budget. The budget proposal contains several provisions that negatively affect our district in terms of school funding and policy items.

As an example, we have cut over \$2.2 million dollars from our annual budget in the past four years, primarily by requiring employees to pay more for their benefits, increasing class sizes and not expanding programs. We simply cannot continue on this path.

These are the budget challenges the Oregon School District currently faces:

- **Governor Walker's proposal to cut \$150 per student will reduce our current budget by \$550,000.** (All Wisconsin Public Schools are funded on a per student basis by the state.)
- Almost 77 % of our budget is invested in "people." To have a great school – we need great teachers and staff. We need to retain and attract the best staff. Competitive salaries and benefits are major components to accomplish this. Providing a consumer price increase of 1.62% (contained in state law) and paying for health insurance increases for school staff will cost approximately **\$730,000.**

Thus, we are facing, **at a minimum a \$1,280,000 deficit** for the 2015-16 school year. We cannot balance the school budget without cutting programs, laying off staff, freezing staff compensation, utilizing funds in reserve or receiving additional funding from the state. It is that simple.

- Additionally, Governor Walker's K-12 Education budget contains policy changes that will negatively impact our district, such as,
 - Expanding the school voucher program (**which takes public school money and gives it to private schools**),
 - Prohibiting the use of the Badger Exam in Wisconsin public schools. (**a test for grades 3-8 that we have invested significant time and resources in preparation for over the past several years**),
 - Changing the state-wide school report card to letter grades (A - F) from the current categories **that determine whether a school is meeting state determined expectations or not**.
 - Establishing a state-level Charter School Oversight Board, (consisting of political appointees of the Governor, State Superintendent and legislative leaders), which would have responsibility for approving new independent charter schools. **This eliminates the role of local school boards to be the sole chartering agent**.
 - The development of an alternative teacher licensure program to allow successful candidates to teach all subjects in grades 6-12. **There is no required training for alternative candidates in how to become an effective teacher**.

We reach out to you as a parent, community member and leader that wants the best for the youth in the Oregon School District. As an example, our District Mission statement is important to each and every child. We need your help so that Oregon School District can continue to meet our mission of,

“... helping students acquire the skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed to achieve their individual potential...”

We are asking you to partner with us by reviewing Governor Walker's 2015-17 State Education Budget in the link provided below, and considering the impact its passage would have on the education you desire for your children, the greater Oregon community and throughout the state. It is well documented that local schools have a profound impact on local economic development, home values and the quality of life in their community. You can find information on the budget at <http://www.oregonsd.org/StateBudgetImpact>.

There is another step you can take that will help us. Please consider reaching out to Governor Walker, local state lawmakers, and the Wisconsin Joint Finance Committee to express your feelings about the impact of the state budget on the Oregon School District and other public schools across the state. You can find your legislators and their contact information at <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/>.

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What will help Oregon Schools and other Wisconsin Schools?

We intend to ask Governor Walker and the Wisconsin Legislature to eliminate the \$150 per student cut and provide for a reasonable increase to public school funding over the next two years. In the recent past, it was common for the State to provide us with yearly increases of over \$250 per student.

We also want Governor Walker and the Wisconsin Legislature to talk with us about the policy changes contained in the 2015-17 State Education Budget. Working together – we can help make the policy changes work at the local school district level.

The students in the Oregon School District have benefited greatly from the support of parents and community members. We want this positive tradition to continue and you can be assured that our goal is to provide the highest quality education to your children.

Thank you for your assistance and continued support.

Sincerely,

Oregon School Board and Superintendent

Mr. Daniel Krause
Oregon School Board President
Sbdk1@oregonsd.net

Rae Vogeler
Oregon School Board Vice President
sbrv@oregonsd.net

Barbara Feeney
Oregon School Board Treasurer
sbbf@oregonsd.net

Jeff Ramin
Oregon School Board Clerk
sbjr@oregonsd.net

Dr. Brian Busler
Oregon School Superintendent
bsb@oregonsd.net
Work – 608-835-4003
Cell - 608-333-6169
Home – 608-835-6783

Steve Zach
Oregon School Board Member
sbsz@oregonsd.net

Charles Uphoff
Oregon School Board Member
sbcu@oregonsd.net

Gwen Maitzen
Oregon School Board Member
sbgm@oregonsd.net