

June 2015

Dear Families and Community Members of the School District of Oakfield,

The state of Wisconsin has a long history of strong and successful public schools. Many believe that we will not be able to say that in the future. In recent months, we have heard a great deal about the proposed state budget that will have a significant impact on K-12 public education. Most recently, the legislature's Joint Finance Committee proposed a budget bill revealing additional measures that will surely have devastating ramifications for all of our public schools across Wisconsin.

Following is a list that highlights some of the key proposals made by our Governor and the Joint Finance Committee:

- The budget proposal underfunds the Wisconsin public schools, forcing many school districts to make drastic cuts, reduce educational opportunities for students, and turn directly to the taxpayers through the process of referenda to fully fund their schools, to maintain programming, and to keep their schools open.
- The budget will drive Wisconsin under the national average in per pupil spending. For the first time in Wisconsin's history, the state budget will not provide an increase per student in revenue limits.
- The budget takes our state backwards as the proposal is to provide less general aid than received in 2010.
- The budget bill supports voucher and charter school expansion. Any expansion will siphon resources away from our public school students. Wisconsin taxpayers cannot afford this growing voucher entitlement. It is anticipated that the expansion of charter schools will likely result in property tax increases. As increasing dollars are diverted to the voucher program, we move closer to having two separate Wisconsin school systems, public and private, funded by public dollars. This is something that we cannot afford.
- The budget bill proposes a new system of vouchers for special education that may not protect these students' legal rights under federal law. In addition, we continue to see no increases in funding to support special education.
- The budget bill eliminates many standards for licensing teachers. We cannot tolerate lowering the standards of our instructional credibility. This will not move our public schools forward.
- The budget bill addresses changes in state testing that will eliminate validity and compromise accountability, aims to reconstruct assessment reporting to the public, proposes a five-star rating system for school districts based on unknown criteria, and creates new graduation

criteria. These proposals are not grounded in research, nor were they done in a collaborative effort with our Department of Public Instruction.

Why would we do this to our children in Wisconsin?  
Why would we do this to our public school system in Wisconsin?

It is anticipated that the full vote of the Senate and Assembly will occur by the end of June. It is NOT TOO LATE to express your concerns as a citizen, taxpayer, parent, educator to your legislators in Wisconsin. To continue to have the outstanding public education system that we have now, we must speak up about the serious destruction that is embedded in this budget bill proposal. Please contact your legislators and ask them to fully fund our public schools and remove unstudied new proposals so that we can continue to provide all students in Wisconsin with a high quality education.

Sincerely,

Sue Green  
Oakfield Superintendent