

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF BLOOMER

Good Afternoon

In his budget proposal, Governor Evers proposed additional funding for K-12 education in a number of areas. I would like to advocate for your support in three specific areas which I believe will provide the greatest level of support for the School District of Bloomer, school districts in our area, and school districts throughout the state.

Special Education Aid has been an area in which the State of Wisconsin has lagged behind the nation for a number of years. Currently, the reimbursement rate for special education funding is less than 29%, Governor Evers has proposed increasing the reimbursement rate to 45% in 2021-2022 and 50% in 2022-2023. Last year the School District of Bloomer transferred \$1,478,181 dollars from our general fund to offset special education expenses. The additional reimbursement aid as proposed by Governor Evers would help to offset this transfer by approximately \$323,000 in 21-22 and \$450,000 in 22-23.

In addition to special education funding, Governor Evers proposed a \$200 per pupil general revenue increase for 21-22 and a \$204 per pupil increase in 22-23. While this may seem like a sizeable increase, it amounts to less than a 2% increase in each year for our district. In the School District of Bloomer, we pride ourselves on our high quality staff, rigorous research based curriculum and small class sizes. In order to maintain this, it is important that we are able to address rising costs in areas such as transportation, insurance, building maintenance and curriculum updates (such as our new reading curriculum which focuses on the science of reading and our new math curriculum which focuses on problem solving and real world application) while, also, maintaining competitive wages. Governor Evers' proposed general revenue increase would assist us in meeting rising costs while maintaining high quality educational programming and instruction. Without such an increase, it is likely that our District will need to consider staffing cuts in the coming years which will result in larger class sizes, a reduction in support for our early learners and reduced offerings for our students.

Finally, I'd like to address Governor Evers' proposal of student count mitigation for one year. Under his proposal school districts would be able to use the greater of 2019-20 or 2020- 21 pupil counts for revenue limits. As you know most school districts across the state have suffered significant declines in enrollment during the COVID-19 pandemic. The School District of Bloomer is no exception; the district saw a decline of 50 students in 3rd Friday enrollment count from the previous year. While I expect that our enrollment will bounce back; through no fault of our own, this year's decline enrollment will impact us for three years. The student count mitigation measure proposed by Governor Evers will serve to stabilize the District's budget allowing us to maintain the quality of education our community has come to expect.

The School District of Bloomer has made every effort to remain open during the COVID-19 pandemic. We felt a responsibility to our students and community and took all possible measures to be in person for face to face learning. In doing so we faced many challenges and expect to continue to face challenges moving forward. ESSER I funds helped our District to remain open for face to face instruction while also offering virtual instruction for those who were not able to return for in person instruction. Additionally, ESSER II and ESSER III funds will help us to address the learning loss and mental health needs that have risen out of the pandemic through academic intervention, after school programming and counseling. However, these are one time funds, to address the additional needs that resulted from the pandemic. In order to maintain normal operations and the educational environment our community has come to expect, the School District of Bloomer will need additional fiscal support through the state budget. I believe that items outlined above from Governor Evers' budget proposal will go a long way in meeting the needs of the School District of Bloomer, and districts throughout the State of Wisconsin.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Regards,

Brian Misfeldt

District Office 1310 17 th Ave Bloomer, WI 54724 715-568-2800	High School 1310 17 th Ave Bloomer, WI 54724 715-568-2800 Option 2	Middle School 600 Jackson Street Bloomer, WI 54724 715-568-2800 Option 3	Elementary School 401 8 th Ave Bloomer, WI 54724 715-568-2800 Option 4
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