



# SCHOOL DISTRICT OF OSCEOLA

**Mark Luebker | Superintendent of Schools**

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**Board of Education**

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Good Morning,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify today. My name is Mark Luebker. Over the past 10 years, I have had the privilege of serving as Superintendent of the School District of Osceola. I am proud to speak on behalf of the Osceola Community to advocate for public education.

I am a strong advocate of comprehensive education reform in Wisconsin. I support all the legislative priorities outlined by the School Administrators Alliance and ask that the great state of Wisconsin support funding to raise academic performance and close achievement gaps.

My testimony today will focus on three SAA priorities; students with disabilities, mental health, and educator recruitment and retention.

Thank you for supporting the increase in special education categorical aid made in the 2019-21 State Budget. The additional funding, certainly assisted in meeting the needs of our most vulnerable students.

We want to ensure the learning of ALL students. I strongly encourage you to support Governor Ever's proposal to increase the level of special education aid to reimburse 50% of aidable costs by the end of the 2021-23 biennium. The School District of Osceola's special education percentage is 12.5%. Over the past two years, like other Wisconsin school districts, we are required to transfer general fund dollars to meet the gap in special education funding. Our projected general fund transfer to special education is estimated at \$1.79 million dollars. An increase of special education funding would free up dollars to meet the needs of our regular education students. An increase in special education funding is much needed across the state.

The mental health concerns for children and adults have compounded during the pandemic. We know all too well that many children and adults mental health needs go unmet causing negative consequences and tragedies for individuals, families, and communities. I urge you to approve the Governor's \$46.5 million expansion of School Mental Health Programs for services provided by school psychologists, nurses, school counselors, and social workers. Please also consider support to increase School Mental Health Grant Programs by increasing funding by \$3.5 million to support more school districts in connecting students and staff to needed services.

Educator recruitment and retention is a real time issue. We are facing a shortage of the best and brightest wanting to pursue education. Many quality educators are leaving public education. Our talent pool for open positions is very limited. It is not uncommon for schools to only have 1 or 2 applicants for hard to fill positions like Math, Science, and Special Education. Please consider easing the restrictions on hiring retired educators to fill these positions and expand and streamline the licensing reciprocity process to increase the pool of out of state educators under PI 34.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Mark Luebker

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Osceola Middle School | 1029 Oak Ridge Drive | 715-294-4180  
Osceola Intermediate School | 949 Education Avenue | 715-294-2800  
Osceola Elementary School | 250 Tenth Avenue East | 715-294-3457  
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