



May 21, 2021

Senator Cowles  
Senator Jacques  
Senator Wimberger

Representative Macco  
Representative Steffens  
Representative Kitchens  
Representative Shelton

Dear Senators and Representatives:

While decisions regarding the state biennium budget will have a significant impact on the Green Bay Area Public School District's (GBAPS) students, staff, families and taxpayers, as the fourth largest school district in the state of Wisconsin, those same decisions will determine the economic well-being of Northeast Wisconsin.

COVID-19 has been a significant disruption to student learning. This disruption occurred whether students were virtual, hybrid or in-person five days a week. Since March 2020, students have experienced isolation, quarantines, illness (their own or a family member), and loss.

As a school board and administration, our decisions regarding student safety have been based in science - Centers for Disease Control, Department of Health and local medical providers guidance; and COVID-19 data regarding spread, hospitalizations, and deaths. In addition, our decisions needed to weigh the district's ability to implement mitigation measures with fidelity, as well as to keep our schools staffed to not only provide instruction, but to ensure they were safe.

While our decision to remain virtual until March has not been supported by all community members, the result has been no school closures due to outbreaks or staff shortages, the ability to move to in-person four days a week with minimal social distancing, the majority of students being taught by certified teachers to ensure high quality instruction, and, with vaccinations, very few staff absences from school as they no longer need to quarantine due to a close contact with a positive COVID-19 individual ([please view our COVID-19 dashboard](#)).

On April 26, 2021 we shared through email a [document](#) that explained our expenses to-date regarding COVID-19. The allocation of ESSER funds for GBAPS is approximately \$72.5 million or a little less than \$1,000 per student, per year through 2024. In addition to the ESSER funds, the following items in the biennial budget are critical for GBAPS to successfully implement the academic and social/emotional resources to address the needs created by COVID-19, but also to retool our education systems to address long-standing systemic issues to ensure all students can be successful. We ask you to support:

- A per pupil general revenue increase in each year of the biennium budget of at least \$200, but preferably \$250.
- Increase to the low revenue ceiling at 90 percent of the statewide average maximum revenue limit per student. The current amount of \$10,000 is 87.3 percent of the current state average revenue limit of \$11,450.
- Inclusion of comprehensive student count mitigation by

- Allowing school districts to use the greater of the 2019-20 or 2020-21 pupil count for revenue limit calculations;
- Increasing special adjustment aid from 85% to 90% of prior general aid each year of the biennium
- Treating non-recurring declining enrollment exemption and base revenue hold harmless as recurring adjustment for one year only.
- Expansion of the mental health categorical aid by \$46.5 million.
- An increase in special education aid to 50% of aidable cost by the end of the biennium.
- Additional funding of \$204 million to expand internet access.

The 2020-21 school year will soon be coming to an end. Working with our community partners, GBAPS is offering a robust summer school, which includes full-day options with wraparound care. Not only does this additional time provide wonderful opportunities for our students to engage in academic and enrichment activities, it also provides much needed, no cost child care allowing parents to return to the workforce. We are excited about how these extended services can positively impact our families and our community, but GBAPS is only able to do so, because of the ESSER **one-time** dollars.

We respectfully request that as you debate and ultimately vote on the biennium budget, you consider **how investing in public education**, especially in urban school districts, who serve large underserved and under resourced populations, could positively change the trajectory of a community, but also the state.

Thank you for your consideration,



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