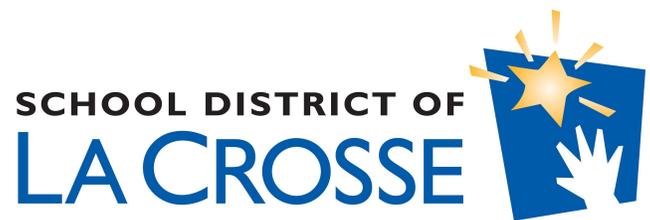


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Kelly Galván, Executive Assistant
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May 20, 2021

Dear State Legislators,

Education funding must be a priority for the next biennium budget. The pandemic has shown just how important schools are to our communities and our economies. Invest in our communities and economies by investing in public education.

Federal assistance for COVID-related expenses has been helpful, however these funds are restricted in their use and they are not ongoing funds. Federal funding is one-time money for one-time expenses. We need Wisconsin to invest in public education so that we can educate students next year and into the future.

Highlighted below are a few of the items that are most crucial for maintaining and improving the quality of education for our students.

Special Education Funding

Schools must receive a significant increase in special education reimbursement. This reimbursement is for legally required services to our most vulnerable students. Increasing reimbursement to 50% would cover an additional \$3.7 million of special education services for the School District of La Crosse and make more funds available to all students. Increasing special education reimbursement benefits every student in a school district.

Increase General Revenues

Schools must receive an inflationary increase of \$200 per FTE to general school funding. As the cost of materials and services increase due to inflation so must the aid to schools, or schools end up with fewer resources to educate students. Increase general school funding or we will not be able to provide the same high quality education for our students next year.

Declining Enrollment Mitigation

Schools must be given relief for the one-year loss of students due to COVID. Allow schools to use the greater of the 2019-20 or 2020-21 pupil count for revenue limit calculations, increase special adjustment aid to 90% of the prior year, and make hold harmless adjustments effective for one year only. If nothing is done, the School District of La Crosse will lose \$1,187,403 in revenue limit authority next year. This year's enrollment will negatively impact students' education for two more years. It is crucial that the funding formula is adjusted to mitigate the one-year loss of students due to COVID.

Low Revenue Ceiling

Set the low revenue ceiling at 90% of the statewide average. This minor change will ensure an equitable education for all students in the state, regardless of where you live or what your spending was in 1993 when revenue limits were set.

High Cost Transportation Aid

Lower the threshold for high cost transportation aid to the statewide average. This will benefit more than half the school districts in the state. Transportation to school is a requirement of public schools and the cost of getting students to school should not negatively impact the education they receive.

School Mental Health Categorical Aid

We have seen a significant increase in mental health needs for our students over the last decade and the pandemic has exacerbated this trend. We want to increase mental health support for students. Unfortunately, we do not have the funds to do so as these are new commitments our public expects of us after revenue limits were set. A categorical aid for school mental health resources will provide the support our students need to come to school ready to learn.

This pandemic has shown how crucial an asset public education is to our community and our economy. More than ever, we need to invest in our children, in our public education system, and in our future. Thank you for your service to the State and standing up for our children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Aaron Engel".

Aaron J. J. Engel, Ph.D.
Superintendent