

Sustainable Funding

State Superintendent **Tony Evers** calls on state leaders to move beyond a “Band-Aid” approach to school funding

During his tenure as State Superintendent, Tony Evers has made it a point to visit schools and hear from students across the state. Recent trips included a visit to St. Croix Falls to make pottery with students and a trip to Hortonville to learn about the district’s mental health work. Another visit took him to the newly consolidated Herman-Neosho-Rubicon School District. One common refrain he has heard from school leaders at these and other districts is the need for more school funding.

“When I’m in a district, I always ask school leaders, what can we do at the DPI to help you?” Evers said. “While the reasons differ from district to district, all roads generally lead back to one place — funding.”

Evers noted that Governor Scott Walker addressed school funding in

his State of the State Address, talking about the need to increase the per-pupil revenue limit. Additionally, Assembly Speaker Robin Vos (R-Burlington) has formed a blue ribbon panel to address school funding.

Evers recognized advocacy efforts of school leaders and community groups as crucial to getting increases for school funding into the next state budget.

“This movement, from the governor and Legislature — it happened due to pressure from you — through continued successful referenda and discussion by boards and members,” he said.

However, Evers also made it clear that school funding in Wisconsin needs to expand beyond “Band-Aid” solutions. He discussed his Fair



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Funding for Our Future plan, which he submitted to the Legislature.

“It’s based on the idea of transparency, fairness in distribution, and protecting all districts during the initial years from losing money due to the change,” Evers said.

The Fair Funding for Our Future Plan would mean an increase of 9.7 percent or \$138,544 for the Three Lakes School District and 23.5 percent or \$652,635 for the Montello School District.

“We have to work together to make those figures a reality, and we cannot let funding be a Republican or a Democratic issue,” Evers said. “Voters from across the political spectrum are passing referenda all across this state. At the local level, kids are simply more important than political labels.”

In closing, Evers left school leaders with a number — \$38,000 — the average per-pupil amount of money recent presidents have spent annually on their own kids’ schools.

“We’re not asking for \$38,000 a kid — we’re asking for a reasonable, sustained commitment from the state.” ■

