



Stand Up for Public Education

By now, we've all likely heard of the governor's plan to freeze public school spending in the upcoming 2013-15 biennium while increasing state aids to the private school voucher program by 10 percent. Under the plan, private schools could spend an additional \$600 per pupil at the elementary level and \$1400 per pupil at the high school level of taxpayer dollars. The plan also would expand vouchers to additional school districts and allow special education students of any district to be eligible for a voucher.

Public education is still reeling from the last state budget which took away more than \$800 million from public education and cut revenue limits by an average of \$550 per student. Private voucher schools, however, were given an additional \$23 million and had their per-pupil allocations held harmless.

The expansion of private school vouchers has nothing to do with improving student achievement or public accountability of taxpayer dollars. There is overwhelming evidence that private school vouchers do not accomplish either goal. And parents of students with disabilities have repeatedly and loudly spoken out against vouchers, which would strip their children's federal rights.

We need to stand together and get our communities involved in advocating for public education.

Public education belongs to the

public — open to all students and accountable to all. Allowing dollars to be siphoned away to schools that can select their students, ignore most laws and regulations that pertain to K-12 education and be accountable to only a select few will not benefit our society. I urge all school board members and administrators to speak out and call on the governor and Legislature to provide at least a \$200 per-pupil revenue limit adjustment to allow schools to cover inflationary cost increases and reject any efforts to expand private school vouchers.

In addition to calling and emailing your legislators, and meeting with them in your local districts with concerned community members, I also urge you to attend the 2013 WASB Day at the Capitol in Madison on March 13. The more who participate, the stronger the message we send. We encourage you to bring community members along with you to advocate on behalf of schools. The WASB staff will provide briefings and arrange opportunities to meet face-to-face with your state senators and representatives to discuss the governor's proposed budget and make our case on why the state needs to increase its support of public education.

If you want to learn more about school finance, come a day early for the WASB/WASBO School Finance Seminar on March 12 in Madison. Members can attend both the Day at the Capitol and the School Finance

Seminar for a special, combined rate. There is also a special WASB workshop the evening of March 12 at the Monona Terrace, which members are welcome to attend even if they aren't attending either conference.

In closing, I would like to thank everyone who attended the 92nd State Education Convention this past January in Milwaukee! Each year, the Convention reinvigorates me for the hard work we must continue on behalf of public education. I'm always so impressed by the caliber of our dedicated school leaders from around the state serving education in our local communities. Your dedication was especially apparent this year as we had a 10 percent increase in attendance over last year, making it one of the highest attended of our conventions.

Based on your feedback, I know that attendees found this year's Convention as exciting as I did. We had top-notch keynote speakers, a robust Exhibit Hall, and fantastic break-out sessions provided by hundreds of school board members, administrators, educators and business partners. This month's issue of the *Wisconsin School News* is dedicated to a recap of the Convention. Planning already is underway for the 93rd State Education Convention in January 2014 and we look forward to providing you with another great professional development opportunity. ■

Public education belongs to the public — open to all students and accountable to all.