



SCHOOL DISTRICT OF BARABOO

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Thank you members of the Joint Finance Committee for allowing me to speak on this year's budget. I am Doug Mering from the Baraboo School Board and I want to tell you that we are proud of our accountable high poverty school, Al Behrman Elementary, which has achieved Title I Beating the Odds recognition for the 7th year in a row!!! In the Baraboo School District we do not shy away from being transparent and accountable because our schools are experiencing high performance.

Voucher schools need to be both academically and financially transparent to the taxpayers and users of vouchers in our State. The state needs to adopt the Governor's proposal to create a separate line item on individual's property tax for its private voucher school costs. Baraboo just got their first voucher school last year and our current voucher schools cost taxpayers \$209,693 based upon a total voucher student count of 28 for this year. As a school board we have no legal responsibility for the students of this or other private voucher schools and the tax bill should more accurately indicate that.

Recently, the Speaker of the Assembly stated that the voucher students actually save taxpayers money. This would be true only if these voucher students were previously attending or actually going to attend public schools as full time students. I can not vouch for Racine but I do know that is not the case with Baraboo. This year both the Baraboo School District and the Sauk Prairie School District each had 4 students show up for one day of schooling so they could qualify and apply for a voucher as a public school student.. Newer numbers in at least the Baraboo area showing these students were in the public schools will be a fallacy too .Previous studies have shown that in these newer voucher programs that 80% plus of the voucher users would be in the private school even without the voucher. For most in the local program this is an entitlement they do not need.

The taxpayers of this state desire transparency and with that will also come accountability. Advancing the Governor's property tax voucher transparency provision is the right, just and honest thing to do. Thank you for your consideration.