

Judy Conlin, Board Vice President for School District of Rhinelander

Priorities for funding from the Blue Ribbon Commission for the Rhinelander District are

1. Special Education Categorical Aid
2. Per Pupil Adjustment and Per Pupil Aid
3. Revenue Limit adjustments
4. Weighting low-income pupils for purposes of calculating general aid and revenue limits
5. Counting full-day 4K pupils as 1.0 FTE for purposes of calculating general aid and revenue limits

We currently transfer \$3.7 million dollars annually from Fund 10 to pay for Special Education services. This significantly reduces funds available for general education programs.

We are a high property value district and currently receive 15% percent of our budget from state funding. Conversely 48% of our students qualify for free and reduced lunch with some schools at 60%. We rely on referendums to maintain current programming. This creates a significant burden for families in poverty.

We encourage you to support the current per pupil rate of \$200/students that should be tied to the base funding amount per pupil. Any increases in this amount would have a significant positive impact for our district.

Per pupil adjustment Inflation indexing would be very beneficial. We haven't seen this since 2014-2015 and the cost of living continues to increase yearly.

Revenue limit adjustments would allow the Board to continue providing and improving services such as school safety, school nursing, school resource officers, energy efficiencies; all are outside the revenue limits & could be over \$500,000 for our district with the potential of up to \$1 million.

Weighting low income students as 1.2 FTE and counting 4K students as 1 FTE would significantly improve our ability to level the playing field for our students in poverty.

We further encourage the Commission recommendation that the Legislature provide funding for community and school mental health as a new categorical aid for mental health services, with payments calculated in a manner similar to per-pupil aid under current law. Our area has few mental health providers with long waiting lists; having mental health services provided through the school would help address the urgency and timeliness for students struggling with mental health.