



May 15, 2021
An open letter to Fox Valley Legislators

Dear Legislator,

The establishment and support of public schools is codified in the **Wisconsin Constitution**. Our founders recognized the important mission of Wisconsin public schools in providing a well-rounded education that will prepare children for their roles as citizens and help them to succeed both personally and economically.

As you work with your colleagues to develop a PreK-12 education funding plan in the state budget, Fox Cities Advocates for Public Education, representing a coalition of hundreds of advocates and community leaders, asks you to **support the following**:

- Include a minimum **per pupil increase of \$200 in 2021-22 and \$204 in 2022-23**. The costs of operating schools (salaries, insurance, utilities, etc.) continue to rise due to inflation. Unless schools have a way to obtain additional resources to meet these higher operating costs, they must cut programs and staff, diminishing opportunities for students. Attracting and retaining quality staff depends on adequate funding.
- The **special education reimbursement should be a guaranteed rate of 60%** for both public and private schools. While public schools' special education costs are generally reimbursed at a rate of less than 30 percent, participating private schools' costs are fully covered up to the 150 percent level (about \$19,500 per pupil) and then are covered at 90 percent with no limit.
- Provide a significant increase in resources for **school-based mental health services** to students and staff. We support the proposed \$46.5 million expansion in Mental Health Categorical Aid.
- Allow school districts with **full-time 4K programs to count each child as a full-time student** in their enrollment reports.
- Allow school districts to use **the greater of student counts** in September 2019 or 2020 to mitigate the effects of the temporary drop in student membership counts (which affect both revenue limit calculations and per pupil aid allocations) caused by the pandemic.

- Build off the bipartisan Blue Ribbon Commission recommendations from the last state budget which increases support for **students of poverty and English language learners**.
- **Pause the planned increase in the school voucher program.** An alternative funding source should be identified that does not negatively impact public schools.

We do **NOT** support limits on funding due to the American Rescue Plan. The federal funding is one-time money and not meant to fund ongoing needs of our schools. That is the job of the Legislature.

Please work with your colleagues to fulfill Wisconsin's constitutional responsibility to public schools. FCA4PE's coalition of hundreds of Fox Valley public school advocates and community leaders looks forward to your support for equitable and adequate PreK-12 funding in the 2021-23 state budget.

Sincerely,

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FOX CITIES ADVOCATES FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION is a non-partisan, issue-oriented coalition of hundreds of Fox Valley public school advocates and community leaders whose focus is on finding common ground regarding growth and improvement of public education.