

Governor/State Superintendent Budget Proposal

Revenue Limits/Equalization Aid

- Revenue limit increases of **\$350 per pupil in 2022-23** and an additional **\$650 per pupil in 2023-24**, along with a roughly **\$800 million state investment in equalization aid** to hold the line on property taxes.

Per Pupil Categorical Aid

- Per pupil aid increases of **\$24 per pupil in 2022-23** and an additional **\$45 in 2023-24** (matching percentages of increase to the revenue limit growth), resulting in more than **\$60 million** in estimated investment.

Special Education Reimbursement

- Invests **\$750 million over the biennium** to increase special education aid. This would increase the reimbursement rate for special education from roughly **30 percent to 45 percent in the first year** of the biennium and to **60 percent in the second year** of the biennium, with a goal of achieving 90 percent reimbursement by the 2026-27 school year.

Staff Shortages

- Allows any school district to hire retired teachers and staff by changing the law regarding rehiring retirees to help districts fill open positions with experienced staff.

Reading/Literacy

- Creates a new literacy-focused **categorical aid of \$10 million** each year to fund literacy-related programming.
- This work would focus on implementing evidence-based reading instructional practices with special attention to establishing systems and structures for sustainability. There would also be a focus on improving reading-specific transitions from 4K to 5K to first grade.

Mental Health

- Creates a new **mental health categorical aid of more than \$240 million**.
- Through this proposal, every district will get enough funding to have at least one full-time staff member focused on mental health services, with additional funding based on student enrollment. Overall, this will provide a \$100,000 base for all local education agencies, or \$100 per pupil.
- This proposal also distributes funding for evidence-based practices on a reimbursement model, rather than a grant model, streamlining funding so every school and every student can access these resources.

School Nutrition

- Provide free meals to all students who qualify for free and reduced meals, as well as significantly decrease the cost for full-priced students by creating a state-funded program to reimburse districts for breakfast, milk, snack, and lunch expenses.

Financial Literacy

- Creates a \$5 million “Do the Math” initiative administered by the DPI to provide districts the resources to start or improve financial literacy curriculum and prepare students for financial success.
- The department will work with CESAs to develop a regional support network that includes professional development for educators and a model curriculum/scope and sequence for districts to implement.

Out-of-School Programming

- \$20 million in an Out-of-School Grant program that increases access to community- and school-based before and after-school programming, modeled after DPI’s ESSER III program.

GOP Reaction

GOP candidate for governor, Tim Michels, called it just more “money and more bureaucracy.”

“This is a feeble ploy to try to win votes after the disastrous results of Governor Evers’ failures. The impact and damage done to children’s education by shutting down schools for two years is not something their parents will easily forget.”—Assembly Speaker Robin Vos via Twitter

Wisconsin conservative groups propose \$577M plan to expand vouchers to all parents regardless of income

A new coalition of conservatives, policy groups and advocacy organizations announced it has begun developing a package of education goals for the coming legislative session, with expanded school choice (i.e., expanding private school vouchers) as a top priority, that could play a considerable role in the upcoming race for governor this November.

The proposals also stand in stark contrast to priorities laid out by Democratic Gov. Tony Evers — setting up an education policy battle in the Nov. 8 election, where Evers, a former educator and state superintendent who has opposed expanded private school vouchers, faces Republican businessman Tim Michels, who has pledged to expand school choice (voucher) offerings across Wisconsin.

The coalition, launched last Thursday (Sept. 8), includes conservative groups Americans for Prosperity, Badger Institute and law firm Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty, as well as education stakeholders like American Federation for Children, virtual education company K12/Stride, School Choice Wisconsin and Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce, the state’s largest business lobbying organization.

Under current law, students aren’t eligible to participate in the Milwaukee and Racine county school voucher programs if their family income is greater than 300 percent of the federal poverty level. Under the statewide school voucher program, that income threshold is 220 percent. Under a GOP bill Evers vetoed last session, those income caps would have been eliminated.”

A fiscal report estimated the vetoed bill could raise property taxes as much as \$577 million.