

Wisconsin state budget creates fiscal obstacles for most school districts

*Governor's contention that 'schools are in good fiscal shape'
misrepresents the reality in many districts*

GREENFIELD, Wis. – School board members, district administrators and parents from across the state gathered in Greenfield on Wednesday to speak about how the \$1.6 billion education state budget cut impacts schools, families and communities.

Speakers from Chequamegon, Eau Claire, Pepin, Nekoosa, Racine, Milwaukee, and many other communities agreed on one thing —everything is not OK for the children of Wisconsin.

According to Bruce Quinton, superintendent of the Pepin School District, Governor Walker's recent cuts are especially difficult after 18 years of school districts operating under state revenue limits.

"Given year after year of school funding reductions, educators are already working with larger classes, fewer materials and fewer programs and services for students," he said. "The most recent budget cuts make things worse, essentially handing the state's budget deficit to all school districts and municipalities throughout the state. Our young people and our educators didn't create this mess, but we will be the ones who pay for it."

Jenni Hofschulte, parent activist at Milwaukee's Maryland Avenue Montessori School, said that when the school's doors open in September, her son will have no physical education, specialized art education, math teacher leader, reading specialist or librarian. There will also be fewer paraprofessionals, and even some classrooms with 38 students per teacher.

While the governor has asserted that the new state budget puts schools in a good position for the future, school leaders and families see things differently.

"For some districts, the problems start this September. For others it will be next September. But for students in our schools, the resources needed for a real opportunity to learn and succeed are dwindling rapidly," said Larry Miller, a school board member for Milwaukee Public Schools. "This is a two-year budget and the overall impact is not going to strengthen Wisconsin's K-12 education system. The financial future is bleak."

The July 20 press conference was held at the Greenfield School District administrative office. It was sponsored by the Wisconsin Opportunity to Learn Network and staffed by the Institute for Wisconsin's Future (IWF at <http://www.wisconsinsfuture.org>.) The Opportunity to Learn Campaign (<http://www.otlcampaign.org>) is a national effort to ensure every child's fundamental civil right to a high-quality public school education, regardless of where they live.

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