

Dear Governor Doyle:

Thank you for your support of education in Wisconsin. As you work on the next budget I know that you will again be placing Wisconsin's school children at the top of your list of priorities. I want to thank you for that and give you some information that will help you as you shepherd that budget through the legislature to its final conclusion this summer.

In the School District of Cameron we are facing the task of trying to build a budget for next year. It will be very difficult to balance that budget without some major program cuts or a reduction of fund balance needed for district operations. You see, we continue to lose enrollment; not a lot, but even losing a few students each year, combined with the state imposed revenue cap and the QEO law, makes it impossible to continue to offer the current level of programming and of course it is also impossible to begin new initiatives.

Cameron is slated to begin a Four Year Old Kindergarten next fall. This program will be integrated with our Early Childhood program and will be partnering with Head Start to offer wrap-around services that our kids and families need so much. As I am sure you know, our situation in northwest Wisconsin includes rural poverty. Our parents work hard, with mothers working just to make ends meet. As a result many of our children fall behind in the areas of preparation for school. Cameron is working hard to provide help for these children and their parents.

Our fund balance is currently 17.5% of our Fund 10. We have been building that slowly over the years. But, simple math will show us that we cannot sustain that amount. We experience a 4% rise in expenditures each year because of factors such as rising prices for supplies and commodities and the QEO. Yet, under the revenue cap, even if we don't lose enrollment, we can only generate a 2% rise in revenues. Four minus two says that we will have to dip into our fund balance. We have creatively nipped and tugged and saved a little here and a little there but we have reached the end of that road. Now we are talking about cutting into the muscle; the liposuction is already done – there is no fat left. It is very clear that Wisconsin must explore new directions in providing funding to our school districts if those school districts are expected to accomplish the mission set for us by the legislature.

Cameron offers an excellent, but a no-frills, program. With an enrollment of 850 students, we attract 72 students through the Open Enrollment process and only have 24 students choosing to go to another district. The realtors in our county advertise the fact that a property is in the Cameron school district as a selling point. That is a testament to our staff, students, parents and community. We desperately want to keep our schools as good as they are and to be able to continue to improve them. To do this requires funding.

Again, thank you, Governor Doyle, for all that you have done. Please keep us and the other 400 + districts in the state in mind when you work on the budget. Please continue to show courage in providing adequate funding for our schools.

Sincerely,

Randal Braun

District Administrator

School District of Cameron

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