

Governor Jim Doyle
P.O. Box 7863
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Governor Doyle,

The Minocqua J1 School District (MHLT) is a partner in the Wisconsin Alliance for Excellent Schools. MHLT School District is a K-8 School District that covers almost three hundred square miles. My Board of Education knows that the education and the future of children in our communities and around the state are in great jeopardy because of the way we fund our public schools. Unless we do something now it will get even worse for the majority of public schools.

The Minocqua J1 School District is a high property value school that also is experiencing declining enrollment. Under the current system, it is believed because our we are a property rich, we must also be income wealthy. That is definitely not the case. One out of four students in our district is on free or reduced lunch. We were successful in passing a referendum in February of 2006. That referendum will allow us to maintain our current level of operations, but only for a few years. I know that passing future referendums will be extremely difficult. Our school only gets 3% of our operating budget from state aid and that decreases by 15% each year.

Fuel and heating prices continue to rise and even though our student population declines, fixed costs remain. We have been and will continue to be fiscally responsible to our community. We take pride in offering great education, but the current formula is unfair to our District and needs to be re-worked to meet the challenges we and many other public schools face today.

As a partner in WAES, Minocqua J1 is committed to fighting for increased categorical aid to address the critical short-term needs in all school districts. At the same time, we urge you to work with us, other education stakeholders, and the Legislature to begin comprehensive reform of the school-funding system in 2007.

As a District Administrator of a small rural district in the “north woods”, I appreciate everything you’ve done for education and hope you continue to support all public schools in Wisconsin. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Jim Ellis, District Administrator
Minocqua J1 School District
7450 Titus Drive
Minocqua, WI 54548
(715) 356-5206