

January 23, 2007

Governor Jim Doyle  
PO Box 7863  
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Governor Doyle,

I was pleased to listen to your presentation at Friday's final session of the WASB/WASDA Conference. As part of your presentation, you gave some hints of what may be included in your State of the State Address and your upcoming budget.

You received a great round of applause for maintaining the two thirds funding. More than ever, we see that school districts in Wisconsin are facing difficult times due to a convergence of a number of forces, including declining enrollment, ever increasing health insurance costs, and higher expectations that we have for the students who enter our classroom doors.

Even though our enrollment has remained relatively stable, due to health insurance costs we have had to make major adjustments in our budget. This past year we laid off a number of teachers and were unable to reemploy several of them. This was the first year we were not able to call back all those that we had previously laid off. This certainly raises a red flag about the economic condition of the school district. The school district has been very aggressive in securing the best teachers to have in front of our students. With the never ending effort to provide a balanced budget on an annual basis, we have not been able to provide the salary increases that would keep up with the market. As a result, we have had a number of our best teachers move on to higher paying school districts.

Over the past decade, there have been a number of task forces that have looked at the school funding mechanism in Wisconsin. It is now time that we seriously consider making that change in the funding mechanism.

As a partner in WAES, the Oconto Falls School District 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.

It is clear that standing up for children is right, and the upcoming legislative session is the time to move forward on this significant need.

Yours truly,

David Polashek  
Superintendent of Schools

DP/rl