

State Funding Decisions are Raising Taxes and Hurting Greenfield Students

The facts about school funding need to be understood by citizens, as the existing school funding laws are increasing property taxes and lowering the quality of education in our schools. The Wisconsin Legislature has created a system that is dooming public schools to failure while simultaneously taking away local control.

The rules that govern school funding are incredibly complex and in many ways defy common sense. Since 1993, Wisconsin has used an approach to school funding that is often referred to as the “three-legged stool”.

Leg 1: State commitment to two-thirds funding - Intended to provide property tax relief.

Leg 2: Qualified Economic Offer (QEO) - Limited salaries & benefits expenses to a 3.8% increase annually.

Leg 3: Revenue Limit – Greenfield’s revenue limit has been about a 2.6% increase annually.

While the QEO required salary and benefits to increase 3.8% annually, other costs such as fuel, electricity, supplies, health insurance, textbooks and transportation often increase at a much higher rate. Roofs need to be repaired, fuel and electricity must be purchased; buildings, equipment & grounds must be maintained; supplies must be available; salaries and benefits must be paid; federal, state and local laws, ordinances & mandates must be followed; computer hardware & software must be working... the list of necessary costs that cannot be avoided goes on and on. By ignoring these facts, **the legislature’s flawed system guarantees actual expenses will be above the funding allowed by the revenue limit, forcing annual local school district cuts.**

Since 1993, the state legislature’s funding laws have caused Greenfield to receive insufficient funds to maintain existing programs each year. Program and staff reductions are being made annually, regardless of students’ needs.

Budget Reductions since 2002-03

2002–03	\$604,700
2003–04	\$606,900
2004–05	\$640,210
2005–06	\$680,693
2006–07	\$820,000
2007–08	\$830,000
2008–09	\$606,660
2009–10	\$600,000

Total Reductions \$5,389,163

How can students’ needs be met when state funding guarantees schools will have to reduce services and staff every year?

Impact of a Broken Funding Formula

- Fewer classroom teachers; no social workers
- Significantly larger class sizes
- Deferred maintenance
- Fewer library-media specialists, reading specialists, counselors, secretaries, aides, custodians, computer support staff & administrators
- Consolidated bus stops and routes
- Drastically staggered school start and end times
- Reduced extra-curricular activities

(A complete list of past reductions is on the back of this page.)

THE SITUATION IS ONLY GETTING WORSE!!!

Most disturbing is that this flawed funding system has recently changed for the worse. The three-legged stool, which was broken from the start, is now down to one leg:

Leg 1: State is no longer contributing two-thirds funding, causing property taxes to increase.

Leg 2: QEO was eliminated; key cost control gone

Leg 3: Revenue Limit is only leg still in place; guarantees insufficient funding to meet students’ needs.

The current state budget approved by the legislature resulted in **Greenfield receiving 15% less funding from the state.** That reduction in funding contributed to an 11.2% increase in the school district portion of the property tax levy even though the District budget only increased 3.8%... *and that includes costs for four citizen-approved referendum projects.* Additional cuts to programs and staff will have a detrimental impact on student learning. Options such as closing schools, eliminating extra-curricular activities and increasing class sizes even further will be considered, but will not be enough for the District to continue to operate.

Local Fiscal Management is Sound

While the state has not addressed the funding dilemma, the District has made significant program reductions and managed expenditures so as to finish the last three years below the projected budget, increasing state aid and keeping taxes significantly lower. For more information about the Board of Education’s fiscal responsibility, visit the District webpage and click on: [District Funding Dilemma](#).

What Can be Done?

Only the state legislature can change the school funding laws. Legislator contact information is available at the District website: www.greenfield.k12.wi.us.

If the school funding laws do not change, an operational referendum is the only other way to maintain services and prevent insolvency. To learn more, please attend a School Board meeting or contact Conrad Farner, Superintendent of Schools at: cfarner@admin.greenfield.k12.wi.us.