



Feb. 9, 2005

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Wisconsin Alliance  
for Excellent Schools

## **MEDIA ALERT**

### **Gov. Doyle's Welcome Proposal to Restore Two-Thirds Funding of Public Schools**

Gov. Jim Doyle's bold proposal to regain lost ground for school budgets by restoring two-thirds state funding is a win-win for children and for property taxpayers, said the Wisconsin Alliance for Excellent Schools (WAES). It's a smart strategy to combine increased state support for public education with property tax relief.

The \$700 million he proposed for additional state equalization aid – the largest increase in nearly a decade – would provide major help for school districts, almost all of which face another year of budget shortfalls and damaging cuts to education programs.

His proposed increases for categorical programs are extremely modest, but are acknowledgements that funding in these crucial areas has stalled. Among areas gaining some additional aid are: the SAGE class-size reduction program, special education, transportation (especially for rural districts), English-language learners, four-year-old kindergarten and school breakfast. There would also be additional support for teachers.

The combination of increased state support of education, plus a proposed \$150 million expansion of the school levy tax credit, would protect homeowners from large increases in local property taxes.

These are changes WAES has been calling for, essential steps in moving the state toward fully adequate funding for public education. Still needed is an adequacy study to define what staff, classes, facilities and materials are needed for a sound, basic education and how much these will cost. Also, the jump in equalization aid won't be as big a help to the many rural districts with high property values but low incomes for year-round residents.

The Wisconsin Alliance for Excellent Schools (WAES) is a statewide, broad-based coalition of school boards, parent groups, educators, students, faith-based organizations and community groups working to replace the present finance system with one that links resources to academic standards and the needs of children.

For more information, see the WAES website (<http://www.excellentschools.org>) or contact Jack Norman, Institute for Wisconsin's Future, at 414-384-9094.