



School Administrators Alliance

Representing the interests of Wisconsin school children

2011–12 Legislative Agenda

A More Sustainable School Finance System

The single greatest problem in Wisconsin's system of school finance is the systemic gap between allowable revenue growth under revenue limits and school district fixed cost increases as driven by state and federal requirements and community expectations. In short, school district revenue growth is far less than fixed cost increases, such as staffing, transportation and utilities. In order to create a more sustainable school finance system, Wisconsin must align allowable revenue growth with cost increases. To this end, the SAA supports:

- 1) Making annual per pupil adjustments under revenue limits equal to a five-year rolling average of personal income growth multiplied by the amount of the low revenue ceiling.
- 2) Aligning school employee total compensation with revenue limits, based on the same five-year rolling average increase in Wisconsin's personal income.
- 3) Increasing general school aid by the same five-year rolling average in personal income growth to further align revenue growth and cost increases and to recognize the rising costs of education.

Equalization Aid

The SAA supports a school equalization aid formula as the primary distribution mechanism for state aid. The SAA also supports the following reforms as a package:

- 1) Distributing the \$897 million in school levy and first dollar credits to school districts in the equalization aid formula.
- 2) Distributing a minimum level of school aid for every student in every school district.
- 3) Increasing the secondary cost ceiling from 90% to 100% of the prior year's average statewide shared cost.
- 4) Additional formula "weighting" for students eligible for free and reduced price lunch.

Health Care Benefits

The SAA supports making health insurance a permissive subject of bargaining.

Low Revenue Relief

The SAA supports increasing the low-revenue ceiling to \$9,400 in 2011-12 and \$9,800 in 2012-13.

Children With Extraordinary Needs

The SAA supports greater access to community services that address the extraordinary needs of students with mental health and drug problems.

Achievement Gap/Early Learning Opportunities

The SAA supports significant investment in high quality early learning opportunities for disadvantaged children as a means of attacking the achievement gap before it develops.

Categorical Aid

The SAA supports a system of categorical aid for targeting state financial support to specific student services, programs and or costs.

Special Education Categorical Appropriation

The SAA supports increasing the current level of state categorical aid funding for special education to reimburse 33% of the prior year's aidable costs. We also support making the special education categorical a "sum-sufficient" appropriation.

High Cost Special Education

The SAA supports state reimbursements for 90% of all district costs above \$30,000 per pupil. Districts will use federal and state general categorical aid for the first \$30,000 of cost per pupil, with a sum-sufficient high cost appropriation covering 90% of cost above the \$30,000 threshold.

Transportation Aid

The SAA supports increasing the current level of state categorical aid funding for school transportation to 33% of cost, sum sufficient. The SAA also supports providing districts which transport students the greatest distance proportionally greater aid, using the current method of distribution. In addition, the SAA supports requiring DPI to distribute any balance in the appropriation (after all claims have been paid) to school districts on a prorated basis.

Small Rural Districts

The SAA supports expanding the current sparsity aid program for school districts of up to 725 students with population densities of 10 students per square mile or less. The SAA also supports removing the current free and reduced price lunch criterion for program eligibility.

English Language Learners

The SAA supports increasing the current level of state categorical funding and extending that funding to all school districts that serve limited English proficiency (LEP) students.

State Assessment

The SAA supports development of a comprehensive grade 3-12 assessment system that is benchmarked and aligned to promote a seamless pathway to college and career readiness. For grades 3-8, the SAA supports changing from once-a-year testing to on-line adaptive testing students may take multiple times in a school year. For grades 9-12, the SAA supports changing from a 10th grade state assessment to the use of the ACT, or other relevant assessment, as the high school test. The SAA also supports a state cost share with school districts for grade 3-8 online adaptive assessments and secondary level college and career readiness assessments as a "bridge" to the new assessment system.