

Survival Coalition: Supports Governor's proposal to increase state investment in public schools

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The Survival Coalition of statewide disability organizations supports the Governor's recommendation to convene a special session to consider additional investments in K-12 education, including two-thirds state funding of all public education. Survival Coalition has consistently advocated for additional funding for special education, school based mental health services, and transition grant funding. In the last biennium, the legislature was able to fund some but not all the areas to help students with disabilities.

Lisa Pugh, co-chair of the Survival Coalition said, "State investment in special education has been flat-funded for over decade, forcing local districts to make up the difference. Survival Coalition has heard from families around the state about significant erosion in quality of education for their children with disabilities with a direct impact on student achievement, emotional well-being, and safety."

The Survival Coalition recently gathered stories in 2019 from over 150 families with 94% responding that additional funding would help their school district provide better education for their child with a disability. "Families want legislators to understand what their children face in our school districts without sufficient funding." said Beth Swedeen, co-chair of Survival Coalition.

The current special education reimbursement rate for Wisconsin public schools was increased in the most recent budget to 30%, but still falls short of the proposed 60%. This forces districts to make tough choices to make up the difference to meet student needs. An additional increase at this time would begin to alleviate the pressures Districts face. The Governor's proposal would increase the rate to 34%

immediately in 2021, before the next biennial budget is developed.

Survival co-chair Kit Kerschensteiner said, “The personal stories that families shared ranged from lack of resources, less paraprofessionals, less inclusion, youth not prepared for employment and independent living, and lack of professional development. We continue to leave students with disabilities behind with no substantial increase in funding.” Additional funding in special education would free up substantial local funding that could be used to help support all students across Wisconsin school district.

To read the proposal:

http://www.thewheelerreport.com/wheeler_docs/files/020620evers.pdf