

# Sen. Felzkowski: Votes to Support Rural Schools

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CONTACT: Sen. Mary Felzkowski

608-266-2509

**Madison, WI** - The Joint Finance Committee today took up the Department of Public Instruction budget and voted on a myriad of K-12 education funding proposals, from increases in special education funding, to doubling mental health aids, to various programs targeted to aid rural school districts. Senator Mary Felzkowski (R-Tomahawk) made the following statement:

“Today we made significant investments into our state’s future by supporting the education of all our children across the state. Education has always been at the forefront of my priorities as a member of the Joint Finance Committee, and I have always been proud to vote in support of our schools. This year, the funding we set aside for our schools comes on top of \$2.6 billion in federal money. I am confident our school districts will use this money wisely.”

The K-12 education proposal that was passed today achieves the following:

- Provides nearly \$500 million in new state funding.
- Sets aside \$350 million to maintain education funding stability in the future.
- Guarantees a minimum of \$781 per pupil to all school districts if the schools were in person more than 50% of the 2020-21 school year.
- Increases Special Education Categorical Aids by nearly 10%, or by \$86 million, bringing the total to 30% of eligible costs - the highest dollar levels ever.
- Doubles Mental Health Categorical Aids by providing an additional \$12 million.
- Provides \$7 million for school-based mental health collaboration grants - a

54% increase.

“I was especially proud to advocate for the funding targeted towards our rural school districts who face unique challenges and costs. I am grateful for my colleagues who voted to support the rural school plan I advocated for, which included an additional \$13 million in high cost transportation aid. I am pleased that we also invested in Lakeland STAR Academy in Minocqua, which offers students with disabilities in the Northwoods the opportunity to learn how to live independently and with self-confidence.”