

State Treasurer Godlewski: Wisconsin's K-12 public school libraries to receive \$39 million to boost education during COVID-19

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MADISON, Wis. – As chair of the Board of Commissioners of Public Lands, State Treasurer Sarah Godlewski today announced a record \$39 million will be disbursed to public school libraries across Wisconsin to help students, parents, and educators continue to tackle the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Common School Fund is a crucial source of revenue that enables school libraries to provide students with books and technology, greatly enhancing the educational experience and success of young people in every corner of the state. For 92% of school libraries, the Common School Funding is the only available source of funding.

The disbursement — the largest regular distribution in BCPL history — was announced virtually on Sunday evening to librarians and educators gathered for the Wisconsin Educational & Media Technology Association's (WEMTA) annual conference.

“Educators, parents, and students have faced enormous and unique challenges during this pandemic,” said State Treasurer Sarah Godlewski. “As the product of Wisconsin public schools and the daughter of two public school teachers, I’m honored to lead the BCPL and help make these vital resources possible. Whether it’s e-books, hotspots, or other essential materials, I know our public schools will put these funds to great use as we continue to tackle the digital divide and ensure every student in Wisconsin receives the highest quality education possible.”

“In this time of constant uncertainty, it is refreshing to know that The Board of Commissioners of Public Lands and Wisconsin State Treasurer continue to be there for Wisconsin school libraries,” said Raquel Rand, WEMTA President. “Their commitment ensures that libraries, librarians, and students will have the resources they need to be successful as we continue to navigate these trying times.”

“The BCPL has come through once again,” State Superintendent Carolyn Stanford Taylor said. “Our school librarians have served their students and staff in extraordinary ways during the pandemic. This funding will help our school librarians continue to provide technology support and resources for students, teachers, and families, extending collaborations with classroom teachers with virtual and in-person learning methods.”

“The folks who wrote our Wisconsin Constitution had a fantastic idea; put the proceeds from the sale of School Trust Lands into a trust and return the interest earned to the school libraries of our State,” Secretary of State Doug La Follette, BCPL Commissioner. “I have been honored to oversee these funds for many years and protect them for the school libraries. Giving them a check for millions each year is a highlight of my work as your Secretary of State.”

In today’s low-interest-rate environment and with the uncertainty of the financial market, this level of distribution would not be possible if the Trust Fund remained invested solely in loans and bonds, as required under statute from 1848 through 2015. The updated investment strategy has led to the diversification of the Common School Fund that likely added \$15 million to the 2021 distribution and will continue to pay dividends to Wisconsin schoolchildren for generations to come. In the last biennium, the BCPL has made \$570 million in new portfolio investments, which includes \$165 million for financing essential economic development, infrastructure, and other community projects and purchases in Wisconsin.

To see funding for your school district, click [here](#).