

# Gov. Evers: Invests \$90 million into K-12 education to address staffing challenges, provide direct classroom support, expand mental health services in schools

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MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers today announced a \$90 million investment into K-12 education across the state as kids, families, educators, staff, and administrators are set to return to school and welcome students back for the upcoming school year in the coming days. The investment includes \$15 million to double the governor’s “Get Kids Ahead” initiative to provide mental health services in K-12 schools across Wisconsin, as well as \$75 million designed to give districts flexibility to meet staffing needs, keep classroom sizes small, and provide other direct classroom support.

“As our students, parents, and educators and schools get ready for another exciting school year ahead, we know that there are some serious challenges our kids, families, and schools are facing. I’ve always said that what’s best for our kids is what’s best for our state, and that means working to do the right thing for our kids and our schools when they need our help the most,” said Gov. Evers. “Whether it’s making sure kids have access to mental health services, helping with increased costs of classroom and school supplies due to national inflation, or retaining and recruiting educators and staff to keep class sizes small, these investments will go toward making sure our kids have the resources and support to get caught up and be successful both in and out of the classroom.”

The governor’s \$90 million announcement today comes as schools are set to begin

the upcoming school year with many districts facing significant staffing challenges and increased student mental health needs, among other challenges exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic. A recent [Wisconsin Policy Forum](#) report showed public sector workers, which includes educators and staff, left Wisconsin's workforce in 2021 at the highest rate in two decades. The \$75 million investment announced today for school districts and independent charter schools will be distributed on a per pupil basis with an additional nearly \$100 per student—\$91.15. The investment, which includes flexibilities for districts and an extended timeline allowing the funds to be used over several school years, can be used to retain and recruit talented educators and staff, address rising costs for supplies and services due to national inflation, defraying the cost of school bussing, and provide direct support for kids in the classroom.

At the same time, kids across Wisconsin and the country are facing significant mental health challenges in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. According to the [Office of Children's Mental Health](#) (OCMH), the coronavirus pandemic has only exacerbated the mental health challenges and the decline of youth mental wellness kids have been facing for years while the ratio of mental health professionals to kids in Wisconsin and across the nation continues to remain below the recommended standards. OCMH [research shows](#) that improving student mental health also improves student health and learning, attendance, and engagement, while reducing bullying, risky behaviors, violence, involvement in the juvenile justice system, and substance use.

During his [2022 State of the State Address](#) earlier this year, Gov. Evers announced he would be investing \$15 million into a new ["Get Kids Ahead" initiative](#) to provide school-based mental health supports and services for nearly every school district in the state. Today, Gov. Evers is doubling his investment in "Get Kids Ahead," bringing his total investment to \$30 million. Every public school district in the state is eligible to receive funds under the program to go toward providing direct mental healthcare, hiring and supporting mental health navigators, and providing mental health first aid and trauma-based care training, among other key needs to support student mental health. Under the governor's total investment, every district that opts into the program receives a minimum of \$20,000 with the remaining allocation distributed on a per pupil basis.

Gov. Evers has consistently and repeatedly urged the Legislature to make meaningful, ongoing investments into K-12 education during his time as governor. Gov. Evers called a special session of the Wisconsin State

Legislature in each budget biennium ([2019-21](#) and [2021-23](#)), respectively, to use readily available state resources to invest in school-based mental health services, increased per pupil and special education aids, and sparsity aid for rural school districts, while working to hold the line on property taxes. Republicans in the Legislature have rejected every education-related special session called by Gov. Evers.

Meanwhile, last week, the Wisconsin Department of Revenue indicated new revenue projections show the state will end the fiscal year with more than \$5 billion in state coffers, including having the highest-ever positive GAAP balance in state history at more than \$1 billion for the 2021 fiscal year as the state's 'rainy day fund' sits at the highest level ever at \$1.7 billion. [Last year](#), after Republicans in the Legislature rewrote Gov. Evers' education budget to essentially freeze local district spending by not adjusting revenue limits and later rejected a special session called by the governor to increase investments in K-12 education, Gov. Evers directed an additional \$110 million investment using CARES Act funds to provide an additional \$133.72 in per pupil aid for every Wisconsin school district. Today's announcement, in the absence of ongoing state funding provided by the Legislature, builds on the governor's previous investments and provides schools the flexibility they need to address the unique ongoing needs of kids and classrooms.

The \$90 million investment announced today is funded by the state's allocation of federal American Rescue Plan Act dollars and will be distributed to schools in the coming weeks. A list of school districts and the allocated amount of funding through the first and second rounds of the Get Kids Ahead initiative is available [here](#). A list of school districts and their allocated amount of additional per-pupil funding is available [here](#).

An online version of this release is available [here](#).