

Please direct inquiries to:
Terri Phillips, 262-208-5181



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Governor Evers' Budget Invests in Kids and Their Future

MILWAUKEE — The Southeastern Wisconsin Schools Alliance (SWSA) commends Governor Tony Evers as he advances a recovery budget that invests in advancing educational opportunities for Wisconsin's children and their future.

Governor Evers recognizes that education is one of the critical pieces for Wisconsin's recovery and future. His investment in education supports children through the pandemic recovery and provides the greatest opportunity for them to move forward in meaningful ways.

The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified and exasperated the gaps between student populations and created a sense of urgency in K-12 public education to address opportunity and achievement gaps.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected the landscape of the K-12 educational system. The past 11 months have been different than anyone has ever experienced. However, what has not changed is our unwavering commitment to the social, emotional and academic success of each of our children," said Lisa Elliott, Superintendent of the Greenfield School District and SWSA Co-Chair. "Given the fact that the pandemic has impacted each of our children differently, our strategies need to be diverse, targeted, flexible and responsive to the complex and varied needs of our students and families."

Governor Evers' budget aligns with many of SWSA's legislative priorities to meet the needs of all children, including:

- Increases state support for the most vulnerable, underrepresented and high-need populations, including students with disabilities, children in high poverty and English language learners. SWSA advocates for an increase in the reimbursement rate for special education to 60 percent, and we appreciate Governor Evers moving toward that goal by proposing an increase to 45 percent in the first year of the biennium and 50 percent in the second year.
- Addresses components in the current funding system to provide the necessary predictable, spendable and equitable resources that invest in enhancing and expanding opportunities for our children.
- Increases support to ensure adequate resources are available to address children's mental health needs, early childhood challenges and other key areas. Governor Evers is aware of the recovery needs of children and is making a significant investment in these areas.

"The pandemic has given us a new appreciation and understanding as to the critical role public schools play in a functioning society," said Terri Phillips, SWSA Executive Director. "Education leaders have worked tirelessly over the past 11 months to ensure kids are not only receiving a high-quality education, but are also supported from a physical and mental health perspective. We are grateful to

these frontline workers and greatly appreciate the investment Governor Evers has put forth in his budget to support our children.”

SWSA looks forward to working with the state legislature to pass a budget that will continue to support Wisconsin’s children through the pandemic recovery while providing opportunities for their future.

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The Southeastern Wisconsin Schools Alliance (SWSA) is a consortium of 31 K-12 school districts educating approximately 25 percent of Wisconsin’s public school children. Membership in SWSA consists of both school district superintendents and school board members, dedicated to advocating for the benefit of all students by driving education policies supporting strong public schools to ensure world-class practices, economic vitality and community well-being.