

**Testimony Provided by Stacy King, on behalf of herself and her family.
April 2, 2001
Janesville, Wisconsin**

**For further follow-up comments or questions please feel free to contact me at:
Stacy King
1438 Hooker Avenue
Madison, WI 53704
608-249-0180**

My family:

Grace King, 15 years of age, congenitally blind since birth

Madeline King, 13 years of age

Amelia King, 9 years of age, congenitally blind since birth

My Experience

- **Lack of personnel to explain diagnosis, and the effects on the lives of my children.**
- **How will my child go to school?**
- **How will my child learn to move around?**
- **How will I learn to raise my child?**
- **Who will support our family through this difficult time?**

The Value of Parent Networking

- **I meet other families**
- **I become linked to the service system**
- **I meet professional who have information I need**
- **I become able to advocate for the needs of my family**
-

The Impact on our Children

- **My children learn to advocate for themselves using me as a model**
- **Children understand that others are succeeding in school and in life--THEY CAN TOO!**
-

What Has Helped Us?

- **Knowledgeable personnel – inservice**
- **Accessing all service systems – preschool, early childhood, resource room, itinerant, residential summer programs**
-

Why is Blindness and Visual Impairment Different?

- **Low incidence disability**
- **Little if any services in some areas of state**
- **No permanent training program**

What does the Transition Plan do for Students, Families, Teachers?

- **Regional Support Specialists**
- **Access to timely, accurate information**
- **Outreach Programs**
- **Summer Programs**
- **Short Courses at residential school**

need -
topic

2 April 2001

Dear Committee,

I would like to have policy language on pp. 536-537 regarding L.E.A. function on the I-team Committee. The language is delegating the decision role to one person rather than a one-person decision. The L.E.A. representative does not have any direct contact with the child on an evaluation basis so their basic understanding of the child. The child's individual needs are best met by a consensus of the I-Team members which has been the ~~past~~ present approach. I would encourage the Committee to look at this policy very carefully.

Respectfully submitted,
Laurie M. Arbutnot

April 2, 2001

Dear Senate Education Committee:

I am an elementary principal at Jackson Elementary School. We were proud to become a "Sage School" at the beginning of the 2000-2001 school year. Sage has allowed us to give our disadvantaged students a fighting chance at learning to read, write, and understand numbers. It has allowed our teachers to have the time to get to know the individual needs of each student, so they can intervene in the educational process at the earliest time possible in the child's life. Educators know the most critical time in development is birth to three years old. The children who benefit from Sage dollars did not always have proper nutrition during those years. They did not always have access to books, toys, and nursery schools. Sage dollars are giving these students a second chance to make up for lost time. I understood we had a commitment from our government to fund our involvement for five years. Providing one teacher for every fifteen students in kindergarten through third grade and opening our school house doors before and after school to work with children and parents, after hours, can make a difference in the quality of life for the children at Jackson Elementary School. We believe that Sage funding through third grade is essential to this cause. We have very dedicated teachers but they cannot do the job alone. Just as our government cannot do its job without the support of the people. Teachers cannot do their job without the support of their local district and state government.

When 39%+ of your students have incomes low enough to qualify for free or reduced price lunches from the government lunch program it means that this percentage of families is living in poverty. Many of our families are working class families who would qualify for free and reduced price lunches but are proud people and don't apply. The statistics don't always tell the whole story. I am personally inviting Governor McCallum to visit Jackson Elementary before continuing his mission to fully fund schools that statistically (only) show a 50% poverty rate or higher. In Wisconsin, we tell parents that if they don't send their children to school they cannot get government aid for them. We know that school is critical in breaking a cycle of poverty. I believe that quality of education makes just as much difference. Some of the children at Jackson school don't have their basic needs of

French Club
 Alternatives to TV
 Homework Club

French Club
 80 students
 soon to come - book club.

Students
 2 students who
 had attended school
 1 month in the last
 year - disappeared

couldn't be found

food, shelter, and safety met. Teachers must meet the basic needs of students every day before they can teach. I will guarantee you that fewer students per teacher, as provided by the Sage program, insures more time for learning and more chance that families can be assisted with personal attention.

I implore this committee to stand up for the rights of these innocent children so that they have a fighting chance during kindergarten through third grade to learn to read, comprehend, write, and understand number processes. Help us, by insuring small class sizes, to have the time to reach out to our families so that they may encourage their children to work hard and continue to learn.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. I encourage you to visit Jackson Elementary School and talk with our teachers. Governor McCallum must remember what 39% poverty looks like in a school and that many poor people do not sign up for the free and reduced lunches which is how poverty is identified in schools. Small kindergarten and first grade classes are excellent. But if we do not continue this program into second and third grade classes, we are only doing half the job.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pat Johnson".

Pat Johnson, Principal
Jackson Elementary School
441 Burbank
Janesville, WI 53546

My name... *Ann Lund, Principal Wilson School*
Over 75% poverty level
SAGE Program for 5 years-

Every benefit that you have heard about SAGE, I can testify is probably true at Wilson.

The main benefit of being a SAGE school is that we are equipped through small class sizes to provide a rigorous academic curriculum by focusing on individual learning needs. Achievement is increased by spending time teaching one on one, by knowing students needs through time spent in on-going assessment, and by working closely with parents and agencies that collaborate with the staff about student needs. Fewer students in each classroom gives teachers time to have an increased **number** of conferences as well as increased time for **each** conference.

Academic achievement is also enhanced because of opportunities for students to participate in lighted schoolhouse activities such as after school clubs and tutoring, summer school, and all day kindergarten.

Related to academic achievement is the time that teachers have in smaller class sizes to build relationships with students and parents and to provide discipline interventions that teach student **self**-governance of behavior. Social and emotional needs of students are better addressed when teachers have smaller class sizes. When these needs are given attention, students are more ready and able to succeed in learning.

I believe the SAGE Program should be extended to grades 2 and 3 at all SAGE Schools. Our record of achievement clearly indicates that the longer students are in a SAGE program, the more they can achieve. If students are not achieving at the proficient level in the primary grades, rarely do they catch up in grades 4-12. We could expect many of those who are not early achievers **not** to be proficient in later years of schooling. Repeating grades due to lack of academic proficiency and failure on graduation tests is a **blow** to student self-esteem and costly to school districts.

Our school has a high rate of student mobility, especially for students who come from poverty situations. Our achievement data indicates that students who have stayed longer at Wilson School have higher rates of achievement than those who often transfer. The mobility is not only across the city of Janesville, but across the state-and ^{across states & countries} nation. It is great that when students are at Wilson they will have the benefit of SAGE. But, what about those students ^{from poverty} who transfer in and out of ~~our~~ schools who may need the advantage of smaller class sizes wherever they are so that they ~~too~~ can succeed in school.

*Cost to cont
SAGE - also
commitment
diff local #
BY Ed
what programs
need to
we debate
to fund the
part fall of SAGE
funds from the state*



Jefferson Elementary School

Alice Wilkens Mann
Principal

1831 Mt. Zion Avenue
Janesville, WI 53545
Phone # 608-743-6600

My name is Alice Wilkens Mann. I am the principal at Jefferson Elementary School in the School District of Janesville. I am here to talk to you about the SAGE program. It is my understanding that under the governor's proposal my school would not be eligible for funding to complete the implementation of this program to second and third grade classes over the next two years. My parents, my staff, and I are opposed to the governor's proposal and feel the state needs to complete the implementation of this program as it was intended.

The school district of Janesville was very supportive of the SAGE program and entered into an agreement with the state to continue SAGE status for our one elementary school that has fully implemented the program and then to add four additional schools to the SAGE program. One of those schools was Jefferson. The district went even farther by providing lower pupil teacher ratios for the remaining elementary schools in grades kindergarten and first. As you can see, the district and the community believe that smaller class sizes do make a difference for our children. We are now asking the state to keep its commitment and fund SAGE as it was intended so we have the fiscal means to continue to offer these lower class sizes.

How do we know SAGE is working? At the present time we have no hard data. We are completing this and should have some figures by the end of the year. However, I can tell you that the lower numbers are making it easier for the teachers to spend more time with each of the children. More time and more individual attention means better achievement. Over the last month, the kindergarten and first grade teachers have been coming to me with story after story of successes with their children. "He can read!" "Look at how much growth this child has made since the beginning of the year." "I do not have one child in this room who is not ready for first grade." And on and on. In past years when we had class sizes that some times reached close to 25 students, we were not able to make these statements. We did our best but it was impossible to reach all of the children with those large class sizes. We want these same opportunities for our second and third grade students who are now sitting in classes of 23, 24, and 25 in our school.

The SAGE agreement also asks schools to provide additional training for our SAGE teachers. This year we allowed our teachers time to work together to provide more differentiation in the classroom. The kindergarten teachers also attended a conference that focused on kindergarten. Most of the K/1 teachers have received training in 4 Blocks (an integrated approach to reading and writing) and CGI (Cognitively Guided Instruction) (a math approach that emphasizes problem solving and the developmental nature of math). So the staff is growing and learning and bringing that back to the classroom.

SAGE is more than smaller class sizes and higher achievement. It also requires the schools to open the schoolhouse before and after the regular school day to give our students a place to be that is safe and nurturing. We are also working on this. We now have a number of before and after school activities for our students. Some of these are provided by staff, some by volunteers in the community, and some by our parents. A few of the things we now offer include Math Fun, Fishing, Homework Club, Hiking, Family Resource Center, Knitting, Soar to Success Reading, 4-H, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, FAST (Families and Schools Together), Breakfast Club, After School DayCare, etc.

If we receive continued funding for SAGE we would have lower class sizes for our youngest students and before and after school programs for all of our students. We believe that this will increase the achievement of our students and isn't that what we all want. SAGE is a proven program. We want the chance to have it happen in our school and community.

Thank you for listening.



Education is our investment in the future.



Education is our investment in the future.

TO: Senate Education Committee Members

FROM: Rodonna Amiel, Principal of Lincoln Elementary School
School District of Janesville

RE: SAGE Funding

DATE: April 2, 2001

SAGE programming was extended to four additional elementary schools for the 2000-2001 school year in the School District of Janesville. Lincoln Elementary was fortunate to be one of these schools. The program has provided the extra personnel needed to staff kindergarten and first-grade classrooms at a 15-1 ratio. The learning opportunities provided for students with this level of staffing is ideal. The needs of most students can be met from those with few skills to those with expansive ones. The low ratio allows time for the teacher to develop a range of activities to address the various learning styles of students and increase the chance for success. Teachers have the opportunity to teach, reteach, and provide extended activities. Although extensive assessment will be completed in the next few weeks, a quick observation or a conversation with the staff would indicate the success of the program. Students have not only increased skills beyond those expected but also have an excitement and craving for learning. Some students which may have been referred for special education are making progress and may not need services in the future. Other students with great skill and potential have continued to grow and learn rather than slide by.

Beyond academic improvement, small class sizes have also allowed teachers to spend more time with parents through longer conferences and extended day activities. Opportunities have been provided for students for after-school clubs as well as learning opportunities for parents and students in the evenings.

Research substantiates the success of low class size, parent involvement, and early intervention in the success of students, especially those at risk. SAGE provides all three. I commend the state for their commitment to this program. However, the true value of the program will be seen over time. I believe the plan to continue the program to grades 2 & 3 is a sound one and highly recommend the continued funding at these levels. The opportunity providing early intervention occurs only once.



District Office

527 S. Franklin St. • Janesville, WI 53545-4823 • (608) 743-5000 • www.inwave.com/schools/jps

Jerry V. & Denise D. Skuta
2284 S. Hawthorne Park Drive
Janesville, WI. 53545

Senate Education Committee
Judith B. Robson
PO Box 7882
Madison, WI. 53707-7882

4/2/2001

Dear Senator Robson and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to express our beliefs and gratitude for the interest that our legislature has in Special Education. The special education provided to our daughter has proven to be more valuable than most people would ever realize. We feel very fortunate that our daughter has and continues to benefit from this program during the most formative and developmental stages of her life. Without the attention she had and continues to receive, the outcome of our daughter's well being would surely be dramatically reduced.

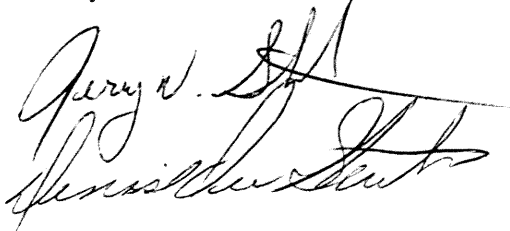
Ever since birth, we knew there was something very different about our child. While she was extremely intelligent, her temperament was very volatile. When she began Kindergarten, the school staff quickly noticed her behavioral issues. We cannot begin to explain the amount of caring and devotion that was given to our daughter. The communication, support and suggestions to help her were something, which we had never experienced or expected.

Today, our daughter is a well-adjusted 6th grade student with very good grades and limited special requirements. Even though this required a great deal of effort on our part, an equal amount was provided by the Special Education Staff. Without a doubt, the Special Education Program has and continues to make positive impact, not only for our child, but many others as well.

If any program should ever receive increased funding, this is absolutely one of them.

Sincerely,

Jerry V. & Denise D. Skuta

Handwritten signatures of Jerry V. Skuta and Denise D. Skuta. The signature of Jerry V. Skuta is written in cursive and is positioned above the signature of Denise D. Skuta, which is also in cursive and appears to be written over the first part of Jerry's signature.

April 1, 2001


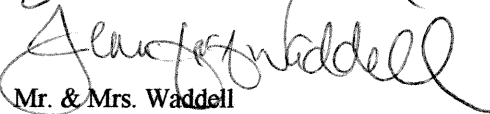
Dear Senate Education Committee,

We are parents of children that attend a SAGE designated school in Janesville. This is the first year of SAGE at Jefferson Elementary but we are excited about what is happening with SAGE. The teacher to pupil ratio in kindergarten and first grade is now 15 to 1. The plan at Jefferson is to extend this ratio into second grade next year and third the following year. Our child, a kindergartner, has benefited eminencely through the 15 to 1 pupil to teacher ratio. We are excited and hopeful that this wonderful opportunity will continue for our child as well as all the children whom attend Jefferson.

It has come to our attention that Governor Scott McCallum's proposed budget plans includes major cuts to the SAGE program. We feel these cuts will affect our childs academical advancement as well as all the students at Jefferson. Our support fully opposes Governor McCallum's cuts to the successful SAGE program and supports making this program permanent through the third grade.

We hope you will consider the postive impact SAGE has had on our child as well as all the students that attend Jefferson Elementary. Please support making the SAGE program permanent and reject Governor McCallum's proposed budget cuts.

Sincerely,



Mr. & Mrs. Waddell

Our names are Dave and Charlene Behling. We have a son with Asperger's Syndrome, Attention Deficit with Hyperactivity Disorder, Sensory Defensiveness and a mood disorder. He is also gifted and talented in the creativity area.

We would like to thank the Senate Education Committee for your interest in hearing the public's testimony relating to funding for Special Education. We fully support increased funding for Special Education. Disabled students deserve an equal education and Special Education is the vessel through which they receive it.

Our son, Troy, needs a one on one aide to be able to be mainstreamed into regular classes. He finally got an aide in 7th grade. Troy is a senior now. Having a one on one aide has made the difference for him. Troy has been mainstreamed into regular and advanced classes with his peers rather than being in a self contained classroom with the only other students he sees being ones who have been removed from class and sent to the Special Education room because of behavior issues.

Troy has blossomed since the 7th grade. Due to our perseverance and the cooperation of the Janesville School District, Troy is a success story. At the present level of funding for students with disabilities, many students could fall through the cracks and be mis-labeled and isolated from their peers. Students with disabilities did nothing to get their disability and they deserve to have the same opportunities for an education as non-disabled students even though it may cost more and yes, it does cost more money and more time and more patience, but it is worth it.

Troy will be graduating in June, having been mainstreamed and on the honor roll with the prospect of a successful future, including attending college. This is largely due to the special education process, a wonderful case worker (special education teacher) here at Craig High School and one at Franklin Middle School and having a one on one aide each year. We urge you to increase the funding for Special Education. Our disabled students need and deserve to be success stories. Thank you.

David and Charlene Behling

2522 Antler Drive

Janesville, WI 53545

State of Wisconsin-Special Education Cost/Aid

	2001-02*	2000-01**	1999-00	1998-99	1997-98	% INCREASE 4 YR>
IDEA-FLOW-THROUGH	\$97,901,119	\$75,296,051	\$63,635,298	\$53,393,045	\$43,637,177	124.4%
IDEA-DISCRETIONARY	\$16,094,478	\$14,275,383	\$13,757,276	\$14,827,891	\$11,636,581	38.3%
IDEA ADMINISTRATION	\$3,188,482	\$3,091,082	\$3,013,896	\$2,969,791	\$2,909,145	9.6%
IDEA-PRESCHOOL ENTITLEMENT	\$7,316,518	\$7,316,518	\$7,016,370	\$7,016,370	\$6,757,860	8.3%
IDEA-PRESCHOOL DISCRETIONARY	\$1,886,777	\$1,886,777	\$1,839,663	\$1,839,663	\$1,802,096	4.7%
IDEA-PRESCHOOL ADMIN	\$471,694	\$471,694	\$459,916	\$459,916	\$450,524	4.7%
FEDERAL SHARE % OF TOTAL	\$126,859,068 11.3%	\$102,337,505 9.9%	\$89,722,419 9.2%	\$80,506,676 8.7%	\$67,193,383 7.8%	88.8%
STATE SPEC ED CATEG % OF TOTAL	\$325,681,400 29.1%	\$315,681,400 30.4%	\$288,048,700 29.6%	\$275,548,700 29.9%	\$275,548,700 31.8%	18.2%
STATE EQUAL (SPEC ED COST) *** % OF TOTAL	\$444,744,731 39.7%	\$413,358,781 39.8%	\$395,916,937 40.7%	\$376,249,652 40.9%	\$349,338,279 40.3%	27.3%
LOCAL SHARE *** % OF TOTAL	\$222,372,332 19.9%	\$206,679,388 19.9%	\$197,956,671 20.4%	\$188,124,798 20.4%	\$174,669,114 20.2%	27.3%
TOTAL % OF TOTAL	\$1,119,657,531 100.0%	\$1,038,057,074 100.0%	\$971,644,727 100.0%	\$920,429,826 100.0%	\$866,749,476 100.0%	29.2%

* Estimates

** State and local share of special education cost covered by Equalization aid should be considered estimates (6.1% increase) as of 3/29/00.

*** Assumes state pickup of 2/3 cost

Impact of Governor's Proposed Budget on Children with Disabilities
IDEA Discretionary Grants
March 2001

Reading Excellence And Demonstration of Success (READS)

- Issue: National research suggests 80% of children currently identified as learning disabled have specific reading disabilities. Research suggests the majority of these children should be able to learn to read proficiently if they are given appropriate and explicit reading instruction.
- What READS is: Research project designed to demonstrate that when children receive comprehensive instruction in reading, including phonics and phonemic awareness, their performance improves and inappropriate referrals for special education decrease.
- How much it costs: Funding recommended for 2001-02 (second year of projected four years) is \$1,150,000.
- Impact on children: The children involved in this study will experience success in reading and other academics. They will not be labeled as children with disabilities and will remain in regular education.

Systems Change—Early and Ongoing Collaboration and Assistance (EOCA)

- Issue: Children more and more are coming to school with diverse backgrounds and needs. Identification rates for children with disabilities continue to grow. Public schools increasingly are challenged to improve support systems for children when they first begin to demonstrate academic or behavioral problems in school.
- What EOCA is: Develop a collaborative problem-solving process within schools to meet the needs of students at risk of failure and referral for special education.
- What it costs: Funding recommended for 2001-02 is \$200,000.
- Impact on children: Children's needs will be addressed as soon as their performance becomes an issue for their success in school. With appropriate and early intervention, these children may not be labeled as children with disabilities.

Assistive Technology Project

- Issue: The needs of many children for assistive technology devices and services may not be met fully because school district staff are not aware of how assistive technology could benefit children, are not trained to assess children's needs for assistive technology or not trained in how to instruct children in how to use the devices.
- What Assistive Technology Project is: Assist school districts in their efforts to develop and implement efficient and cost effective assistive technology services. What it costs: Recommended funding for 2001-02 is \$600,000. The services of this initiative have saved school districts in excess of \$3.5 million over the past six years (private rentals, vendor donations, bulk purchases).
- Impact on Children: Children with disabilities who are provided the assistive technology devices and services they require are able to participate with their non-disabled peers in the classroom, meet with success in school and make the kinds of post secondary school transition necessary if they are to be successful.

- Personal story: Eight-year-old Jacob lives with disabilities preventing him from walking and talking. With the help of a wheelchair and switch devices, he attends school every day. Jacob helped demonstrated at the Assistive Technology Show and Tell the switches he uses. He pressed a switch that had a picture of himself on it and a recorded message. Another switch played his favorite music. Everyone could see how Jacob could communicate and participate with others in class.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Training

- Issue: DPI teacher certification does not include TBI licensure. This is a low-incidence area, approximately .0003 of total public/nonpublic enrollment.
- What TBI training is: Continue training teachers, update training materials, maintain the CESA TBI trainers' network and develop linkages with state teacher training institutions.
- What it costs: Funding recommended for 2001-02 is \$75,000.
- Impact on children: These children have very unique needs that because they usually happen as the result of an accident or injury, are unanticipated. These children benefit from the support of school staff specifically trained to deal with the issues of brain injury and its impact on school success.

Autism Training

- Issue: DPI teacher certification does not include Autism licensure. This is a low-incidence area, approximately .0017 of total public/nonpublic enrollment.
- What Autism Training is: Continue to sponsor autism training, using a curriculum that includes two introductory modules, as well as modules on assessment, discrete trials training, early childhood and social skills.
- What it costs: Recommended funding for 2001-02 is \$100,000.
- Impact on Children: These children have unique and usually severe needs. As this training improves the capacity of school staff to serve these children appropriately, they succeed better in school and eventually the community.

Paraprofessional Training

- Issue: Roles of paraeducators have expanded and their impact on student learning has increased.
- What Paraprofessional Training is: Promote and support the preparation of paraprofessionals so they have the skills and knowledge to increase student learning and performance.
- What it costs: Recommended funding for 2001-02 is \$50,000.
- Impact on Children: As trained paraeducators support the learning of children with disabilities, their performance will improve.
- Personal story: Mary goes from raised hand to raised hand correcting misspelled words and capitilization. After whirling around the 2nd grade classroom, Mary is off to the 1st grade classroom to help write simple stories about dogs. By the end of the day, a reading specialist and Mary will work with at least 60 students who need special assistance with reading. The reading specialist says she couldn't do her job without Mary--I would be able to help just half of the kids I do.

IEP Initiatives

- Issue: Developing a good and functional IEP is a challenge. The IEP is a process as well as a document. It serves as a compliance document, a plan for the educators working with the child, and a communication tool for the parent.
- What IEP Initiatives is: Develop a guide that an individual educator can use to assist them in understanding and facilitating the development of a quality IEP.
- What it costs: Recommended funding for 2001-02 is \$150,000.
- Impact on Children: Quality IEPs that contain goals and objectives designed to meet an individual child's unique needs will help the child to succeed in school.

Behavioral Assessment

- Issue: Programming successfully for children with behavioral difficulties depends in part on understanding the purposes of behavior.
- What Behavioral Assessment Project is: Assist school staff in utilization of positive interventions to address behavioral issue, in part through the development of resources, an assessment kit, and web site.
- What it costs: Recommended funding for 2001-02 is \$100,000.
- Impact on Children: Children will function more appropriately, leading to better learning and citizenship.

Transition Project

- Issue: Transition from school to the adult world often is difficult for students with disabilities. IDEA requires transition activities to ensure that students stay in school and engage in meaningful educational experiences so they will be prepared for post-secondary education, employment and independent living.
- What Transition Project is: Coordinated at the state level and implemented at the CESA/district level, provide for delivery of transition support services, including staff development.
- What it costs: Recommended funding for 2001-02 is \$354,000.
- Impact on students: Students will experience success in the adult world as contributing citizens.
- Personal story: Several years ago I worked with Jenny, a high school student in our transition program. Our grant allowed us to work directly with students who would have difficulty transitioning to the world of work. This young lady was non-verbal, poorly motivated, with low self-esteem. During the 10th and 11th grades, we exposed her to a variety of jobs. It was apparent she loved to clean, was extremely organized and very thorough. Her teacher and I arranged for a training program at a local hotel. One day a week we took her to the site and worked with her cleaning rooms. This was the first time Jenny could demonstrate her ability to achieve. She began to smile, and tried to communicate more. Last semester of her senior year she was employed part-time. By graduation she had a full-time job with benefits. In doing follow-up we learned that she was in charge of the morning breakfast served to guests. Obviously her communication skills had greatly improved. I understand she was able to get her drivers license. We never could have provided this type of attention or program without this discretionary grant and I'm sure Jenny would have exited high school and remained at home.

Post High School Student Follow-up

- Issue: Special education law requires collection, analysis, and dissemination of general information about persons with disabilities who no longer attend high school, including whether they are employed, enrolled in postsecondary education and living independently. Education stakeholders and policymakers need to assess the successes of the educational experience of students with disabilities.
- What Post High School Student Follow-up study is: Outcomes survey of students with disabilities who graduated during the 1999-2000 school year; a longitudinal study is planned three and six years out, adding a new cohort of graduates. Local educational agencies will utilize the data to identify strengths and weaknesses in their instructional programs.
- What it costs: Recommended funding for 2001-02 is \$50,000.
- Impact on children: Utilize survey results to improve performance outcomes of students with disabilities. Establish performance standards in the area of postsecondary outcomes, and improve the transition planning process to enable individuals with disabilities to make successful transitions from secondary school.

Mediation Project:

- Issue: Sometimes, the relationship between parents of a child with a disability and school staff is marked by disputes about what is right for the child.
- What Mediation Project is: Free both to schools and parents, mediation is facilitated negotiation carried out by a neutral person, the mediator, designed to help parents and school staff resolve their disputes.
- What it costs: Recommended funding for 2001-02 is \$485,000.
- Impact on students: When parents and school staff can resolve their dispute in this non-adversarial manner, respect becomes mutual and communication is improved, contributing to a more positive working relationship in the future.

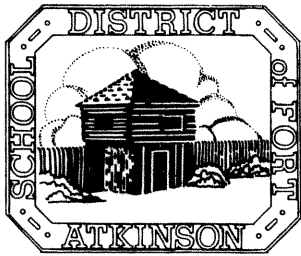
Wisconsin Statewide Parent-Educator Initiative (WSPEI)

- Issue: Building positive partnerships among parents, schools and communities on behalf of children with disabilities can be challenging.
- What WSPEI is: All about partnerships, its goal is to develop a statewide network of parents and school staff to create or maintain resources to help foster positive working relationships, supporting shared decision-making and children's learning.
- What it costs: Recommended funding for 2001-02 is \$775,000.
- Impact on Children: When parents and school staff start off with a positive working relationship, the benefits to children are significant.

My Name is Tanya Langer and I live at 501 W. Sunny Lane, Janesville, WI.

I would like to thank you for your legislative interest. I am a Mother, Aunt, and Sister who is in support of increased Special Education Funding. Growing up I watched my parents and siblings struggle through the special education process because they did not have the resources available that we have today. And now I am a mother of a child who requires special education. My son Nicholas is in the Early Childhood Program in the Janesville Schools. Nicholas is the child that the doctors said on a daily basis at birth that he probably would not make it, and yet here we are. He does have several physical limitations but at this point his cognitive issues are not clear. Nicholas is the type of child, like many, that with good family and school support can overcome many obstacles that would later in life cost our community much more than their education would have. I feel that if the school system has the funding and support that it deserves our children will be an even greater benefit to society later in life. Our children not only need this education but they deserve it.

With this being the first year of school for Nicholas it is even more evident to his father and myself how beneficial special education is. At each doctor and therapy appointment we hear over and over how well he is doing. Not just physically but also socially and mentally. We believe that these things would not have been as noticeable with out school. Nicholas loves to be with other children, he loves his teachers and support staff and it is evident that they enjoy him as well. With the types of comments we receive on a regular basis to not be here today and ask for increased funding for special education would have been a serious disregard to my son's future and our family's future. We feel that special education in our schools helps the entire family it is not just directed to help the student. It indirectly supports the family as a whole by offering services, support, and a safe and rewarding environment for our children. We are asking for your support to help make our children successful in life.



SCHOOL DISTRICT OF FORT ATKINSON

201 Park Street
FORT ATKINSON, WISCONSIN 53538
(920) 563-7804

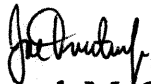
My name is Joe Overturf and I am employed as the Director of Special Education and Pupil Services in the School District of Fort Atkinson. I began my career in the special education field in 1973.

Sweeping reform for educational services for students with disabilities was enacted in the state of Wisconsin in 1973. At that time, a commitment of financial support was given by the state legislature at a level of seventy per cent (70%) categorical aid for special education personnel and transportation expenses. The amount of state aid for special education expenses at the present time is about thirty-five per cent (35%) of the cost for special education personnel and transportation.

In 1975, the federal Congress passed Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children's Act. At the time of this legislation, Congress realized that there would be an extraordinary expense for local school districts and gave a commitment to defray forty per cent (40%) of the extraordinary cost to serve students with disabilities in the public school setting over a five year period. Local school districts have never realized this level of federal support and the School District of Fort Atkinson receives, at the most, fifteen per cent (15%) of its extraordinary costs for serving students with disabilities from the federal government.

The 1980s, 1990s, and the new millennium have experienced a dramatic increase in the number and severity of students with disabilities. Students who are medically fragile and require a great deal of care, children with autism, and children displaying speech and language disabilities are examples. While medical and other technological advances, changing demographics, and social and economic factors may be some of the causes of heightened demands on public schools, the inadequate state and federal support of legislation only serves to undermine the commitments given to students with disabilities, their families, and their providers...the public schools.

As a result of state revenue limits, school officials are forced to make critical decisions concerning what educational programs to maintain and what educational programs to eliminate. This fact, coupled with the increasing expenses of special education and a steady decline in the percent of state and federal support for special education, has created an internal cannibalization of educational services for school students in the state of Wisconsin. I request that the State increase its financial commitment to special education services by significantly increasing its per cent of categorical aid for special education personnel and transportation and that school districts be permitted to secure the funding for the local share of those costs outside of the Revenue Cap....in order to support the education of all students.



Joseph M. Overturf
Director of Special Education/Pupil Services
School District of Fort Atkinson
201 Park Street
Fort Atkinson, WI 53538

April 2, 2001

Judith B. Robson
State Senator
15th Senate District
Post Office Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882

Dear Senator Robson:

Thank you for holding the Senate Education Committee hearing in Janesville, Wisconsin today. I appreciate your interest in education for our children. As a parent of a child with special healthcare needs, I support the need for increased funding for special education.

My daughter, Katie, was born three months premature and suffered brain damage. Consequently, she has always had extensive medical needs. Katie is diagnosed with hydrocephalus and cerebral palsy and has undergone many surgeries and procedures because of these conditions.

I am excited that even though Katie has special needs she can be in the regular classroom with her peers. Katie enjoys her classmates and they enjoy her. They each bring gifts of learning about people to each other.

Katie does have obstacles learning, however, because of being born the way she was, and she can't help that. That is why special education is so important for Katie. The individual education process works for Katie. She receives physical therapy, speech therapy, occupational therapy and various learning disability interventions in other classes where she struggles. Many times she requires the assistance of an aid in her classroom.

Katie is a delightful little girl who loves to learn as other children do! Please stand firm on the issue of increased funding for special education so all children with disabilities can have the opportunity to learn to the best of their abilities.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Tara L. Schlegel

1439 LaFayette Street
Janesville, WI 53546

To: April 2, 2001

Members of Senate Education Committee

RE: Special Education Spending and Class Size

My name is Kathy Brickman and I appreciate this opportunity to express my concern regarding special education funding. I want you to know that I am equally aware that this is an impossible situation for the members of your committee. The demands on an already constrained budget must be overwhelming.

But I would like to take this moment to speak on behalf of children like my son, Sam. Sam is an autistic 8 year old. He has been included in the general education population for all of his educational career. As you can imagine this requires a lot of support from my school district. He is attended by a one-on-one aide. His curriculum is modified, and is overseen by my school's speech therapist and learning disabilities teacher. The advantage of having smaller class sizes seems self evident. All children can be encouraged and challenged in their special areas. They learn to be more cooperative, sensitive and are better prepared to face difficulties in the coming years.

I am extremely amazed and grateful for all of the hard work and dedication that is provided to my son. Even though this has been a difficult transitional year for him, his team has never wavered in their determination to find a technique that works.

And so we come to the reason for this plea. I understand the need for fiduciary responsibility. I also feel that children like my son depend on the support they receive from federal and state mandates. These mandates have never been funded at appropriate levels. It is unrealistic to expect school districts to provide services at even a basic level without financial support. In cases like my son's, where a series of different techniques and styles must be implemented it is impossible. My husband and I attempt to provide as much as we can in terms of equipment and additional therapies for our son. But ultimately I must rely on the expertise of the district staff and their knowledge to direct our son's education.

I would like to beseech the members of this committee to listen to our children's voices. They are almost totally reliant on others to make decisions regarding their lives and futures. This is hard enough to do in the face of rising medical costs, prescription fees and the cost of available technologies, never mind the fact that we as parents have to try to understand and cope with the diagnosis of our children. It would be extremely difficult to try to negotiate this maze if you place families under the burden of trying to accomplish this with little or reduced funding.

But these members of your constituency do not vote, they do not make political donations, they cannot present you with facts and figures regarding the efficacy of funding support. They have to rely on others to hear their voices and provide the necessary means for a chance at a functional life. The funding at this early level can do nothing if not increase the chances for our children to succeed later in life. It seems that on this aspect alone your committee would agree; money spent now in comparison to the money allocated later to provide services to care for individuals for a lifetime is money well invested. Please do not let them languish in silence. We as their parents attempt to do the best we can. Now we need you to listen to these amazing children, because their future is up to you.

Thank you.

Kathy Brickman
1925 Eastwood Ave.
Janesville, WI 53545

School District of Milton

430 E. High Street, Suite 2 • Milton, WI 53563 • (608) 868-9200 • Fax (608) 868-9215

April 2, 2001

Senator Richard Grobshmidt and Members of the Senate Education Committee:

My name is John Faust. I am the Director of Special Education for the School District of Milton. I am speaking here today on behalf of children with disabilities, parents of children with disabilities, regular and special education professional and paraprofessional staff, and administrators in the School District of Milton. I am here to testify on the negative impact that state imposed revenue caps are having on children, parents, teachers, and administrators in our school district. I further wish to address some of the numerous policy issues contained in Governor McCallum's proposed biennial budget. Thank you for granting me the opportunity to speak with you today.

The School District of Milton is facing its second straight year of budget reductions due to the revenue caps that limit district spending. Prior to the current school year, the district was forced to cut approximately \$860,000 from its budget to balance revenues and expenditures. For the upcoming 2001-2002 school year, the district is facing a projected \$350,000 - \$400,000 shortfall between expected revenues and expenditures. This pattern will keep repeating itself until revenue limits are substantially modified or the district's enrollment consistently and significantly increases. The cumulative effects of these current and projected budget reductions over time have the potential to substantially impact the educational programs the School District of Milton offers its students.

What has been the impact of the budget reductions to date in the School District of Milton? It meant that vacancies were not filled prior to the 2000-2001 school year. It meant an increase in class sizes at the elementary and middle school levels. For the 2001-2002 school year, the district is facing more staff reductions. Special education staff were spared this past school year, but will be greatly impacted for the upcoming school year. The district is facing the loss of a half-time early childhood special education teacher, a half-time teacher of students with cognitive disabilities, a paraprofessional in a program for children with cognitive disabilities, and the loss of a part-time occupational therapist. Additionally, staffing reductions will occur at Milton High School in regular education classes and programs causing an increase in class sizes and the elimination of certain classes. Finally, Milton High School has lost one of its two associate principal positions. These reductions in staff negatively impact the services the district offers to its students.

The School District of Milton prides itself on preserving special education programs and services for children that truly need them. The most recent data available from the Department of Public Instruction (December 1, 1999) indicates that the prevalence rate of children with disabilities in the district is 10.39%, which is under the State average of 11.77%. This rate is 1.38% under the state average. Data from the December 1, 1998 count of children with disabilities indicates that the district's incidence rate was 10.16% and the state average 11.29%. The district was under the state average by 1.13%.

The School District of Milton has been able to keep its incidence rate of children with disabilities low because of the significant amount of intervention that is provided to children before they are considered for special education and related services. The district invests heavily in early intervention and literacy services at the elementary level. The district's efforts in Reading Recovery significantly reduced the number of children referred for possible learning disabilities at the primary level. The district's efforts to serve children that present academic and behavioral challenges at other levels has also served to preserve special education and related services for children that truly need them.

These services are in jeopardy. Milton High School lost its teacher providing services to children at-risk prior to the genesis of the 2000-2001 school year. Proposed budget reductions for the upcoming 2001-2002 school year find a further reduction of services to children at-risk at the middle and elementary levels.

It is important to recognize the importance of district efforts to address the needs of all children through a wide variety of services and interventions other than special education. Children with disabilities emanate from the general education environment. As districts, including the School District of Milton, are forced to reduce services to children through increased class sizes, elimination and/or reduction in programs and services to children at-risk, and the fewer administrators to deal with discipline and safety issues, the pressure on the special education system to serve these students will increase. There will be a predictable rise in the number of children with disabilities in the State of Wisconsin, not because of new eligibility rules for special education, but because special education will be one of the only services available to children and parents that present academic and behavioral challenges. A vicious cycle of referral and assessment will result.

I urge you to consider increasing the amount of special education aid provided to districts above the \$25 million in the Governor's proposed budget. The State of Wisconsin, in past years, committed to funding special education at a 63% reimbursement rate. The state deviated from that promise and went to a sum certain commitment of \$275 million. Since the adoption of the sum certain philosophy, the reimbursement rate for special education has declined every year. Committing \$25 million as is proposed in the Governor's budget will not keep districts close to the current reimbursement rates. Combined with revenue caps, this proposal will negatively effect the programs and services the School District of Milton offers students with and without disabilities.

Milton East Elementary
725 Greenman Street
Milton, WI 53563
(608) 868-9380

Milton West Elementary
825 W. Madison Avenue
Milton, WI 53563
(608) 868-9230

Consolidated Elementary
4838 N. Cly Rd. F
Janesville, WI 53545
(608) 752-3107

Northside Intermediate
School
159 Northside Drive
Milton, WI 53563
(608) 868-9280

Milton Middle School
20 E. Madison Avenue
Milton, WI 53563
(608) 868-9350

Milton High School
114 W. High Street
Milton, WI 53563
(608) 868-9300

As mentioned previously, the district is projected to lose professional and paraprofessional staff in early childhood, programs for children with cognitive disabilities, and the related service area of occupational therapy. Continued reductions in regular education programs and services will produce additional stress on the system making it difficult to meet the needs of children and maintain high academic standards. The major impact of the budget reductions will not be felt until the 2002-3003 school year. The district is increasing its use of federal flow through dollars to provide services that were previously provided through local dollars. If the situation does not change, drastic program effects will be felt more deeply than is currently projected for the next school year.

The Governor proposed that high cost children with disabilities be defined as a child that costs \$50,000 with reimbursement coming at the rate of 50% with the dollars coming from already appropriated handicapped aids. We do not need a shifting of funds from one place to another; we need a commitment to fund high cost children with disabilities from new dollars. I suggest that high cost children with disabilities be defined as those costing three times the state average (approximately \$30,000) and that 90% of those costs be reimbursed.

There is a tremendous amount of talk at both the federal and state level concerning the education of our children. President Bush issued the challenge to "leave no child behind." I urge you to think deeply and seriously about what this means. I ask you to take the time to learn the many different challenges and issues children today bring to the school setting. There are numerous children in schools today that come from abusive environments. There are children that are subject to neglect. There are children that are living in poverty. There are children that come from homes where parents are addicted to alcohol and/or other drugs. These children bring a wide variety of issues to schools today. If schools are expected to deal with these children and all their needs, we must be provided the resources to do so.

These children are angry. These children possess mental health issues such as depression and anxiety disorders. These children need treatment and supportive environments outside the school setting. School safety is a huge issue in this country. Is it any wonder when we commonly deal with second and third grade students that threaten and inflict physical harm on other children and adults in the school setting?

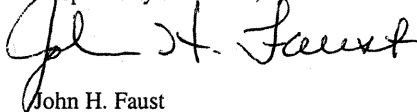
Leaving no child behind is a wonderful philosophy that we need to embrace. We need to embrace this philosophy with our hearts, with a deep commitment to children, and with the fiscal resources necessary to make this philosophy a reality rather than political rhetoric and fodder.

The State of Wisconsin over the past 10-15 years has invested hundreds of millions of dollars in juvenile and adult correctional facilities. These juvenile and adult facilities are filled to capacity. It is an important function of government to provide safe communities for its citizens. It is also important for government to act proactively rather than reactively. Dollars expended on juvenile and adult facilities may be necessary, but it is not cost effective in the sense that it does not address the problem at its source. We need to commit and invest in children. We need to invest in services for children and support for their families. I urge you to spend some time in our schools to see first hand the issues with which we are asked to deal.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. In summary, I ask that you consider and implement changes in the revenue caps to allow school districts adequate resources to address the needs of our children. I ask that you increase the amount of funding for special education above the \$25 million requested by Governor McCallum. I ask that you address the issue of high cost children with disabilities by defining high cost students realistically and not using already appropriated dollars to aid districts in serving these children.

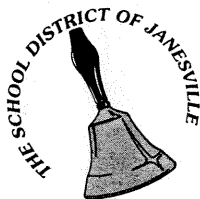
Finally, I ask for your proactive commitment to children, all children in this state. Children with disabilities, for the most part, begin in regular education. Let's make "leave no child behind" a reality that we live in Wisconsin. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,



John H. Faust
Director of Special Education

(608) 868-9221 - Office
(608) 868-9215 - Fax
faustj@mail.milton.k12.wi.us



Education is our investment in the future.

My name is Jeanine Allen and I am the Director of Student Services for the School District of Janesville. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on special education services.

Over my 32 years in public education I have been involved in several significant educational changes that have improved outcomes for students in our schools. These changes are grounded in the expanded research base on effective teaching and learning practices. I experienced change first through the eyes of a classroom teacher, then as a special education teacher in the area of learning disabilities, next as a special education program support teacher, and now as a central office administrator. Over this same time period I further experienced positive changes in our special education service delivery system: most significantly noted as we recently moved to a unified educational system for all students under IDEA 97.

In more recent years our population of students with disabilities has increased. As these enrollments increased I witnessed an increase in the diversity and severity of student needs. Students with multiple and severe needs who ten years ago were placed in residential treatment or institutions are now students successfully served in our schools. We have also experienced an increase in the severity of students with emotional behavioral disabilities. In addition, we serve more students with fetal alcohol syndrome, students whose mothers have abused drugs, and students with autism, other health impaired, and traumatic brain injury needs. These low incidence yet high cost students often require the supportive services of counseling, para educator instructional support, occupational and physical therapies, and speech/language programming.

I undertake my job responsibilities related to both the leadership for and the fiscal management of special education programs and resources most seriously. In our district we look carefully at the most efficient and cost effective way to implement quality services for our students to succeed K-12 and to improve student outcomes upon graduation.

Local costs to fund special education services have significantly increased as we work with students who are more diverse and needy. The following items provide information behind our numbers.

1. In 1992, we did not have students identified with needs in the area of autism. We now have sixteen students. These students require the services of occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech and language and assistive technology. Nine of these students require one-on-one para educator instructional support.
2. In 1993, we had 141 students with cognitive disabilities. Today we have 161 students. Although the numbers have not significantly increased, student severity has. We presently serve 50 students with moderate to severe delays who require multiple related services.

3. In 1993, we had 149 students with needs in emotional behavioral disabilities. We now have 209 students. Eighteen of these students have severe needs that require para educator instructional support.
4. In 1993, we had two students with Other Health Impaired needs. In the current school year we have 72 students identified. A significant number of these students have attention deficit disorder and require well-defined behavior management programs.
5. Our higher incidence rate continues to be in the area of learning disabilities. Because of our incidence rate we established and worked with a local learning disabilities Incidence Committee to analyze what occurs in the classroom prior to a referral, what occurs from referral to identification, and finally what happens as a result of student placement over time.

The Janesville School District desires to continue to offer quality services to our students. State funding needs to be increased substantially in order for our district to stay within our current level of services. We specifically seek your support for reimbursement for the costs of providing special education to low incidence high cost children defined as three times the state average (close to \$30,000) and 90% of those costs should be reimbursed. These reimbursements should be in addition to handicapped aids. We do not agree with the Governor's budget proposal that defines high cost as \$50,000 per child and would only reimburse 50% of those costs.

We further seek your support to have a goal of 50% in the statute for a reimbursement rate for special education. Our current reimbursement rate for special education costs is 35%. The Governor's proposal for proposed changes to special education funding will reduce that rate to 32%. If this happens our district will have to reduce its current projection for 2001-02 categorical aids by \$300,000.

The Governor's budget also proposes a census based aid distribution. This change disassociates the funding from the services and will have a negative effect on our district.

In addition, Bill Sections 2660-2666 identify changes to the special education statute. We recommend that those sections be pulled out of this bill as they are policy items, and should be discussed in a different forum.

Increasing reimbursement for state and federal special education services is crucial. Federal and state requirements have increased under the reauthorized special education law. These changes will improve the outcomes for our students, but they need the proper level of funding. Our district seeks adequate funding for the educational programs and services we provide. We urge you to consider and respond to the pictures from the field that you hear today.

Thank you again for the opportunity to present testimony. It is most appreciated.

Wisconsin PTA

4797 Hayes Road, Suite 2, Madison, WI 53704-3256 (608) 244-1455

Good afternoon my name is Karen Grochowski. I am here today representing the Wisconsin Congress of Parents and Teachers, more commonly referred as the PTA, and our 47,000 members across the state.

By virtue of your membership on this committee, your colleagues in the legislature look to you as the education experts. I urge you to use the knowledge you gain here today to influence the members of the Joint Finance Committee to amend the budget proposal to include funding that will help relieve the looming financial crisis in many school districts. The proposals I present here today will really only help to keep the fiscal problems from becoming significantly worse in our schools, they really won't fix the problem. The issues surrounding school funding are complex and cannot all be addressed in the few months that are allocated for this budget discussion. Wisconsin PTA looks forward to an on-going dialogue that, in the near future, will result in public policy reforms to school funding that are fair to taxpayers and provide students with an adequate education.

With regard to special education Wisconsin PTA finds the current budget proposal inadequate to meet the needs of children with physical, behavioral and learning disabilities. The funds allocated in this proposal would result in the state falling further behind in its commitment to children with special needs. While the state is currently reimbursing local school districts about 36% of these costs, it is estimated that would fall to 33% in 2002-2003 biennium, less than half what the state originally promised when it issued special education mandates to school districts.

And it isn't just the children with disabilities who will struggle to have their needs met as result of this shortcoming in the budget proposal- its all children.

With the state-imposed revenue caps on school districts inadequate funding for special education ultimately affects all the students as school districts are forced to take funds from the regular education budget to pay for mandated services for students with disabilities.

WI PTA recommends that aid for special education costs should be set at a 50% sum sufficient level and that for "high-cost" students the reimbursement be 90% of the costs of services which exceeds three times the state average cost per student.

With regard to the SAGE program PTA supports expansion of class size reduction programs. In the last 20 years there have been numerous studies on the influence of reduced class size on educational achievement. Smaller classes offer teachers the chance to devote more time to each student, to identify students' needs more easily, and to teach more effectively. Students in smaller classes become more engaged in learning. Equally important is that parents benefit too. Smaller classes allows for improved communication

between home and school. One of the most effective strategies for increasing student achievement is improving parental involvement. The SAGE program will help us do that.

PTA opposes the proposal to scale-back the SAGE program and believes that plans to reduced class sizes should continue to be implemented as originally planned, allowing all schools who are participating to have small classes(15 students) in kindergarten through 3rd grade.

Many provisions in Wisconsin's state budget proposal mirror government spending priorities and initiatives on the federal level and that causes concern for the members of Wisconsin PTA. We would urge legislators to carefully examine proposals for significant tax cuts to ensure that we aren't paying for them with our children's future. I'd like to end by calling to your attention a proposal by one of Wisconsin's representatives in Congress and encourage you to follow his lead and invest in our future. Calling his proposal "A Real Test of Values", Rep. Obey suggests that rather than approving a huge tax cut package, policy-makers should invest resources into education programs and strengthen the long-term outlook of the American economy. Among other things this proposal invests in programs that help recruit, train, and support highly qualified teachers and reduces class size; This plan calls on states and local governments to increase their investment in education, while also requiring the federal government to play a strong role in this partnership.

Comments delivered by
Karen Grochowski
Wisconsin PTA

Trudi Massie
1411 Oakland Avenue
Janesville, WI 53545

My name is Trudi Massie and I have a child with special needs. My daughter Kendra was diagnosed with Learning Disabilities at the age of four. My concern is not only for my own daughter but also for all children and parents as they enter into this time of uncertainty.

Kendra is fifteen years old and a freshman at Craig High School. Kendra has made the transitions from elementary and middle school to high school with ease. This was due to a large amount of help from others and the special aides Kendra has been offered in our school district. I believe we have major concerns still, but overall for my own personal voyage it has been a pleasant one.

My daughter has received many services offered due to funding for special needs students. I strongly recommend these services be continued and offered to her and other children like her. Funding for special needs children is of utmost importance, not only for the child but for our community as well.

Over the last eleven years working with the school district, principals, teachers and case managers I believe there is a place for my child and others in the general student population. I believe only good can come from this union.

My daughter is now fifteen years old. She is a very good student and active member in the community. We need these services so she can continue her path in life to the best of her ability.

A caring parent.

WALWORTH COUNTY



Est. 1839

W I S C O N S I N

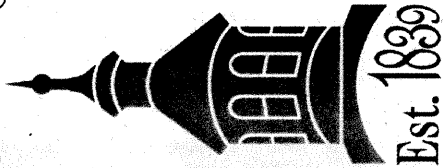
County Board

Thomas A. Lothian
Supervisor, District 17

539 Park Ridge Road
Williams Bay, WI 53191
262-245-5901 tel
262-245-1854 fax
262-949-6304 cell
lothian@idenet.com

www.walworthcountywi.gov

WALWORTH COUNTY



W I S C O N S I N

Walworth County
Children With Disabilities Education Board
Statistics on Student Enrollment & Program Costs

Walworth County Economic Profile Population

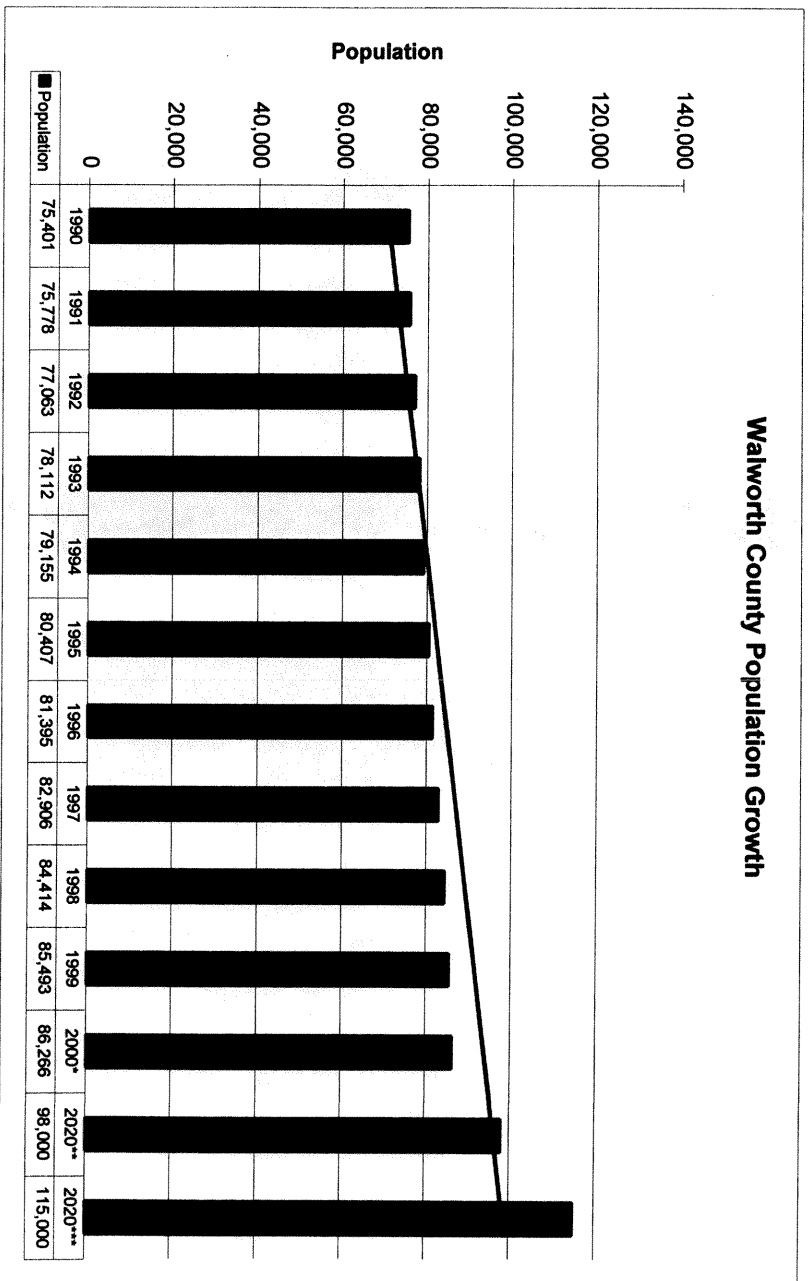
Year	Population	% Change from Previous Year	% Change from 1990
1990	75,401		
1991	75,778	0.50%	
1992	77,063	1.67%	
1993	78,112	1.34%	
1994	79,155	1.32%	
1995	80,407	1.56%	6%
1996	81,395	1.21%	
1997	82,906	1.82%	
1998	84,414	1.79%	
1999	85,493	1.26%	
2000*	86,266	0.90%	13%
2020**	98,000	12.76%	23%
2020***	115,000	25.66%	34%

*Wisconsin Dept. of Administration - 1/1/00 final est.

**SEWRPC Intermediate growth projection

***SEWRPC high growth projection

Source: U.S. Bureau of The Census, Wisconsin Dept. of Administration & SEWRPC

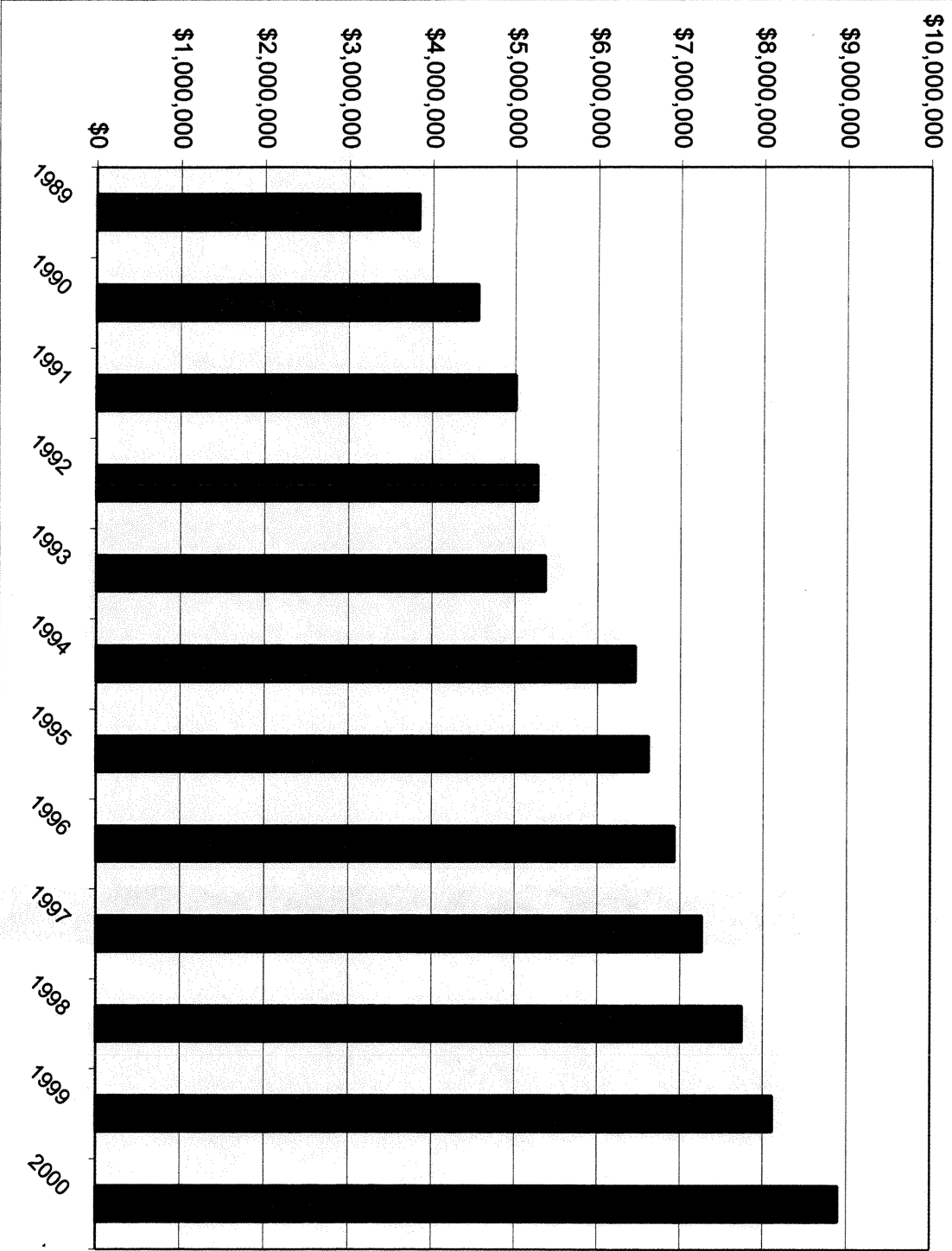


**Children With Disabilities Education Board
Historical Data 1990 - 2001 Budgeted**

Year	Total Expenditures	% Change	Total Appropriation	State Funding	Federal Funding	Other Funding	Fund Balance Change	FTE Count*
1990	4,462,154		2,073,641	2,124,749	266,787	134,384	137,404	104.23
1991	5,054,499	13%	2,164,601	2,158,878	353,909	116,930	(260,182)	118.10
1992	5,387,374	7%	2,671,174	2,200,767	449,322	176,704	110,593	124.18
1993	6,277,172	17%	3,370,570	2,388,987	479,218	211,237	172,840	129.95
1994	6,200,910	-1%	3,246,583	2,532,328	460,499	259,490	297,990	131.98
1995	6,485,909	5%	3,062,018	2,590,953	674,757	261,913	103,732	135.98
1996	6,833,089	5%	3,142,405	2,742,647	254,048	288,425	(405,564)	139.07
1997	7,149,749	5%	3,625,527	2,775,518	418,220	222,329	(108,155)	140.23
1998	7,596,665	6%	3,983,182	2,775,469	631,434	228,101	21,521	145.29
1999	8,211,847	8%	4,248,962	2,826,232	803,694	218,342	(32,241)	152.13
2000 Budget	8,896,740	8%	4,505,495	3,303,665	768,898	318,682	-	164.88
2001 Budget	9,997,122	12%	4,725,273	3,759,772	974,183	364,894	-	177.29

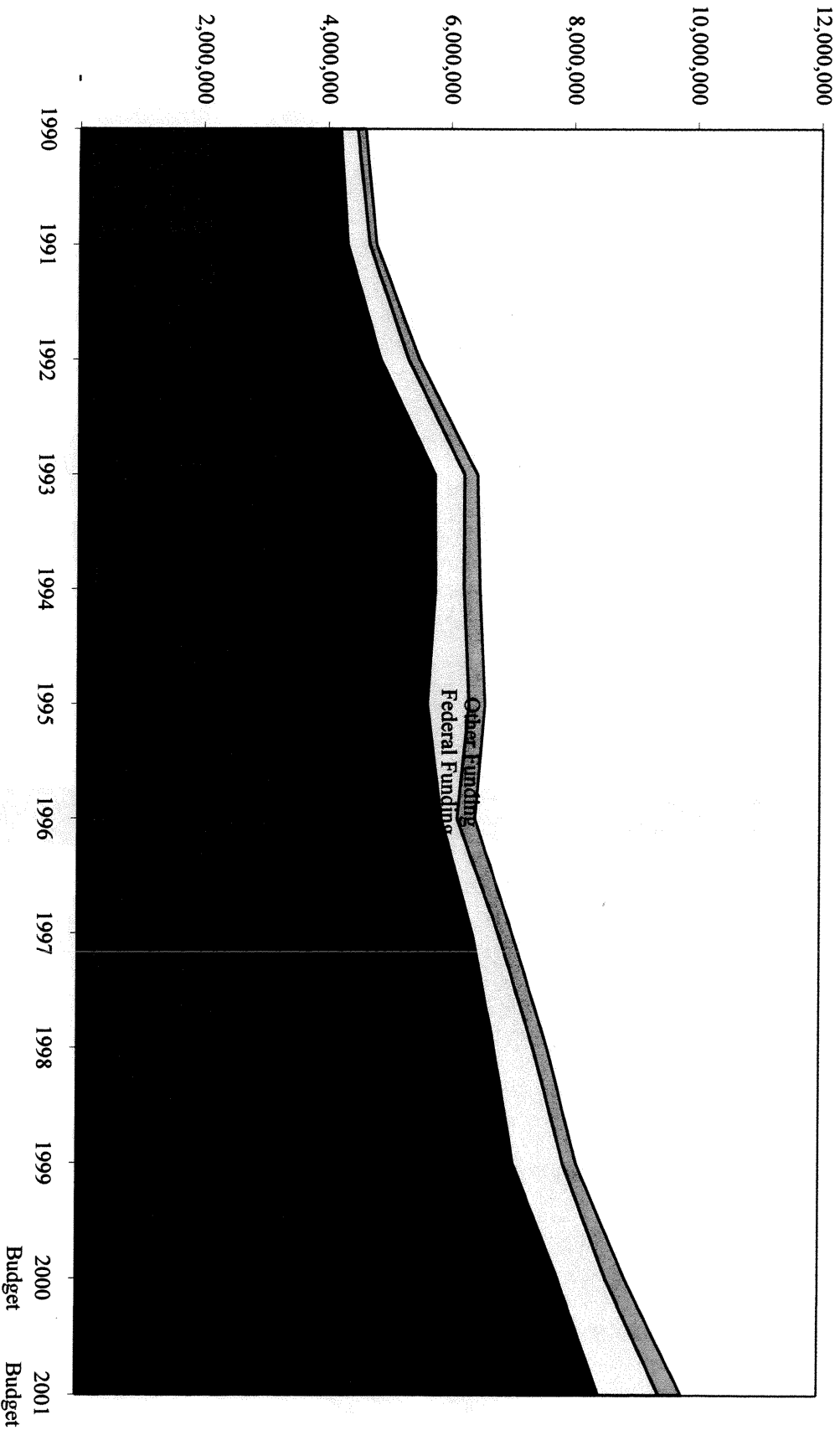
* - Information provided by Human Resources Director

Twelve Year CDEB Program Costs

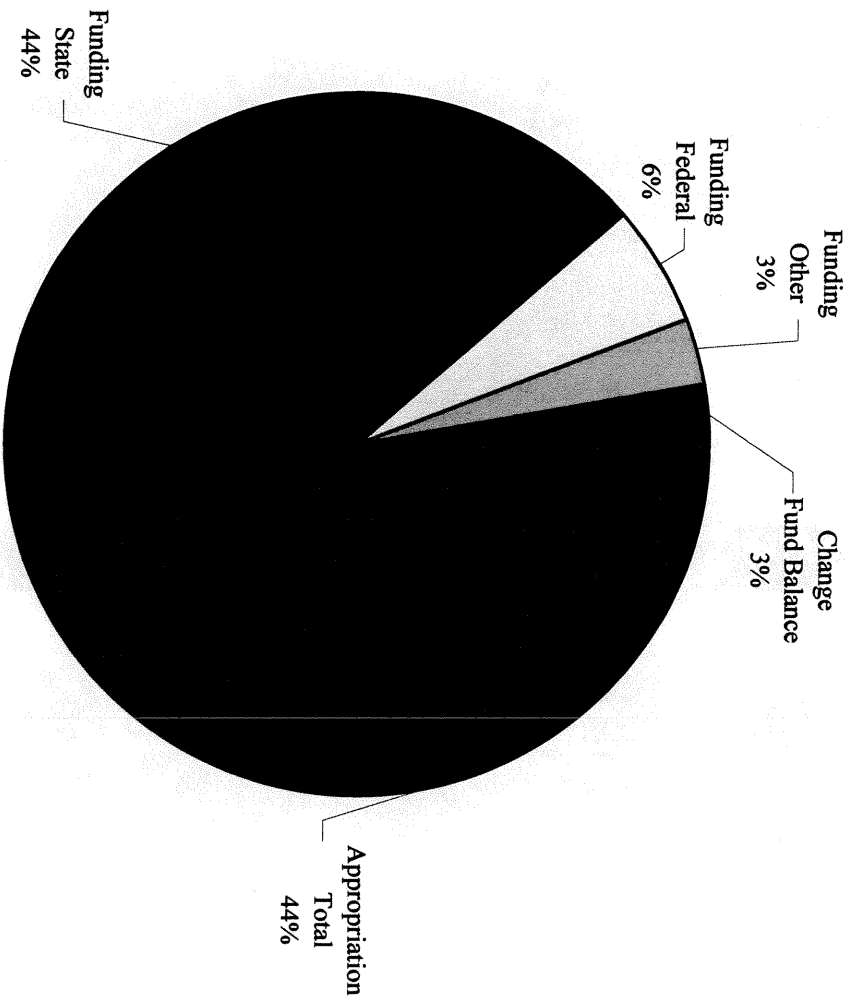


■ Total CDEB Budget

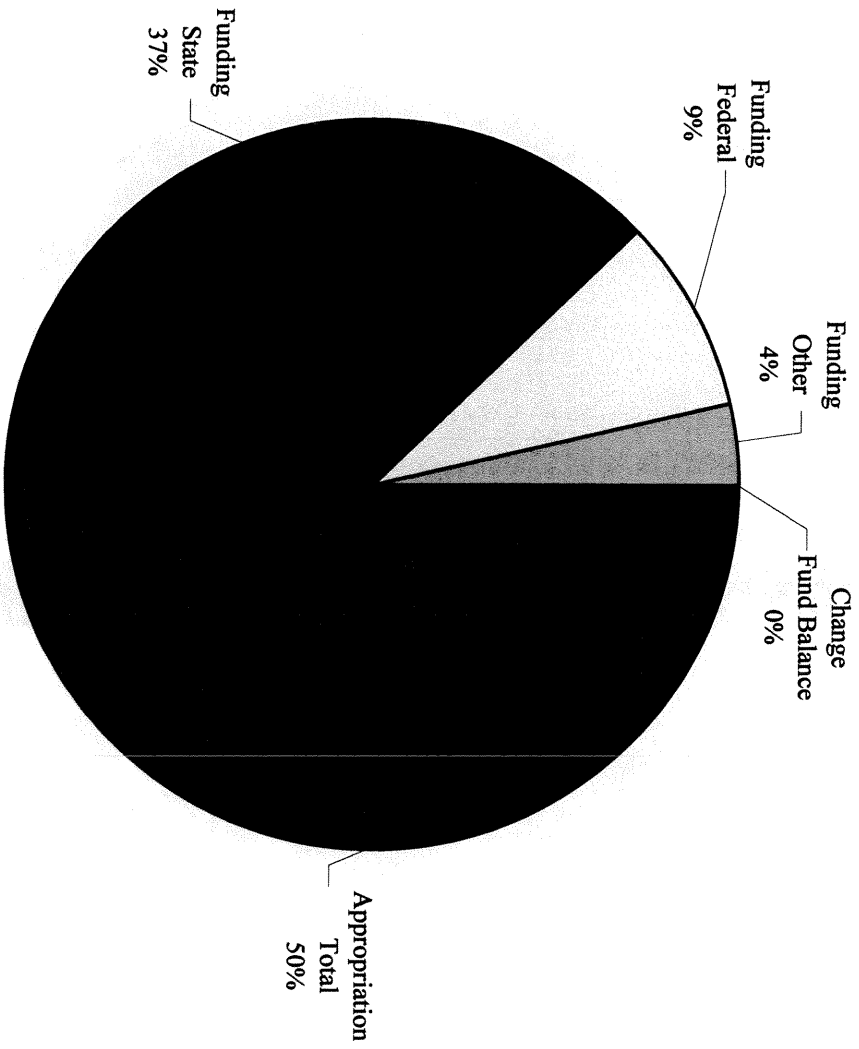
Children With Disabilities Education Board Funding Sources



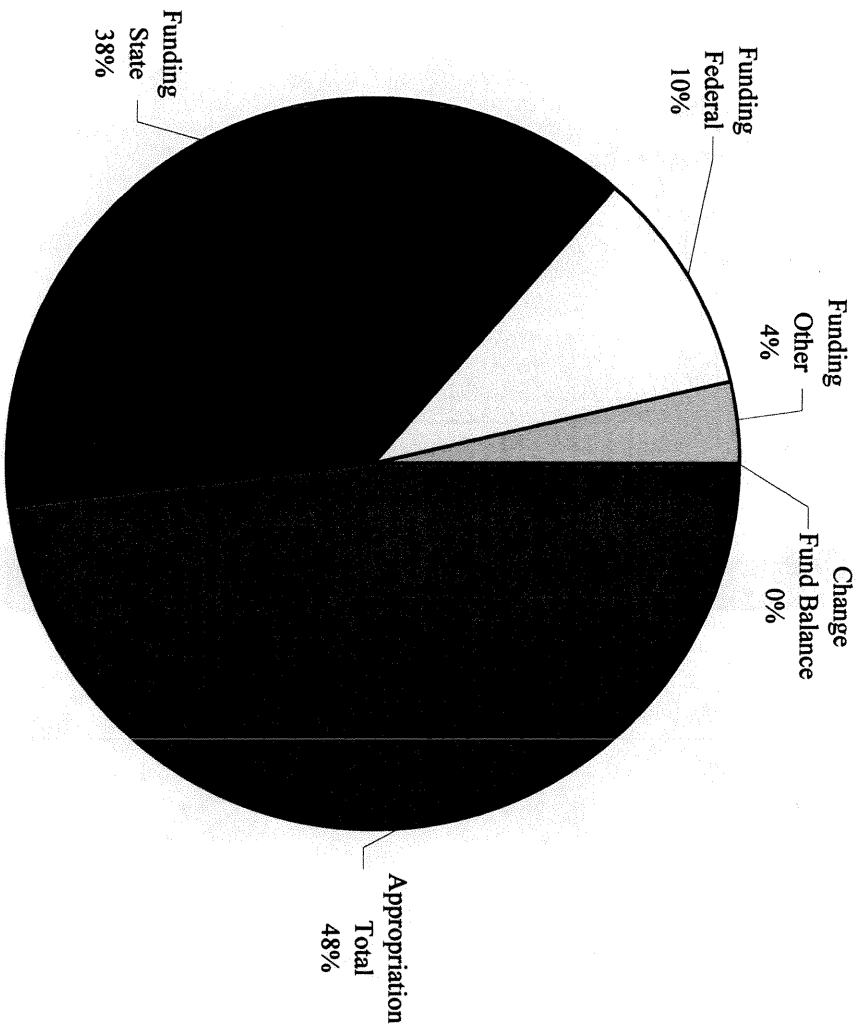
Children With Disabilities Education Board 1990 Funding Activity



Children With Disabilities Education Board Budgeted 2000 Funding Activity

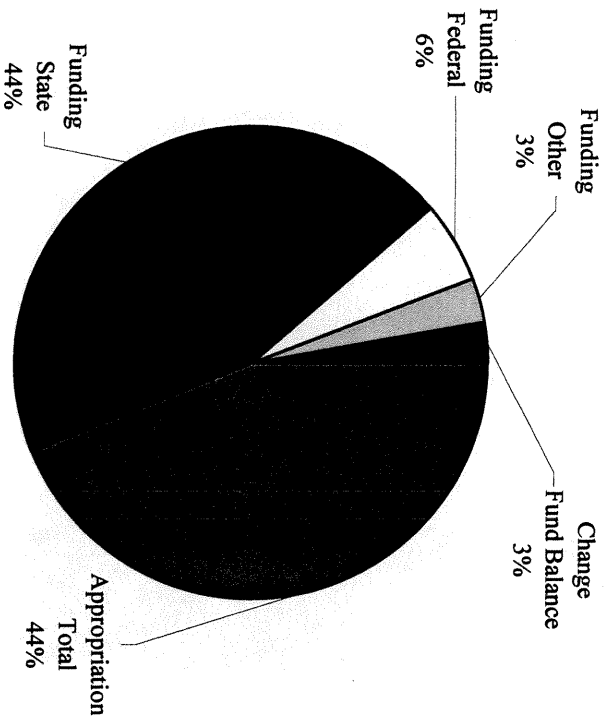


Children With Disabilities Education Board Budgeted 2001 Funding Activity

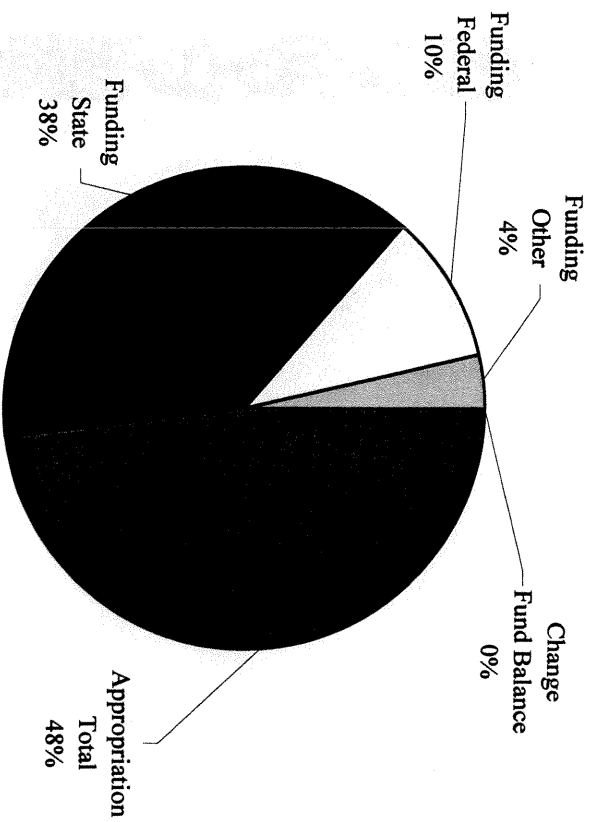


Children With Disabilities Education Board Comparison of 1990 Funding Activity to Budgeted 2000 Funding Activity

1990 Funding Activity

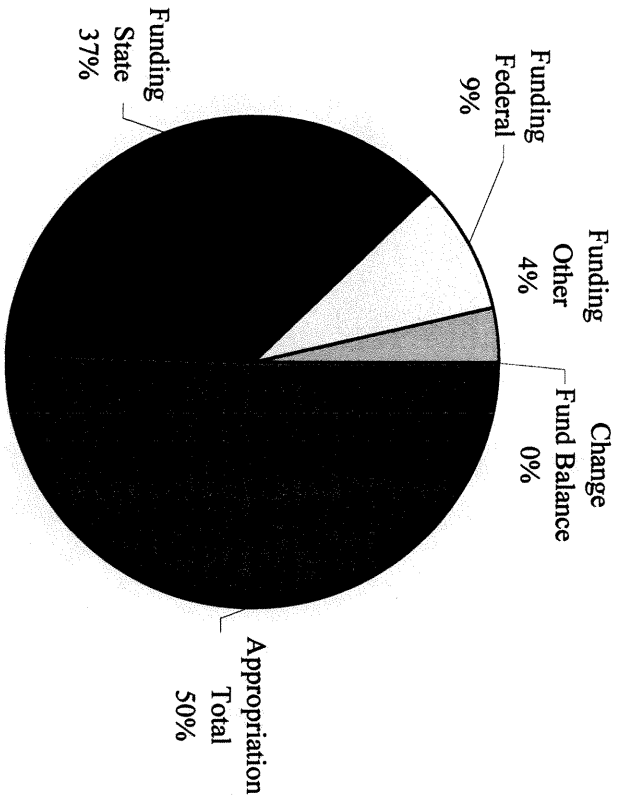


2001 Funding Activity

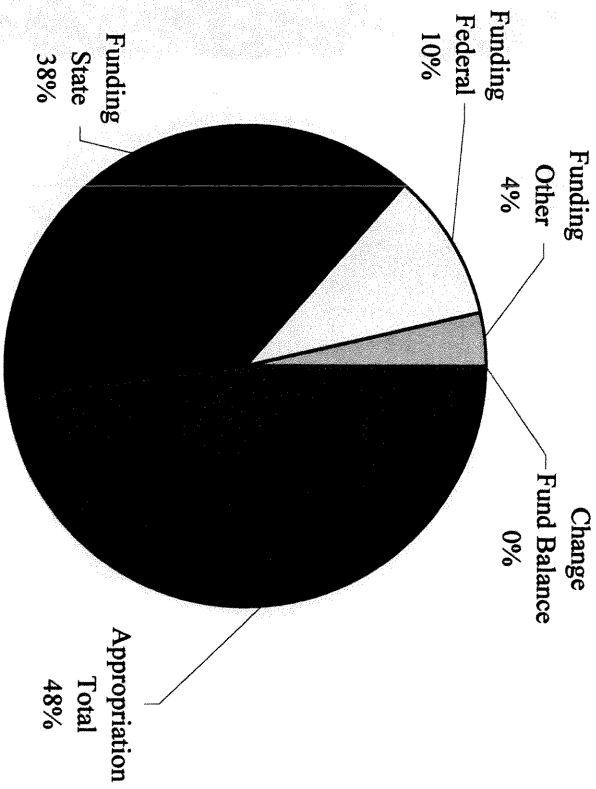


Children With Disabilities Education Board
Comparison of 2000 Funding Activity to Budgeted 2001 Funding Activity

2000 Funding Activity



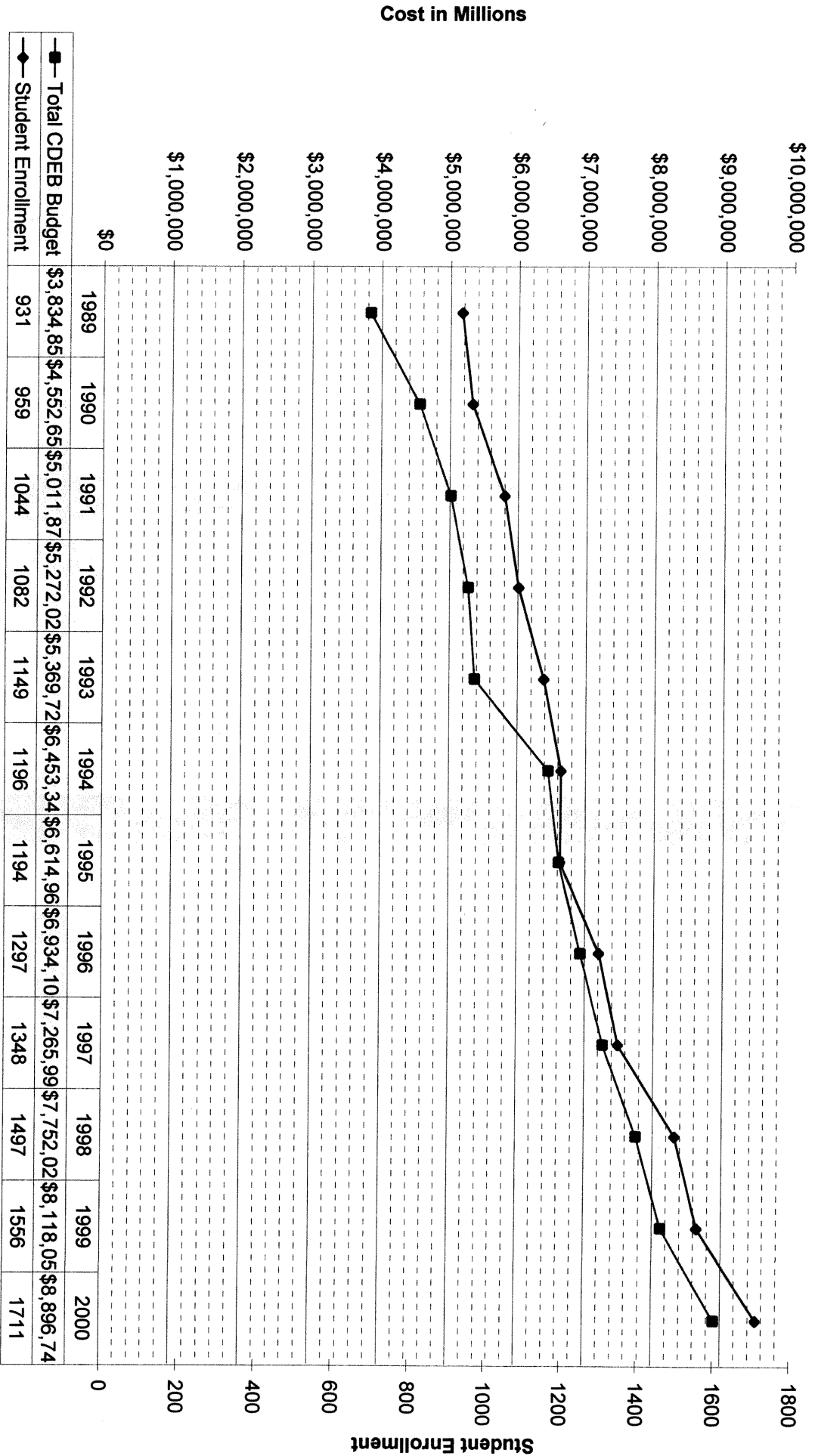
2001 Funding Activity



Program Costs for Walworth County Children with Disabilities Education Board
1989 - 2000

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Total CDEB Budget	\$3,834,858	\$4,552,651	\$5,011,871	\$5,272,029	\$5,369,729	\$6,453,341	\$6,614,963	\$6,934,106	\$7,265,990	\$7,752,021	\$8,118,059	\$8,896,740
Student Enrollment	931	959	1044	1082	1149	1196	1194	1297	1348	1497	1556	1711
% of County Allocation	42.4%	44.2%	45.0%	46.2%	46.3%	52.5%	52.5%	53.2%	54.5%	54.5%	53.0%	50.60%
School FTE Staff	104.23	118.10	124.18	129.95	131.98	135.98	139.07	140.23	145.29	152.13	172.88	

Twelve Year CDEB Program Costs with Student Enrollment





by
Joseph H. Quick

Paying for Special Education: A Crisis in Our Schools

Because of the lack of adequate funding for special education by the state and federal governments, school districts are being pushed to the wall financially, the author says. And increasingly, regular education parents are being pitted against special education parents.

In some respects, Robyn Silber is just like any concerned mother who is working to ensure the best for her children. In the last two years, however, Silber has stepped up her advocacy. Clutching a framed portrait of her son Max, a first-grade, special education student in Madison, and third-grade daughter, Hannah, she has walked the halls of the state Capitol meeting with legislators, testified before the budget-writing Joint Finance Committee and gave a personal, impassioned plea to US Rep. Tammy Baldwin—please, help us.

"It's simple to think of funding—or not funding—a program as just numbers on a balance sheet," Silber told Baldwin at a meeting in Madison attended by parents, school board members, teachers, and school administrators in the 2nd Congressional District. "Inadequate funding of special education places all children at risk by denying them equal access to a quality education. Districts and teachers are being asked to do more with less money. I realize that one of the most important things I can give my children is an education. However, I cannot achieve that goal without your continued commitment to making public education in Wisconsin work for Wisconsin's kids."

Funding special education has reached a crisis point in Wisconsin, many school board members and educators say. The lack of funding for the state and federally mandated programs and services, exacerbated by state-imposed revenue limits, has pushed school districts to the wall. It has become a matter of what must be cut from the local budget in order to pay for the required programs. Increasingly, regular education parents are pitted against special education parents—all fighting for finite resources.

The erosion of resources for special education has been dramatic, given the fact that the state pours more than \$4 billion into K-12 education each year. While equalized aid has increased, categorical aid—which funds special education programs and services—had been frozen from 1994 until the passage of the 1999-01 biennial budget. The result is a radical departure from Wisconsin's historical commitment to special education.

Since the 1930s Wisconsin has funded special education through categorical aids. In the 1970s the Wisconsin Legislature was the first state to adopt laws governing special education programs and



La Follette High School special education teacher Jessica Steuer works with Reid Gromnicki during a writing skills class. La Follette uses a cross-categorical teaching model, meaning that teachers work with a variety of students, regardless of the student's disability. (Photos by the author)

services. In fact, the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is modeled after Wisconsin's statutes. During the last decade special education enrollments have grown steadily, while the general school population is in decline for more than half of the state's school districts. This reality has been disastrous.

Legislative Audit Report

In May 1999, the independent Legislative Audit Bureau released an evaluation of special education funding. The audit meticulously detailed the funding fiasco of the 1990s. When Congress passed IDEA, it authorized reimbursing states for 40 percent of costs for programs and services. In 1997-98 Wisconsin's reimbursement was less than 5 percent, or \$42.4 million—a funding shortfall of \$282.8 million.

Correspondingly, state statutes directed the Legislature to reimburse school districts for 63 percent of costs (a statutory target eliminated in the 1999-01 biennial budget). But because of a legislative nuance called "sum certain" funding, when there isn't enough money to reimburse at 63 percent, the available

resources are prorated. (Funding two-thirds the cost of general aids to schools is a "sum sufficient" appropriation, meaning the allocation totals whatever amount it takes to fund two-thirds.)

For the 1997-98 school year the state reimbursement rate was 37.5 percent, or \$275.5 million—a funding shortfall of \$219.7 million. Combined, the state and federal shortfall amounted to more than one-half billion dollars, or \$502.5 million.

A news release issued by the governor's office the week the state budget was signed said, "While special education is a federal mandate under-funded by Washington, the governor is agreeing to additional state money to help local school districts meet the needs of these students." The \$47 million in new spending for special education came as welcome relief for school districts, but it still only allowed for an estimated 34 percent reimbursement rate.

In 1998, both houses of the Legislature voted to federalize Wisconsin's special education laws (1997 Senate Bill 384). The measure passed both houses on a voice vote—generally reserved for agreed-upon bills—and was signed by the governor.

Enrollment Increases

The audit also identified a 20 percent increase in special education enrollments between 1992-98—compared to a 6.3 percent increase for all public school students. In large part, the growth came from an expansion of special education criteria by the state and federal governments. While special education enrollments are increasing, more than half of Wisconsin's school districts are seeing downward trends in overall enrollment, really putting the squeeze on districts.

To illustrate the increase, during the 1995-96 school year, the Madison School District served six autistic children. The total after the January 2000 count was 158. The audit also touched a nerve related to identification of special education students—especially learning disabled students.

"... Some disability and needs criteria are based on student performance and personal judgment, rather than on a clinical diagnosis. In addition, members of the education community believe the availability of state categorical aid for special education creates an incentive for districts to place students in special education rather than to develop remedial regular education programs that could address some students' needs," the audit stated.

A report by the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance, following up on the audit, highlighted the over-identification issue. The alliance's report drew a swift, stinging rebuke from WASB Executive Director Ken Cole. "My God, give us a little credit," he said. "Do they think we're making these things up?" The allegation gave some cover for legislators reluctant to boost spending.

At a Senate Education Committee hearing in February, Sen. Mary Lazich (R-New Berlin) remarked that there is over-identification of learning disabled students. Paul Halverson, special assistant to the state superintendent and a recognized expert on special education, was emphatic: "There is no incentive for school districts to identify children for special education."

A Parent's Perspective

Cynthia Hirsch, 59, is no stranger to the rough and tumble world of politics. After her daughter's tragic death, she worked with legislators to pass a state law easing the ability of grandparents to adopt their grandchildren. She spoke at news conferences, conducted media interviews, and testified at public hearings to tell her personal story. But when she testified before the Senate Education committee in February, supporting Senate Bill 342, a reinstatement of the state's 63 percent statutory special education reimbursement rate target, she lost her composure and broke down in tears.

"This bill is about children, and for me, about a 9-year old girl—to give her hope for the future."

When Hirsch began her fight to improve Wisconsin's adoption laws, she admits, "I didn't know a senator from a congressman. But you've got to be politically involved to get things done." Shortly after adopting granddaughter Randi, then 18 months old, she soon realized something was not right. Her husband, Roger, was already on permanent disability, and she had to quit her job to care for Randi.

Living on a fixed-income, the Hirsches have spent more than \$12,000 for testing, tutoring, special classes, and increased insurance expenses to help Randi. "We were desperate," she recalls. Cynthia also attended Johnson Creek School Board meetings.

"I needed to understand the school's perspective," she said. Now, she realizes the plight school districts face. "It's every school district. There is one big issue. It all comes back to funds. You can't believe the tension it causes. I know what our school's finances are ... the money's just not there," Hirsch says ruefully. She recounts a situation after the district's gifted and talented program was eliminated and a friend said, "Oh, those [special education] kids get the money first."

"I don't resent parents for saying this," Hirsch said, but adds, "I can't in good

conscience ask for what's in Randi's [Individualized Education Plan]. The current situation puts a parent in a position that if you push too hard, you run into hostility [from other parents] and teachers who resent you."

The Hirsches drive third-grader Randi to the UW-Whitewater's Communicative Disorder Clinic twice a week after school. The district agreed to pay the \$200-per-semester fee and transportation costs. "In a way, I'm selfish for doing this. I'm just trying to find the best way to help my daughter," Cynthia Hirsch says.

Superintendent's Task Force

In March 1998, State Superintendent John Benson appointed a task force to examine special education funding. The 20-member group represented specific special education constituencies, advocacy groups, and legislators. The charge was to find a better way to fund special education. After several months of intense scrutiny, the group issued a set of recommendations.

A key recommendation suggested changing the current categorical aid formula by directing the aid to first pay

for "high cost" students. The committee defined a "high cost" student as one whose educational costs exceed three times the average cost of regular education. The recommendation supported funding 90 percent of the additional costs.

The task force was unable to estimate the affect on categorical aid because there is no reliable information on the number or cost of "high cost" students by district or statewide. There is no record from the committee of how to develop a uniform, statewide costing system to ensure fairness in aid distribution—a sticky, practical problem.

The committee also recommended distributing the remaining categorical aid as follows: 40 percent based on each district's relative proportion of school districts' total student population; 40 percent based on each district's relative proportion of total special education enrollments; 10 percent based on the district's relative proportion of total students who qualify for free or reduced priced meals; and 10 percent distributed to school districts with 1,000 or fewer students in a proportionate manner. ▶



Tyler Roberts, a special education student, hits the drums during La Follette's Jazz Band practice. Tyler is also the drummer for the school's marching band.



Special education aide Deb Beckwith guides La Follette student Marcus Offerdahl during shop class. La Follette's inclusion program combines regular and special education students in its classes.

The task force also recommended an increase in funding and allowing districts to exceed the revenue caps to fund the mandated programs and services. "The combination of stagnant special education funding, increasing identification rates and costs and revenue caps is a politically explosive mix," the report offered. To date, there has been little more than further discussion of the task force's recommendations. The recommendations were not offered as part of Benson's 1999-01 budget requests to the governor in September 1998.

Alternatives

Halverson, Benson's special assistant, said there are two directions to go related to special education. Clearly, funding is an issue, but appropriate identification of special education students could help, somewhat, to alleviate the funding dilemma. "We do believe there is some over-identification of special education students. If we can intervene to stop, moderate, or reverse enrollment trends, that will be the key," he said.

"There is so much data that shows special education referral rates are different across school districts. This is not a knock on teachers. It's our collective responsibility to make sure teachers have the skills to teach reading and math in the primary grades. Systemic staff development is the key," he said. "When we reduce the number of inappropriate referrals, we help kids and we help taxpayers."

Halverson suggested that a program like SAGE, which reduces K-3 classes to 15 or fewer students, might be part of the solution. With intensive, one-on-one teacher-student time, there conceivably could be fewer referrals for learning disabilities. The Legislative Audit Bureau report indicated that one-half of the growth in special education came from the learning disabled category.

Halverson said the DPI is using \$1 million in IDEA funds for a special education research project entitled Reading Evaluation and Demonstration of Success, or READS. The primary purpose, according to the DPI, is to focus on

children with disabilities and children at risk of being identified as disabled. Grants will be distributed to schools that have project advisory committees including a parent, regular and special education teachers, a reading specialist, the building principal, and others.

The DPI hopes that research gleaned from the grant will "impact on how special education is conceptualized. We believe that in the future, special education will focus more directly on children who are truly disabled rather than children who have been inappropriately identified as disabled due to ineffective instruction."

Madison Superintendent Art Rainwater recently wrote a column for daily newspapers highlighting the plight of districts that are grappling with funding special education. He called for a Legislative Council study to comprehensively review special education funding in Wisconsin.

The Legislative Council is a non-partisan legislative service agency that conducts in-depth research on select issues to prepare legislation for the session commencing after the fall elections. Committees are composed of legislators and public members. In February, the Senate Education Committee unanimously agreed to recommend a Legislative Council Study on special education. Decisions on Legislative Council studies are generally made in the spring.

Halverson believes changes in special education—both funding and programmatic—are essential and inevitable. But he admonishes, "Before we jump into something new, let's be sure we know what we have." ■

Quick is the legislative liaison for the Madison Metropolitan School District.

Special ed needs review

By Art Rainwater
Guest Columnist

The approval of a \$47 million increase for special education in the 1999-2001 biennial budget was welcome relief for school districts. However, despite the hefty increase, local districts will still only be reimbursed for about 34 percent of the costs for the mandated programs and services. Several key questions still remain about funding special education and the Legislature needs to seriously consider an overhaul of special education financing.

In May of 1999 the nonpartisan Legislative Audit Bureau released a report detailing special education costs in Wisconsin. Its analysis clearly indicated that special education is severely underfunded by both the state and federal governments. In the 1970s Congress authorized reimbursing states at 40 percent of program costs. Last year the federal government's outlay to Wisconsin was less than 5 percent.

Prior to passage of the budget last October, state statutes required districts to be reimbursed for 63 percent of costs—for the 1997-98 school year the reimbursement rate was 31 percent. (The state budget eliminated the 63 percent reimbursement rate from statutes.) Combined, the state and federal reimbursement shortfall to districts in Wisconsin amounted to \$502.5 million, according to the audit bureau report.

The audit also showed the tremendous growth in special education enrollment statewide between 1992-1998. In large part, the nearly 20 percent increase is due to expansion of special education criteria by the state and federal governments that opened the door to increased enrollment. About 12.5 percent of Wisconsin's students are in special education programs, slightly below the national average of 12.7 percent.

The audit stated that, "some disability and needs criteria are based on student performance and personal judgment, rather than on a clinical diagnosis," speculating that districts over-identify students for special education in hopes of receiving more financial aid. This serious allegation must be addressed. If it is happening, it must stop. But anecdotes and conjecture will not remedy the problem, if it indeed exists.

A news release issued by the governor's office the

Special education expenses affect all students.

week the state budget was signed said, "While special education is a federal mandate underfunded by Washington, the governor is agreeing to additional state money to help local school districts meet the needs of these students."

The original federal special education laws crafted in the 1970s were modeled after Wisconsin's. In fact, the state has always been a pioneer in the special education arena. Both houses of the Wisconsin Legislature voted to federalize Wisconsin's special education laws in 1998. The measure passed both houses on a voice vote—generally reserved for agreed upon bills—and was signed by the governor.

Special education expenses affect all students. Mandated programs are the first draw when school budgets are developed. State-imposed revenue limits restrict the amount of revenue school districts are allowed to raise from taxpayers. So regular education students have textbooks with outdated information, routine maintenance is forestalled to save money and extracurriculars are cut.

In even-numbered years, the nonpartisan Legislative Council conducts in-depth research on select issues to prepare legislation for the session commencing after the fall elections. Special education funding is ripe for overhaul and the issues should be reviewed.

Over-identification of special education students, funding high-cost, low-incidence students (such as those with autism) and determining the state's role in funding these mandated programs and services are just a few of the issues that need scrutiny. Our goal must be to develop a genuine federal-state-local partnership. This funding dilemma must be resolved—for the sake of all of Wisconsin's children.

Art Rainwater is the superintendent of Madison Public Schools.