



SCHOOL DISTRICT OF BARABOO

423 Linn Street
Baraboo, WI 53913
(608) 355-3950 · Fax (608) 355-3919



To: 2018 Legislative Council Study Committee on the Investment and Use of the School Trust Funds
From: Doug Mering Baraboo School Board
Date: August 16, 2018

Thank you members of the 2018 Legislative Council Study Committee on the Investment and Use of the School Trust Funds for allowing me to testify in favor of the Common School Fund. I am member of the Baraboo School Board and our community and board are very committed to our school libraries. Note we have recently built and been using a 21st learning space for one of our elementary media centers for the last 3 years. We are just completing a library media center in our high school which I believe will be one of the top school libraries in the state. These were parts of two referendums which were passed in our Baraboo School District Community. I have also attached a copy of a recently unanimously passed resolution by our board in favor of the Common School Fund passed that was a reaction to proposed bills that were put forward before the legislature.

We have just completed many public meetings around the state for the Blue Ribbon Commission on School Funding. I have discussed this with two members of that commission and not once during any of those meetings did anybody bring up any

issues regarding the Common School Fund. It is working well and this is definitely a case of do no harm and if it is not broke don't fix it!

a) The current procedures have been highly effective in aiding the students of our schools. We have the flexibility in justifying the purchases we needed to make.

Technology purchasing has seen a great deal of change throughout the last 10 years yet the district and DPI have never been an obstacle in our Media Specialists pursuit of the materials and services we have needed for our students. The oversight provided has only asked that we justify the need for any purchases we have requested that fell into the grey area of what may or may not be specifically authorized. Most recently, the purchase of a build your own computer called "Piper Rasberry Pi Computer" was authorized with Common School Fund money. It is a learning tool that goes beyond just the functions of a typical computer. The students assemble the pieces and then program the buttons to make the computer more usable. This is done with the guidance of the software that comes with the computer.

b) The high school library is fortunate enough to have a small amount of funds budgeted to cover the cost of materials not eligible for Common School purchases. It is used to purchase repair materials, furniture, promotional resources, and occasional requests from teachers of students. If it were the only source of funds available we would lose the majority of our digital resources and not be able to afford more than one book order per year. This is especially true in regards to eBooks which are much more expensive than print. The number of eBooks we are currently able to order

meets the needs of our students and staff but without the Common School Fund we would be forced to limit the amount of both print and digital books available for both leisure reading and research materials.

The amount the District receives from the Common School Fund (also known as Library Aid) is a significant amount to assist the District with expenditures in the school district's library programs. These expenditures include library books, instructional media and computers, and other related software/licenses associated with the school district's libraries. We have provided historical data displaying the amount of Library Aid the District has received the past 4 years.

DESCRIPTION	2014-15 ACTUALS	2015-16 ACTUALS	2016-17 ACTUALS	2017-18 ACTUAL
	\$	\$	\$	\$
Library Aid	119,023.00	131,189.00	115,091.00	128,448.00

As you can see, if the Common School Fund went away or was repurposed, it would cause a considerable hardship for the District to fund the needs of our libraries.

The amount of the Library Aid is determined by the number of residents ages 4-20 reported on the District's annual census count as of June 30th of each year. The annual distributed amount is determined by the total census reported by all school districts in order to determine the amount per child. Then the annual distribution of

earnings from the Common School Fund is based off each district's resident census count and the per child amount. The funding is received annually in April.

c) The District has experienced positive borrowing through the State Trust Fund Loan Program (i.e. administration building (\$662,000) and 2016 referendum (\$1,960,000)). There is a loan application process to determine eligibility. The BCPL State Trust Fund Loan Program are used typically for three types of public purposes:

- School repairs and improvements including building renovations and the installation of energy-efficient heating and lighting systems.
- Local infrastructure projects including roads, town halls, airports, sewer systems and wastewater facilities, trucks, and emergency vehicles.
- Local economic development through Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) districts and downtown revitalization projects.

Eligible borrowers include counties, cities, villages, towns, technical college districts, metropolitan sewerage districts, town sanitary districts, public inland lake protection and rehabilitation districts, and drainage districts.

The loans consists of the average paperwork procedures associated with borrowing. The ability to pre-pay is available and the loan interest rates are comparable (maybe slightly lower) than other lending institutions.

d) Our Media Specialists prefer the fund to be used in a more conservative investment strategy. The amount we receive is sufficient and are rarely left with not enough to get what we need. If there were years of "boom and bust", the uncertainty would only

lead to less efficient uses of the money throughout the year. Knowing that we can count on a similar size fund enables our resources to be more stable and predictable. This gives students comfort and trust in using our physical and digital sources as a primary support for their learning. They are much less likely to invest their time and effort into school resources if they experience changes in what is available. At a time where they can get a great deal of information from other sources it is especially important for libraries to be consistent and predictable. Once they have a trusting relationship with libraries they start to experience the benefits that come with the scholarly sources that are peer reviewed and free of advertisements and company agendas.

As far as the question regarding if the Common School Fund should invest in stocks and bonds, this is a decision the larger pool of constituents can debate. There are always risks associated with these strategies which can potentially lead to higher rates of return.

Overall, the Common School Fund (Library Aid) has benefited public education for many, many years. It would be devastating for school districts if this aid went away or was repurposed.

Sincerely,



Doug Mering

Email: dmering@barabooschools.net

pH: 1-608-434-7968



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(608) 355-3950 · Fax (608) 355-3919



SCHOOL DISTRICT OF BARABOO BOARD OF EDUCATION RESOLUTION

Common School Fund Baraboo Board of Education Opposition to Senate Bill 713 and Assembly Bill 857

WHEREAS, the State Senate and Assembly members have introduced legislation to end the use of Common School Fund to finance school library purchases in our state; and

WHEREAS, the School District of Baraboo Board of Education's mission is to strive for excellence to ensure that every learner is successful in an evolving world. The School District of Baraboo Board of Education opposes Senate Bill 713 and Assembly Bill 857 because it is contrary to that mission for the following reasons:

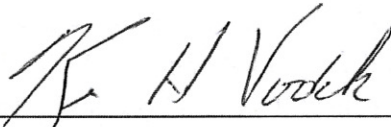
- SB713 and AB857 would end the only dedicated source of school library funding in our state.
- The current regulations protect how Common School Fund money is spent that ensures equitable access to learning materials for all staff and students in our public schools.
- Librarians use the money to nurture a love of reading and learning. They make informed selections based on their intimate understandings of what their students want and need. They fill their shelves with books that excite and inspire students. Many of these students come from low income families and have barriers to public library resources.
- The money is also used to purchase digital tools that give schools access to reliable information for research. If school libraries couldn't provide these, students would rely on websites that are often biased, commercialized, and/or not intended for educational research. In order for our schools to develop critical thinking, informed citizens, ready for today's workforce, they need these quality digital resources.
- Wisconsin schools benefit from having Common School Fund money used exclusively in their libraries. The books, ebooks, newspapers, periodicals, web-based resources, and other tools purchased are curated to ensure they are appropriate and easily accessible to all students and staff.
- The current Common School Fund structure works and has provided many years of benefit to the Baraboo School District's libraries and our students. We also

believe that this bill is in violation of how the framers of the Wisconsin Constitution intended the Common School Fund should be set up.

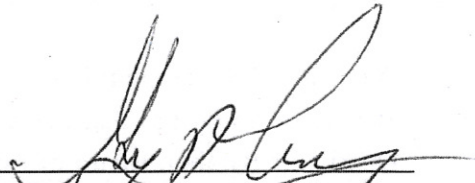
- The Baraboo Board of Education opposes Senate Bill 713 and Assembly Bill 857 which endangers future generations of students who will lack access to quality school libraries and the foundation of our education will corrode along with our citizen's critical thinking and love of learning.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the School District of Baraboo Board of Education calls on Governor Walker, the Wisconsin State Senate, and Wisconsin State Assembly to oppose this legislation, which is not in the best interest of current or future residents of the State of Wisconsin.

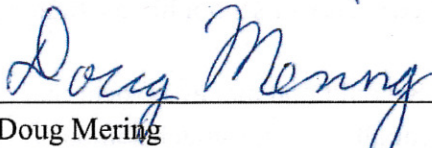
Adopted, approved and recorded February 12, 2018.



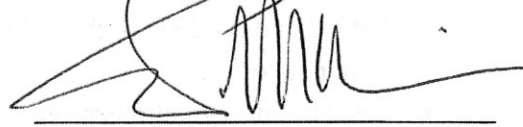
Kevin Vodak
Board of Education President



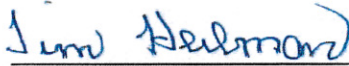
Gary Cummings
Board of Education Clerk



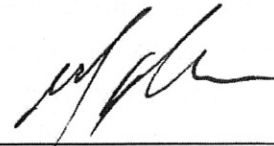
Doug Mering
Board of Education Vice-President



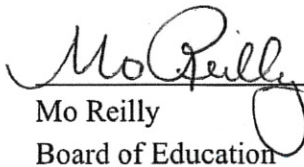
Sean McNevin
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Mo Reilly
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