

April 22, 2015 Number 16

Even small ads get attention!

CANBY NEWS · 507-223-5303

LETTER TO EDITOR

Dear Editor,

With a projected \$1.9 billion budget surplus on the horizon for the next biennium, Gov. Dayton and the Legislature have an opportunity to right many past wrongs by adequately funding public education this session.

In order to meet the basic needs of Minnesota's public schools, the Legislature must add at least three percent increase on the general education funding formula.

The general education funding formula is the core, the mission, and the bread and butter for the school districts' finances. The formula can't be ignored and should not be underfunded. Now that we have a budget surplus, the time is now to reinvest. The general formula is fair and treats all students as valuable. The formula demonstrates our respect for the teaching profession. The formula authentically respects the long-term commitment of school board members and gives schools the most flexibility to meet student needs.

Article XIII of the Minnesota Constitution states that the Legislature must provide funding to "secure a thorough and efficient system of public schools throughout the state." For 11 of

the past 13 years, the legislature has not done that, as increases to the state's general funding formula was less than inflation.

Despite having a sizable surplus, the Legislature has come up woefully short with their budget targets for education funding this session. The House's current target of \$157 million doesn't even allow a one percent increase in the funding formula. The Senate's \$350 million target also falls below three percent. And though Gov. Dayton's \$695 million target is wonderful, he has proposed only a one percent increase to the funding formula in each year of the next biennium.

Let's not send education backward with inadequate funding. Instead, let's invest in every school district, every school and every student equally and fairly.

If Legislature spends one percent or less on the education funding formula, our schools will see widespread teacher cuts, fewer high school electives, increased class sizes, less technology for students, larger achievement gaps, less access to support personnel such as guidance counselors and/or social workers, and additional operating levy referendums that

put more burden on taxpayers.

For Canby Independent School District #891, a one percent general education formula increase for FY '16 would amount to \$38,869 and a one percent plus one percent increase for FY '17 would amount to \$79,371. These proposed increases over the next two years do not even come close to covering inflationary costs of utilities, maintenance and repairs, insurance, textbooks and supplies, etc. The school district will be faced with some very difficult decisions including, but not limited to, staffing, program offerings, extra-curricular activities, purchasing, and travel.

Underfunding education is short-sighted and short-changes our students and the future of our state. Urge our legislators to make a positive impact on our children. Urge them to make at least a three percent increase on the general education funding formula. To contact area legislators, go to <http://www.leg.state.mn.us/leg/legislators.aspx>.

Sincerely,
Superintendent
Laura K. Schuster
Canby Independent
School District #891



Week of April 20, 2015

State Education Funding

With a projected \$1.9 billion budget surplus on the horizon for the next biennium, Governor Dayton and the legislature have an opportunity to adequately fund public education this session. School Districts across the state believe that in order to meet the basic needs of Minnesota's public schools, the legislature must add at least three percent increase on the general education funding formula.

The general education funding formula is the core for school districts' finances. The general formula is fair and treats all students as valuable. The formula gives schools the most flexibility to meet student needs.

Article XIII of the Minnesota Constitution states that the legislature must provide funding to "secure a thorough and efficient system of public schools throughout the state." For 11 of the past 13 years, the legislature has not done that, as increases to the state's general funding formula was less than inflation.

Despite having a sizable surplus, the legislature has come up short with their budget targets for education funding this session. The House's current target of \$157 million doesn't even allow a 1 percent increase in the funding formula. The Senate's \$350 million target also falls below 3 percent. And though Governor Dayton's \$695 million target is wonderful, he has proposed only a 1 percent increase to the funding formula in each year of the next biennium.

In a few weeks, our District will be placing a number of staff on a proposed Unrequested Leave of Absence (ULA) and probationary termination list. The reason is because of the uncertainty of the size of state funding increase for next year. We are projecting an increase in expenses of 3 percent and currently, the state legislature's funding proposal is at a 1 percent increase. The District's general fund reserve is not sufficient to absorb a 2% growth in expenditures.

Please urge our legislators to make a positive impact on our children. Urge them to make at least a 3 percent increase on the general education funding formula.