

# Caledonia Area Public Schools

Independent School District 299, Caledonia, MN 55921

Learning Today – Leading Tomorrow

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4/24/2015

Rep. Greg Davids  
585 State Office Building  
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Rep. Davids:

I am writing in regards to the Education Plan for Minnesota School Districts. I work for the Caledonia Area Public Schools. Since the beginning of the year, we have been working on projecting our budget for the 2015-16 school year. Initially, the talk of school funding was pretty good in light of the 1.9 billion dollar budget surplus. However, as time marched on, the outlook has become grimmer. The more recent talks of the House and Senate bills looks like schools will be lucky to get even a 1&1 on the formula. I wanted to let you know what that would mean for our district.

A 1% increase for our district next year would be approximately \$42,000 additional revenue. To give you some perspective on what we are looking at, a 1% salary increase on just our teachers' salary (with steps and lane changes) will be \$95,878.80. That doesn't even talk about an increase for any of the other staff, such as food services, custodial, office, etc. Then we have our insurance rate increases (health, liability, workers comp), the additional work for Affordable Care Act (ACA) and having to offer insurance coverage to more staff because of the ACA requirements. The \$22,195 we receive for the new Teacher/Principal evaluation process doesn't even cover the cost of the work required for it. We are not a Q Comp district and therefore, not able to receive the additional revenue available to those districts, but the work requirements are nearly the same. The kindergarten free breakfast program was SUPPOSED to be FREE when in fact, districts get reimbursed \$1.58 for a kindergarten breakfast but a reimbursement for a free/reduced breakfast is \$1.93. That's \$.35 per breakfast the districts has to cover the cost of. We have a transportation contract up for bid and hope that it will not be more than a 1% increase. We are unsure at what point our utility rates will increase and the list goes on and on.

Over the years we have made drastic cuts to our programs and staff. We've been fortunate to have approval of one-day bonds from our local taxpayers the last several years. I don't know where our district would be sitting right now without that. We would most definitely be on the cusp of statutory operating deficit.

We've done some neat things and continue to move forward with other initiative for our students. Over the last couple years we've enacted a one to one iPad program that by next year will cover all 4<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders. We are implementing a Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) as a proactive approach to behavior supports to achieve social, emotional and academic success. We are starting to us the Understanding by Design tool to focus on "teaching for understanding". We have started a Lego League and moving into Robotics. We are creating classrooms with a different design layouts to create a more hands on learning environment. The list goes on and on.

It's an exciting time in education, but we need the funding to keep this initiative moving forward. We hear talk about support for education, but without the funding, it will be extremely difficult to continue everything we have started AND to create the WORLDS BEST WORKFORCE. Please help initiate a substantial increase in the education formula so our educational system can become the envy of other states. Thank you very much for your support, time and service.

Sincerely,

Barbara Meyer  
Business Manager  
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