

## **School-funding reform update, week of March 2**

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The Wisconsin Alliance for Excellent Schools (WAES) is a statewide, independent, membership-based organization of educators, school board members, students, parents, community leaders, researchers, citizens, and community activists whose lone goal is the comprehensive reform of Wisconsin's school-funding system. If you would like more information about the organization -- or on becoming part of WAES -- contact Tom Beebe at 920-650-0525 or [tbeebe@excellentschools.org](mailto:tbeebe@excellentschools.org).

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### **SFN reform plan subject of March 24 hearing at the Capitol**

Members of the Assembly Education Committee

(<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/w3asp/commpages/IndividualCommittee.aspx?COMMITTEE=Education&HOUSE=Assembly>) will meet on March 24, at 1 p.m., to consider the funding reform plan of the School Finance Network (SFN at <http://www.sfnwisconsin.org>). The meeting will be held in Room 413 North and is open to the public.

SFN's reform plan

([http://www.sfnwisconsin.org/user\\_images/files/SFN\\_Plan.pdf?phpMyAdmin=3b5c513428b10250725eca918a17ac9f](http://www.sfnwisconsin.org/user_images/files/SFN_Plan.pdf?phpMyAdmin=3b5c513428b10250725eca918a17ac9f)), two years in the making, will be the subject of the hearing. Parents, students, educators, and taxpayers from around the state will testify, in addition to members of the SFN coalition.

If you can attend and show your support for reform, please do. It is time for our elected officials to know that we expect change that guarantees our children the opportunity for success. To find out more about the hearing, WAES, SFN's reform plan, and how you can get involved in the reform effort, go to <http://www.excellentschools.org>.

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### **SFN plan continues to be in the news around Wisconsin**

In a recent column in *The Monroe Evening Times* (<http://www.themonroetimes.com/main.asp?SectionID=4&SubSectionID=40&ArticleID=9663&TM=48312.61>), Jill Gaskell -- a member of the Pecatonica and Wisconsin PTAs, WAES, and the School Finance Network -- recently praised Governor Jim Doyle's call for school-funding reform.

"We praise the Governor for making school funding a priority. He has ideas ... While different (than SFN), all of these ideas are worthy of discussion and debate as our state looks for a realistic solution."

Also, Dan Burkhalter, WEAC executive director and SFN member, appeared on WIBA's "Outside the Box" show hosted by Mitch Henkes. It can be heard at [http://www.wiba.com/cc-common/podcast/single\\_podcast.html?podcast=outsidethebox.xml](http://www.wiba.com/cc-common/podcast/single_podcast.html?podcast=outsidethebox.xml). Go to 2-26-09HR2 (the piece with Burkhalter starts at about 17:35).

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### **Evers, Fernandez meet in West Allis at state superintendent debate**

There will be a public debate between candidates for the state superintendent of the Department of Public Instruction on Wednesday, March 18, at the West Milwaukee Intermediate School ([http://www.wawm.k12.wi.us/Our%20Schools/WestMilw\\_Folder/West.htm](http://www.wawm.k12.wi.us/Our%20Schools/WestMilw_Folder/West.htm)), 5104 West Greenfield Avenue, in West Milwaukee. It will be held in the auditorium and run from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Sponsoring the event are the West Allis-West Milwaukee PTA Council -- a member of WAES (<http://www.excellentschools.org/about/partners.htm#parent>) -- and the Milwaukee City PTA Council.

Squaring off for the job of leading the state education department are Rose Fernandez (<http://www.changedpi.com/>), Mukwonago, and Tony Evers (<http://tonyevers.com/>), Madison. Fernandez. On her website, Fernandez says she supports levy limits and that "pouring more money at a problem doesn't solve it." Evers website talks about fair and sustainable funding that provides all children quality educational opportunities.

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### **2009-11 state budget appears to be on the fast track**

While WAES members were disappointed that the Governor's budget ([http://www.doa.state.wi.us/debf/pdf\\_files/bib.pdf](http://www.doa.state.wi.us/debf/pdf_files/bib.pdf)) didn't do much for school-funding reform, they were thankful that Governor Jim Doyle (<http://www.wisgov.state.wi.us/>) did what he could to make sure public education didn't see further gaps grow between costs and revenue after 15 years of destructive, state-imposed revenue limits. That said, there is much in the budget to which to pay attention.

Reports from the Capitol are that the Governor and the Democratically-controlled Assembly and Senate would like to get the 2009-11 budget passed as soon as possible,

knowing few will be happy with it. Meetings of the Joint Committee on Finance (<http://www.legis.wisconsin.gov/lfb/jfc.html>) -- meetings that usually run throughout the spring -- could be wrapped up in March or early April.

The Wisconsin Association of School Boards' website offers a great analysis of the budget. It can be found at <http://www.wasb.org/cms/state-issues.html#09-11budget>. If you want to get involved in the process, the Wisconsin Council of Children and Families is offering you a unique opportunity to attend its 2009 Advocacy Camp, March 17-18 at Grace Episcopal Church, 116 West Washington Avenue, in Madison (<http://www.wccf.org>).

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## **WAES doing good work, but needs your financial support**

WAES is going forward with SFN to make sure that the school-funding reform crisis is addressed by our elected representatives in Madison. We are working closely with our new partners to make sure the Assembly Education Committee hears from folks all over the state when they meet on March 24. Additionally, WAES will lead the effort (<http://www.excellentschools.org/events/SFN/SFNrollout.htm>) to organize communities to work with their legislators to achieve our goal.

While WAES continues to work for the SFN plan, we are also working to make it better. The SFN plan is a compromise and that compromise got us where we are today ... a place we haven't been in a decade ... at the table and talking about change. WAES does think, however, the SFN plan can be made better and will continue to work for important improvements.

In order to keep doing its important work, including educational outreach to communities around the state, WAES needs your financial support. Check our membership page (<http://www.excellentschools.org/about/partners.htm>) and, if your district isn't a member, do what you can to bring them on board. If you belong to a union, group, or organization that isn't a WAES member, do what you can to get them to sign on. And, if you as an individual aren't a member, join now. Your dues are tax deductible. Contact me or go to the WAES website at <http://www.excellentschools.org> and click "Join WAES."

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## **Tax cuts cost state billions since mid-1990s, LFB report says**

According to a press release from 74th District Rep. Gary Sherman (<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/w3asp/contact/legislatorpages.aspx?house=Assembly&district=74>), Port Wing, tax cuts have cost Wisconsin \$14.4 billion over the last 14 years (<http://thewheelerreport.com/releases/Mar09/mar2/0302shermantaxcutting.pdf>).

Rep. Sherman says the income tax reduction of 1999, alone, resulted in a total revenue decrease of \$6.24 billion, including about \$1.7 billion in the 2007-09 biennium alone. "That is far more than any shortfall in the current budget and just about enough, all by itself, to account for the structural deficit going forward."

Sherman said he asked Legislative Fiscal Bureau (<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lfb/index.html>) to compile the list of tax cuts because some doubted him when he told the Legislature the state's repeated tax cuts since the 1995-97 biennium had substantially decreased Wisconsin's revenue stream.

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### **Four groups renew memberships in WAES**

And, when you join WAES, you join an excellent core of organizations and individuals who are working toward the same goal ... reforming Wisconsin's school-finance system. Go to <http://www.excellentschools.org/about/partners.htm> to see who you'll be "hanging around with."

Those renewing their memberships since the last e-mail update were the Rock Valley Education Professionals, AFT-Wisconsin, the League of Women Voters Education Fund, and Pat Kerhin.

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### **Oneida County Board petitions state for school-funding reform**

On a vote of 20 to 0, the Oneida County Board, Feb. 17, asked the State Legislature to change the school-funding formula to "more fairly distribute state aids" to districts throughout the state.

The resolution (<http://mmsdamps.files.wordpress.com/2009/02/200902131047467299735.pdf>) was authored by supervisor Paul Dean. "The state is obligated," he said, "I'll say it again, the state is obligated to support the district schools. ... If we lend support like this (resolution), and other people as well, maybe they'll (lawmakers) see that we do have a problem."

An article in *The Lakeland Times* (<http://www.lakelandtimes.com/main.asp?SectionID=9&SubSectionID=9&ArticleID=9126&TM=36703.93>) quoted fellow supervisor Gary Baier as saying "northern Wisconsin districts are facing an economic crisis under the current school-funding formula."

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### **Round-up of funding problems from around Wisconsin**

Following a failed referendum -- a referendum many thought was either bullying or overblown -- the reality of \$1.16 million in cuts is now settling in across the Salem School District ([http://www.kenoshanews2.com/news/deep\\_cuts\\_in\\_salem\\_school\\_budget\\_4410860.htm](http://www.kenoshanews2.com/news/deep_cuts_in_salem_school_budget_4410860.htm)). The school board voted unanimously to lay off 17 full-time teachers; reduce programs like art, band, and physical education; and to eliminate all extra-curricular programs. "My husband and I were both shocked that it got to this point," one parent said. "Now I think we're scared."

Folks are regrouping in Appleton, too, following a failed \$15.9 million referendum to

exceed revenue limits early in February. Now, the school district is faced with eliminating between 30 and 40 staff positions, up to 30 of them classroom teachers, increasing class sizes, and postponing curriculum and instructional technology updates, as well as security improvements in school buildings

(<http://www.postcrescent.com/article/20090219/APC0101/902190480/1003/APC01>).

Failed referenda in Appleton, Salem, Clinton, Waupun, Highland, and Siren -- the only six held on election day in February -- may be yet another result of the national economic downturn. Michelle Dawson, executive director of the Racine-Kenosha Builders Association, said it's not a good time for governments to increase property taxes. On the other hand, Tom Heegeman, a home builder in Appleton, said, "We can build roads all over the place, but when it comes to educating our children, it seems like people without kids in school decide they should vote 'no.' That's the wrong attitude to take

(<http://www.dailyreporter.com/item.cfm?recid=20050789&snippet=f>)."

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## **Early childhood care and education key to economic development**

According to a "Research Brief" from Milwaukee's *Public Policy Forum* (<http://www.publicpolicyforum.org/>), the best way to "grow our economy and effectively educate the future workforce" may be to invest in "high quality early childhood care and education ... "

The general consensus among researchers is that investment "results in better long-term outcomes, including higher wages, lower crime, and healthier families," the brief said (<http://www.publicpolicyforum.org/pdfs/ECECaseStudiesBrief.pdf>). In Minnesota and Illinois, the economic value of early childhood education was pushed by economic research, analysis, and strong, active, and bipartisan support from a wide variety of constituencies, including business and civic leadership.

One Chicago business leaders said, "The business community ... has become one of the most fervent supporters of early care and education. It applies a basic lesson of business: Spend modestly now to save significantly later."

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## **Help WAES correct e-mail update glitch**

Some of you receiving this e-mail update are frustrated by the way it arrives -- endlessly long lines that are patience-trying to read. Hopefully we can help each other out.

As of now, only a handful of subscribers are suffering with this glitch. If you receive these endless lines, let me know and I will send you a text version that seems to take care of the problem.

Also, if you know how to fix it, let me know at [tbeebe@excellentschools.org](mailto:tbeebe@excellentschools.org). Thanks.

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**Help us better serve you by letting us know when you change your e-mail address. In that way we can stop sending the update to the old one and switch over to the new address as soon as possible.**

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## School-funding reform calendar

- March 9 -- Community meeting on the 2009-11 state budget, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., Beloit Memorial High School (<http://www.sdb.k12.wi.us/memorial/>) cafeteria, 1225 4th Street, Beloit; for more information, contact Joe Fahey at 414-967-1682
- March 10 -- Lobby Day sponsored by the Wisconsin School Social Workers Association (<http://www.wsswa.org/>), 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., meeting at the Madison Masonic Center, 301 Wisconsin Avenue, and moving to the State Capitol
- March 12 -- Community meeting to discuss the 2009-11 state budget, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., Chase Bank community room, 4702 South Packard Avenue, Cudahy, sponsored by South Shore Citizens for a Prosperous Future; for more information, contact Joe Fahey at 414-967-1682
- March 16 -- School-funding reform discussion with the Dunn County Retired Educators Association (<http://www.wrea.net/>), noon, at the Moose Lodge 1584, 720 19th Avenue East, in Menomonie (<http://www.menomonie.com/>)
- March 18 -- State Superintendent's Candidate Forum, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., West Milwaukee Intermediate School ([http://www.wawm.k12.wi.us/Our%20Schools/WestMilw\\_Folder/West.htm](http://www.wawm.k12.wi.us/Our%20Schools/WestMilw_Folder/West.htm)) auditorium, 5104 Greenfield Avenue, West Milwaukee, sponsored by the West Allis-West Milwaukee PTA Council and the Milwaukee City PTA Council
- March 17-18 -- 2009 Advocacy Camp, sponsored by the Wisconsin Council of Children and Families (WCCF at <http://www.wccf.org/>), Grace Episcopal Church (<http://www.graceec.org/>), 116 West Washington Avenue, Madison; register at [http://www.wccf.org/event\\_advocacy\\_camp\\_2009.php](http://www.wccf.org/event_advocacy_camp_2009.php)
- March 22 -- School-funding forum, as part of the Multiple ViewUUS Forum series, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., at the Olympia Brown Unitarian Universalist Church (<http://www.obuuc.org/>), 625 College Avenue, Racine (<http://www.cityofracine.org/>)
- March 24 -- Informational hearing of the Assembly Education Committee (<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/w3asp/CommPages/IndividualCommittee.aspx?COMMITTEE=Education&HOUSE=Assembly>) on the school-funding reform plan of the School Finance Network (<http://www.sfnwisconsin.org>), 1 p.m. in Room 413 North of the State Capitol
- March 30 -- Discussion of the School Finance Network (SFN at <http://www.sfnwisconsin.org>) reform plan with the Central Wisconsin School Board Consortium, Stevens Point (<http://www.spacvb.com/>), 7 p.m. at the P.J. Jacobs Junior High School Cafeteria (<http://www.wisp.k12.wi.us/education/school/school.php?sectionid=18&PHPSESSID=97d66aee7a8153f1832f94b113cdf739>), 2400 Main Street
- April 16 -- School-funding reform discussion with members of the Richland Area Retired Educators Association (<http://www.wrea.net/>), 9:30 a.m. at the Country Kitchen Restaurant in the Ramada Inn ([http://www.ramada.com/Ramada/control/Booking/property\\_info?propertyId=11386&bra](http://www.ramada.com/Ramada/control/Booking/property_info?propertyId=11386&bra)), 1450 Veterans Drive, Richland Center (<http://www.richlandchamber.com/>)

- April 27 -- School-funding reform discussion as part of the Social Justice Series at Lawrence University in Appleton
- May 3-4 -- "Students leading the way to school-funding reform" sectional presentation, 9:10 a.m. on Monday, May 4, at the Senior High School State Conference ("Leadership -- Out of this World) of the Wisconsin Association of School Councils (<http://www.wasc.org/index.cfm>), Regency Suite Hotel and KI Convention Center ([http://www.hotel-sierra.com/locations/green\\_bay/default.aspx](http://www.hotel-sierra.com/locations/green_bay/default.aspx)), 333 Main Street, Green Bay (<http://www.greenbay.com/>)
- May 18 -- School-funding reform discussion with those attending the Citizens Advocacy Project, 11 a.m., Oakwood Village West ([http://www.oakwoodvillage.net/default.php?page=29#sec\\_89](http://www.oakwoodvillage.net/default.php?page=29#sec_89)), Madison, sponsored by Dane County Advocacy Network Education (for more information call 608-441-7897)

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*Please feel free to share your copy of the WAES school-funding update with anyone interested in this important public policy issue. Contact Tom Beebe at [tbeebe@excellentschools.org](mailto:tbeebe@excellentschools.org) or 920-650-0525 for details.*

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"The moral test of a government is how it treats those who are at the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the aged; and those who are in the shadow of life, the sick, the needy, and the handicapped," -- Hubert Humphrey, 1976

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