

For Immediate Release
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Contact: Mary Whitrock, Superintendent
WhitrockM@ripon.k12.wi.us
(920) 748-4600

Superintendent Attends Listening Session with Governor Walker

Ripon, WI – On December 1, Ripon Superintendent Mary Whitrock attended a listening session with Governor Walker and 38 other school superintendents from the surrounding area. The listening session, hosted by CESA 6 as part of the Governor's 2020 Vision Project, provided an opportunity for leaders in education to highlight critical issues for legislators as they begin work on the 2017-19 biennial budget.

According to the Governor, the goal of this and other listening sessions around the state is to “create a forum for our citizens to give feedback about what they think is working in Wisconsin, what our focus should be as we approach the next budget, and what the role of state government should be.” Items that topped the list for superintendents of things working in Wisconsin included: a strong preK-16 education system; supportive local communities; dedicated and hardworking labor force; abundant natural resources; strong agribusiness and manufacturing; growing diversity of people and cultures; and a spirit of innovation and forward thinking.

In terms of the education focus for the next biennial budget, superintendents emphasized the need for increasing local control, additional state revenue for low spending districts, matching the school spending cycle (which starts on July 1st) with the legislative budget cycle (which is not completed until the fall), basing a district's student count on monthly enrollment instead of only a September and January count; and providing monthly aid payments to districts rather than just a few times a year.

Dr. Whitrock noted, “One idea shared with Governor Walker was to amend Fund 80 restrictions so mental health and AODA services could be provided at a local level through community programming.” The superintendents also encouraged addressing teacher shortages by providing incentives for teacher candidates that work in rural districts.

Looking forward, to the next 10-15 years, top priorities included: keeping Wisconsin graduates in the state; attracting new people and industries to our great state; increasing exports, and

protecting family farms. “At the risk of asking for too much in the month of December, providing additional per pupil allocation for low spending districts like Ripon was at the top of the superintendents’ list,” Dr. Whitrock commented. “Overall the education message shared with Governor Walker was to increase local school board control so districts can innovate to meet the individual needs within their community.” Any comments or suggestions, please contact Dr. Mary Whitrock at (920) 748-4600.

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