



HOWARD MARKLEIN

STATE SENATOR • 17TH SENATE DISTRICT

Capitol Update By Senator Howard Marklein September 18, 2015

School Membership Counts Set School Budgets

Today, Friday, September 18, 2015, is a major day for school districts throughout our state. The third Friday of September is one of two dates annually that all public school districts take an official membership count and report it to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI).

The Membership Count is the single largest variable in determining a school district's budget.

According to DPI, "Membership" is defined as the average of the resident full-time equivalent (FTE) students enrolled on the third Friday of September and 2nd Friday of January (including part-time attendance by home-based or private school students), plus the summer school and foster group home FTE.

The Membership Count, or the number of students in a school district, is the key variable in a school district's budget. The Membership Count determines the size of our school district budgets. The size of a local school district's budget is calculated by multiplying the membership count by the district's cost per pupil.

For example, if a district's enrollment is 1,200 pupils and its allowable revenue limit per pupil is \$10,000 (state average), the district's budget is \$12,000,000. Using the same allowable revenue limit per pupil, a district of 700 pupils would have a budget of \$7,000,000.

If a student body increases, the budget increases. If a student body decreases, the budget decreases. As a result, the total dollars dedicated to public education in Wisconsin are less important than the actual number of students in the classroom, especially in rural school districts.

In the 17th Senate District, we face an uphill battle for school finances. Rural populations are changing. We have fewer young families in our communities sending fewer children to school. As a result, our membership counts are declining, directly impacting the overall budgets for rural school districts.

As a result of this reality, it is important for us to recognize that economic development, jobs and quality of life are important factors for funding our schools. Communities throughout the 17th District are seeking ways to grow existing businesses, attract new businesses, improve quality of life opportunities and increase population. These efforts directly impact local school finance.

Overall, school districts in the 17th Senate District face funding challenges. However, many of our districts are using unique, innovative ways to continue educating our youth and developing new programs

with fewer resources. As your State Senator, I marvel at some of the partnerships and collaborative efforts among communities, business and schools. Working together, we will find ways to overcome the impacts of declining membership so that our kids will receive high-quality education and our communities will grow and prosper.

For more information and to connect with me, visit my website <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/senate/17/marklein> and subscribe to my weekly E-Update by sending an email to Sen.Marklein@legis.wisconsin.gov. Do not hesitate to call 800-978-8008 if you have input, ideas or need assistance with any state-related matters.

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