



St. Joseph County ISD

Building Better Futures for Children and Communities

Superintendent: Teresa L. Belote, Ed.D.

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Dear Families and Staff,

We are receiving questions around programming, services, free lunch programs, etc. in our county. As we have started the 2025-26 school year, we want to update you on a critical issue in Lansing that could impact our schools in St. Joseph County.

State law mandates that lawmakers approve a K-12 school funding budget by July 1st each year so districts like ours can plan and operate with certainty. Our budgets need to be board approved at the local level by July 1st for the fiscal year of July 1st - June 30th. As of today, no agreement has been reached. That means we are through approximately one sixth of our fiscal year with no way of knowing if our budgets, that were built on projections, will cover expenses.

The challenge as school leaders is how to make decisions in the absence of funding guarantees. We have a commitment to our communities to be fiscally responsible and in the absence of information regarding funding, we are in a challenging position.

These funds ensure we can provide reasonable class sizes and student support services, maintain bus operations, fund academic programs, as well as enrichment opportunities, like athletics and the arts, and compensate our teachers and staff working with our students. We understand the challenges our legislators face in balancing budgets but moving money out of the school aid fund undermines the system that was built strategically to ensure schools were funded to operate efficiently.

We have reached out to our elected officials, asking them to act quickly. If you have concerns regarding the possibility of ending the free lunch programming, weighted funding for students with special needs, or potential cuts to career technical education, feel free to contact our state lawmakers as well.

Our students deserve a stable, fully funded school year. Together, we can ensure their learning continues without interruption and our families aren't unduly burdened with last minute changes to budgets that support their children's education.

Sincerely,

Teresa Belote, St. Joseph County ISD
Chad Brady, Centreville Public Schools
Patrick Breen, Constantine Public Schools
Kelvin Butts, Burr Oak Community Schools
Art Ebert, Sturgis Public Schools
Leasa Griffith-Mathews, Mendon Community Schools
Rick Hilderley, Colon Community Schools
Shelly McBride, White Pigeon Community Schools
Nikki Nash, Three Rivers Community Schools
Jerome Wolff, Nottawa Community School