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**SMALL SCHOOLS WOULD SUFFER FROM BUDGET'S CHANGES TO  
4-YEAR-OLD KINDERGARTEN**

Budget changes relating to four-year-old kindergarten programs would fall more heavily on smaller school districts, according to a new analysis by the Wisconsin Budget Project of the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families (WCCF).

The Legislature approved budget amendments that would cut \$23 million per year from the aid to public school districts associated with four-year-old kindergarten programs, and would restrict the ability of school districts to replace the lost aid with local funds. Governor Doyle is now reviewing these budget changes.

The analysis released Tuesday reveals that the state's smaller school districts are more likely than large districts to offer four-year-old kindergarten. They also tend to have a larger percentage of their students in such programs. As a result, they would be disproportionately affected by the changes.

Some of the state's largest districts would also be adversely affected by the changes, particularly Milwaukee Public Schools, which has a little over a third or all the students enrolled in four-year-old kindergarten.

"The negative impact on Milwaukee Public Schools should come as no shock to anyone who has followed this issue," said Jon Peacock, Director of the Wisconsin Budget Project. "The surprising aspect of our findings is the disproportionate impact on the smaller schools."

The report concludes that the changes related to pre-school financing would make it difficult for school districts to continue programs for four-year-olds. "Contrary to the claims of some observers, wealthier districts would not be immune to the effects," Peacock said.

Cutting state funding for 4-year-old kindergarten would also have negative consequences for the Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy program. Reduced state spending could mean a reduction in the amount of federal child care block grant funds the state is able to draw down. Meanwhile, the elimination of some

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school programs for four-year-olds would likely increase the demand for child care assistance as parents turn to private care providers to pick up the slack.

“The combination of increased child care demand and reduced block grant funds would probably lead to damaging cuts in the child care program,” Peacock said.

The report notes that the pending changes would also negatively affect a number of parental choice and charter schools in Milwaukee. State aid for the choice schools would be reduced because the change in the weighting of four-year-old kindergarteners would reduce the total membership count for choice schools by about 2.5 percent.

Governor Doyle has the option of vetoing the Legislature’s changes, which would allow schools to continue their four-year-old kindergarten programs without making deep cuts elsewhere in their budgets.

The full analysis is available on the WCCF website at <http://www.wccf.org/pdf/4k.pdf>.

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