Most officials want education cut — by someone else

By DOUG MYERS
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Apparel nobody wants to be the "bad guy" when it comes to helping balance next year's state budget by cutting state funding for public schools.


"Nobody wants to take the initiative," said Mark Drennen, president of the nonpartisan Public Affairs Research Council. Drennen said elementary and secondary education — kindergarten through 12th grade — should also face budget cuts if the Capitolnewsbureau
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grade — should also face budget cuts if the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education's current $375 million in state funding. The governor's budget cuts higher education by another $134 million in an effort to meet a $618 million gap between anticipated revenues and what Edwards wants to spend in the 1993-94 state budget.

At the same time, a $32 million increase in line for public schools next year. The increase is part of a five-year plan to move toward equalized per-pupil spending in poor and more affluent school districts. Under provisions of the state Minimum Foundation Program, which guides state funding of local school districts, the Legislature appropriated $32 million more this school year than last school year for that purpose.

Under the state constitution, BESE is charged with writing the MFP, and the Legislature can only approve or reject the plan. BESE submits if the Legislature doesn't approve an MFP rewrite, the existing MFP remains in force.

The Legislature is constitutionally bound to provide the funds to implement the MFP unless the governor suggests a cut and two-thirds of the legislators agree.

Last week, the governor said that the administration has asked BESE to force the $32 million increase the current MFP mandates for public schools next fiscal year.

Addressing a legislative panel, Edwards said the request was sent in hopes BESE, in "this crisis we find ourselves in," may