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Wisconsin 2030

THE EDUCATION PATH TO PROSPERITY WITHIN THE DECADE

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JULY 2021

AMERICAN ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE

Executive Summary

It's no secret that the United States has slid into educational mediocrity when compared to international peers. That development threatens Americans' ability to adapt in an evolving economy, be productive and content at work, put down deep roots in their communities, and help their nation continue to lead on the world stage. That decline has especially harsh consequences for the Midwest, which has seen industrial instability, slow population growth, and striking inequality of opportunity in rural and urban areas.

This report uses Wisconsin as a model, proposing new education reforms for Great Lakes and Great Plains states. These reforms rely on states' unique midwestern characteristics to generate opportunity, prosperity, and purpose. Now that the previous bipartisan education consensus has frayed, it is important to propose new, bold ideas to supplement successful school choice and accountability reforms.

I propose eight ideas, coupled into four categories. We should transform the classroom by bringing back phonics-based reading instruction, getting high-quality teachers into the profession, and helping these teachers mentor the next generation of educators. We should grow urban and rural choice by funding district and choice students equally and making better investments in high-speed rural internet. We should modernize school bureaucracy by using a Yelp-like school enrollment system to empower parents to seek out quality and moving school board elections to the general Election Day to boost participation. We should promote working-class college by encouraging "Guided Pathway" reforms at technical colleges, creating more flexible technical college programs and funding mechanisms, and allowing 529-style accounts to cover apprenticeship expenses, not just college costs.

These ideas reach all American children, not only middle-class students aiming for a four-year degree. To complete a comeback, Wisconsin and states like it must invest in their future blue-collar workforce. By making sure that all families have access to high-quality schools, states can generate broad abundance in all sectors—tech and trades, finance and farms.

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By Mike Gallagher

Ask Wisconsin business owners in any industry what their biggest challenge is, and you will get similar responses: *Workers. We cannot find enough good workers. We need more young people who have the skills and willingness to tackle anything we throw at them.*

Wisconsin, a state known for humble, hard work, is not working. Our state has settled into 27th place in per capita gross domestic product (GDP) over the past decade.[1] Our population has grown at less than half the national average, putting us in the bottom third.[2] Wisconsin experiences the fourth-highest brain drain of skilled workers in the country.[3]

Wisconsin's schools are supposed to produce the next generation of Wisconsin workers. Yet education, which used to be our state's secret weapon, is rapidly becoming our greatest liability.[4] As recently as 1996, Wisconsin was an educational powerhouse, testing in the top five nationally.[5] In the 25 years since, Wisconsin has dropped 11 spots.[6] Nearly 60 percent of Wisconsin students cannot read or do math past a high-school-track level.[7] As our middle-class students slump below the national average,[8] our racial achievement gap makes national news.[9] Our White fourth graders score about as well in math as our Black eighth graders do,[10] and we have the nation's second-lowest Black graduation rate.[11]

Students who struggle early never make up ground. Wisconsin's high school graduation rate has declined since our heyday,[12] as has the University of Wisconsin–Madison's ranking and prestige.[13] Of those who do reach college, 19 percent must retake high school math as freshmen.[14] Fewer than half of our public college students graduate on time, and the 30 percent who do drop out accumulate tens of thousands of dollars in debt with no degree to show for it.[15]

The coronavirus pandemic and corresponding school shutdowns exacerbated all of these destructive trends, punishing in particular Wisconsin's poorest kids.[16] A year shut indoors led to student failure everywhere: the biggest metros,[17] smaller cities,[18] rural towns,[19] and suburbs.[20]

While Wisconsin's schools have declined, American classrooms have settled into also-ran status. If you look for the United States in the international test score rankings, you have to scroll down for a while. Communist China sits up top, and northern Europe, Canada, and eastern Asia are represented early.[21] America sits at 13th in reading and 37th in mathematics.[22] We still rank high, however, in one category: spending per student.[23] If you think the $195 billion stimulus Congress provided schools will lead to long-term improvement,[24] consider that our academic decline post-1996 has come with 37 percent growth in education spending.[25]

Put simply, we are failing Wisconsin's children. We are failing to prepare the next generation for hard work, the rigors of adulthood amid technological change, and the intellectual demands of American citizenship. We are wasting their enormous potential and, with it, Wisconsin's potential to thrive in the 21st century.

To make Wisconsin work, we need to save our schools. We must turn Wisconsin into an educational superpower by 2030. Our revival depends on it. Here is our path forward.

Read the Right Way

You probably have never heard of her, but Lucy Calkins is one of the most important figures in American education today. Over the past 30 years, she has helped transform teaching standards and methods across the country from her influential perch at Columbia University. Her "balanced literacy" approach prioritizes memorizing words instead of phonics, in which students learn to read by sounding out letters. Classrooms have lurched away from phonics, which scientific studies have proved is the most effective method,[26] and toward these risky experiments. Now, 16 percent of younger grades, or hundreds of thousands of students per year, rely on Calkins' teachings.[27] The only problem? She admitted in 2020 that her theories were wrong.[28]

Success in the classroom depends on reading. It is the key that unlocks the rest of school and a lifetime of gainful employment.

Thanks in part to balanced literacy, too many American children lag behind in reading before the crucial third grade year. If children are not on track by then, they are four times more likely to drop out of high school—six times more likely if they are Black or Hispanic.[29] High school dropouts have difficulty attaining stable jobs and end up costing $2.2 trillion in lost productivity and income every single year.[30] Tragically, 22 percent of Wisconsin third graders score at the "Below Basic" level in reading, meaning they are functionally illiterate.[31]

Despite this trapdoor to unemployment, over one-third of Wisconsin's school districts still rely on Calkins' textbooks or did in the past decade.[32] She continues to hold her tenured job.

Success in the classroom depends on reading. It is the key that unlocks the rest of school and a lifetime of gainful employment. We must fix reading comprehension in Wisconsin by teaching our children to read the right way.

Fortunately, there is already a blueprint for success. In 2013, 48th-ranked Mississippi had a 12-point reading achievement gap compared to the national average.[33] After developing a phonics-heavy, kindergarten-to-third-grade reading plan that year, Mississippi matched the national average by 2019, posting the nation's highest fourth grade reading growth.[34] If Wisconsin had grown as much as Mississippi did, we would tie for best in the nation.[35]

We can make similar progress by similar means. We ought to enforce the sole use of phonics education in Wisconsin's teacher programs and ensure that teachers who learned under the old system have the resources necessary to change their approach. We must also support early childhood reading training for all who need it. Teachers should flag reading deficits in kindergarten, notify parents, and implement plans to catch kids up.[36] We should prevent graduation to fourth grade unless students (exempting those with special needs) can score above the lowest reading proficiency level on the Wisconsin Forward Exam, and we should drastically assist those who do repeat.[37]

Students who never learn the basics of reading end up taking grade school courses in high school, paying for remedial classes in college, or abandoning school altogether without a diploma. Ultimately, we have three choices: spend millions on catch-up classes, lose billions in productivity, or fix the root of the problem by third grade.

Recruit and Prepare Great Teachers

Great teachers are the single most important ingredient in great schools. If we want the best educational system in the country, we need to recruit, train, and retain the country's best teachers. Yet our state's talented educators face a system that works against them.

First, consider Wisconsin's teaching programs. While they have a reputation for being among the best in the country (and are certainly priced like it), they are not preparing the next generation of teachers with the basics. To get into the classroom, Wisconsin teachers must pass the Praxis test, which measures their basic knowledge of their subject area. A staggering 19 percent of potential Wisconsin teachers fail this test, and, for non-White candidates, this jumps to an outrageous 70 percent.[38] For comparison, Wisconsin passes 91 percent of its bachelor's recipients on a much harder nursing exam.[39]

Second, we financially reward teachers for everything but teaching. The best way for educators to make more money is to spend their summer pursuing dubiously beneficial master's degree work or to leave the classroom entirely and become an administrator.[40] The result is that 55 percent of Wisconsin teachers have spent hard-earned savings on a degree they do not need,[41] even while their average salaries have dropped,[42] and administrative staffs in schools have grown much more rapidly than the staffs actually doing the teaching.[43]

Third, Wisconsin hinders potential Black, Hispanic, Asian, and Indigenous teachers from succeeding academically and taking charge of their communities' schools. Students of color are often stuck in low-performing schools and receive spotty support in college, denying many the opportunity to one day educate kids who share their same life experiences.[44] Wisconsin public schools are now 32 percent non-White,[45] but only 5 percent of teachers are people of color.[46]

To address these problems, we must raise our standards. The US Department of Education should withhold federal Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grants from programs that cannot meet a first-time Praxis passage rate of 85 percent.[47] We should mandate that teacher programs display first-time passage rates, broken down demographically, on their admissions website and in their major promotional materials.

We can also financially reward great teachers for actually teaching by reforming Wisconsin's master educator license program. Currently, the master educator program provides generous benefits for mentor teachers, but it is geared toward those who obtain a superfluous master's degree.[48] A reformed program would task "master teachers" with mentoring recent college graduates interested in teaching, whether or not they majored in education.

Anyone who holds a bachelor's degree, aces a background check, and passes the Praxis could spend a year co-teaching with a master teacher, perfecting his or her craft, instead of two years grinding away in hands-off theory courses. This could attract nontraditional candidates to understaffed areas such as math, science, foreign language, and rural schools and quickly produce substantial benefits for their students.[49] In return, master teachers would receive sizable financial rewards and prestige for training the next generation of great teachers while simultaneously maintaining their own excellence in the classroom.

Finally, Congress can address our lack of teachers of color by allocating career transition funds, as it once did, for paraprofessionals to become certified teachers.[50] The pandemic forced us to lean on support teachers for primary instruction more than ever before. In Wisconsin's five largest districts, 52 percent of support teachers are non-White.[51] Many of these dedicated educators have years of teaching experience but don't have the means to get the bachelor's degree that would allow them to lead classrooms.

We can get these potential stars trained and back in schools without them passing through traditional programs. An intensive two-year program in the subject matter they want to teach would be followed by two credit-earning "apprentice teacher" years under a master teacher. With a subject-specific bachelor's degree and Praxis pass in hand, these talented teachers can get to work educating students of all backgrounds.

Fund Students Fairly

School choice advocates have helped hundreds of thousands of children gain access to a high-quality education. Today, 25,841 students learn in Milwaukee Parental Choice Program schools, which started out serving 8,012 children.[52] On top of that, 18 percent of Wisconsin's high-poverty choice schools are rated five stars compared to just 2 percent of high-poverty traditional schools.[53]

Yet, these public charter and private voucher schools receive much less state funding per pupil than district schools do. For example, a family with three kids might send one to a district school, where the state provides $14,737 for that child;[54] another to a charter school, where the state provides $9,165; and the last to a Lutheran school, where the state provides $8,300.[55] Our state operates as if some students are worth less than others. This is deeply wrong.

District charter schools receive even less in practice. For the minimal task of processing charter paperwork, public school districts skim off the top of every student's funding.[56] While choice schools must make every dollar count, public school districts have the luxury of dipping into others' cash flow. We must stop administrators from diluting funds that are meant for educating students.

One way to address these imbalances is through fair student funding. Under this model, a set amount per student (accounting for special needs, English learning, or extreme poverty) would follow a student to whatever school suited him or her best, whether that is a charter, traditional, or parochial school. It is past time to give those 55,000 choice students equal funding and equal educational opportunities.[57]

Funding the child rather than the ZIP code or school type will also move us away from our regressive property tax system. Currently, neighborhood property values determine how much a child gets; the cheaper the home, the less money a student has to learn. Our state produces an impossibly complicated formula to balance things out instead of treating each child equitably.[58] The new model will give all students equal resources to succeed, will allow parents to take control of their child's education, and will incentivize schools, whatever the sector, to perform better.

We also should keep choice dollars with choice schools. Rather than have a choice school depend on a local district's school board and administrative office, otherwise known as a local education agency, Wisconsin should create a choice school local education agency to administer in each of Wisconsin's 12 school regions. These schools will get more federal dollars to teachers and classrooms and be managed by people who understand their unique qualities. It will also alleviate the burden on existing district staff, who manage three separate systems at once. To ensure student-focused spending, the federal government can expand transparency on how much federal education funding gets wasted through administrative skimming and expensive fees from vendors.

Connect for Rural Course Choice

Rural Wisconsinites face unique education challenges, particularly with school choice. Unlike in urban areas, if students in rural Wisconsin have unique needs or want to pursue coursework not offered in their local school district, there may not be another option in a reasonable commuting distance.

Quality broadband should be our rural students' lifeline to specialized courses, whether that is Advanced Placement (AP) economics and statistics for the college-bound or livestock management and programming for trade work.[59] Nothing can replace the value of in-person instruction from a good teacher, but, in these circumstances, digital learning offers rural students the opportunity to supplement local offerings.[60]

Yet, digital learning depends on widespread broadband internet access, an ongoing challenge in rural areas. The pandemic has exposed massive gaps in our kids' access to choices. In 2020, four out of seven rural schools did not give all students laptops for virtual learning.[61] One out of 11 rural homes had no internet access at all.[62] Fair student funding can provide schools better resources to advance rural choice, but not the necessary broadband infrastructure.

We know our students in farm country and smaller towns can compete with those in our wealthiest suburbs, but without access to digital resources, they are at a significant disadvantage.[63] These students lose access to high-quality, streaming education tutorials in grade school and specialized, future-focused courses in high school. Wisconsin also loses out on top-level talent who would start a business in a rural area or raise a family while working from home were it not for the lack of strong, stable internet access.

To become an educational superpower in an information age, we need to solve this rural broadband issue more quickly and intelligently than other states. The Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Rural Digital Opportunity Fund gives states $11.2 billion to build on the $10.7 billion already invested over the past two years.[64] Wisconsin can auction broadband spots to the companies providing the highest speeds at the most reasonable costs. We must make these auctions competitive for providers that know and invest in their communities. Throughout, we should avoid risky Chinese hardware vendors that could prey on national broadband networks.[65] Finally, we can streamline the application process for the FCC's E-Rate school broadband program to help small schools compete and set fair funding ratios between rural and urban schools to protect rural E-Rate support.[66]

Both the governor and the state legislature want to invest resources into rural broadband, but we must not rely exclusively on one method or technology. For efficiency's sake, Wisconsin should implement a "dig once" policy, which would spend more time upfront to lay fiber-optic broadband cable during road construction to avoid the long-term expenses of separate slow, expensive shoveling.[67]

We should also consider innovative, non-wired solutions to complement traditional strategies. Starlink, a SpaceX program, has launched internet-providing satellites into low orbit to reach Americans in places where laying cable is not financially feasible.[68] The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation should position key northern Wisconsin communities as early adopters of Starlink. While it will not be able to compete with the 5G speeds in downtown Milwaukee, it will allow northeastern Wisconsinites to access significantly faster internet than currently available satellite internet.[69]

Going forward, we also should include innovative wireless solutions in grant programs such as the Broadband Expansion Grant.[70] Providing high-speed bandwidth to rural families can unlock immense course choices for students and attract families to plant roots in small-town Wisconsin.

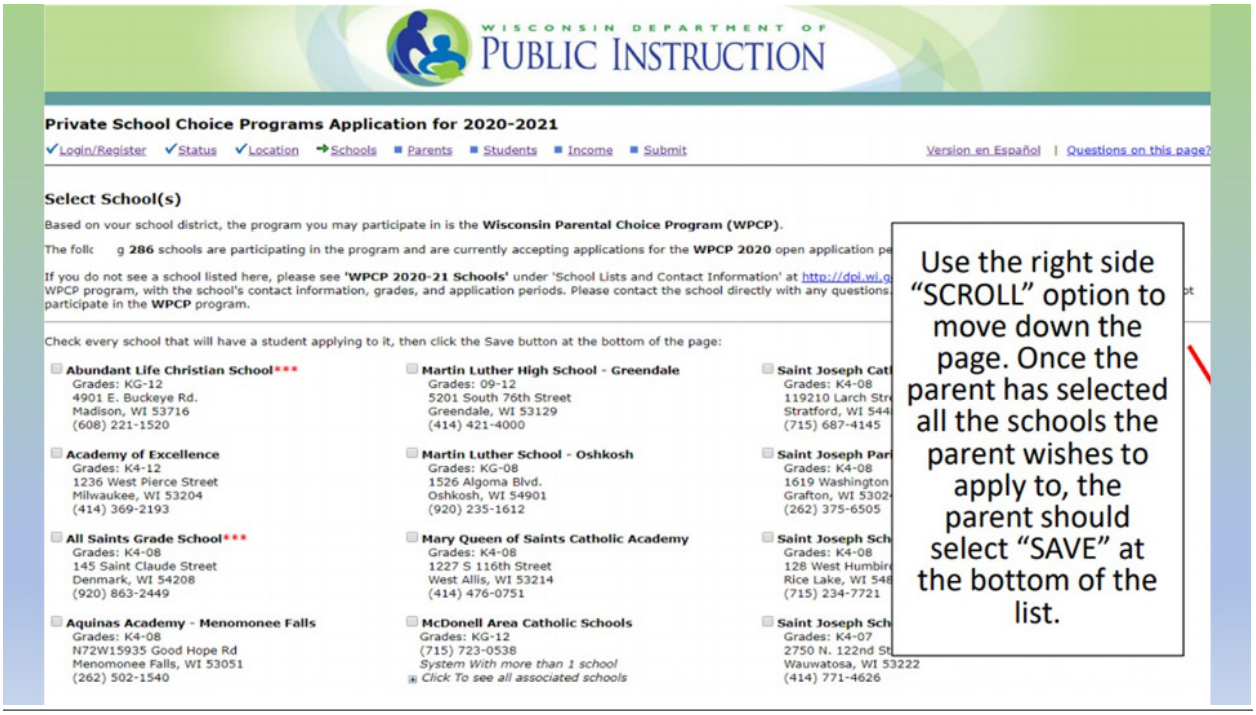
Optimize Parents' School Choices

If you are a Wisconsin parent of one of the 120,477 students using open enrollment or vouchers to attend a school of your choice,[71] you have to navigate byzantine online databases that look like they were designed during the dark ages of the internet. These sites contain precious little information to help you make an informed decision.[72] Which schools are safe? What do student-teacher ratios look like? How about after-school activities? When it comes to one of the most important decisions parents can make, Wisconsin's platform offers less information than you would get trying a new restaurant (Figure 1).[73]

This lack of transparency hurts the Wisconsin students who need the most help. Every year, tens of thousands of parents realize their children have wasted a year in a subpar or unsafe school and transfer them to a new one. In Milwaukee, one in four kids moves schools yearly,[74] likely attending three or four schools before hitting freshman year of high school. With new curricula to learn, isolation from friends, and a rotating cast of teachers who never quite become mentors, it is no surprise that grade point averages plunge and dropout rates soar.[75]

It is time to empower Wisconsin parents with information and drag the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) into this century. DPI should create a dashboard in which each school in Wisconsin is color coded by its state star rating (Figure 2).[76] A few clicks could put all sorts of information at parents' fingertips: reading and math scores, class size, extracurriculars, and parent reviews. Families could sort by

Figure 1. Wisconsin Choice Program Application



Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, "Private School Choice Program (PSCP) Online Parent Application 2021–22 School Year," 2021, https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/parental-education-options/Choice/Student_Application_Webpage/Parent_app_screen_prints_ENGLISH_2021-22.pdf.

test scores, safety ratings, distance from home, or any other metric that matters to them.[77]

We should funnel all school enrollment through this system so all parents can gain expertise and pick the right school for their children the first time around. We can no longer let mediocre schools disguise themselves just long enough to accept state money and squander precious futures. Empowering parents will unleash market forces, tilting enrollment toward high-quality schools while pressuring bad ones to shape up or close up.[78]

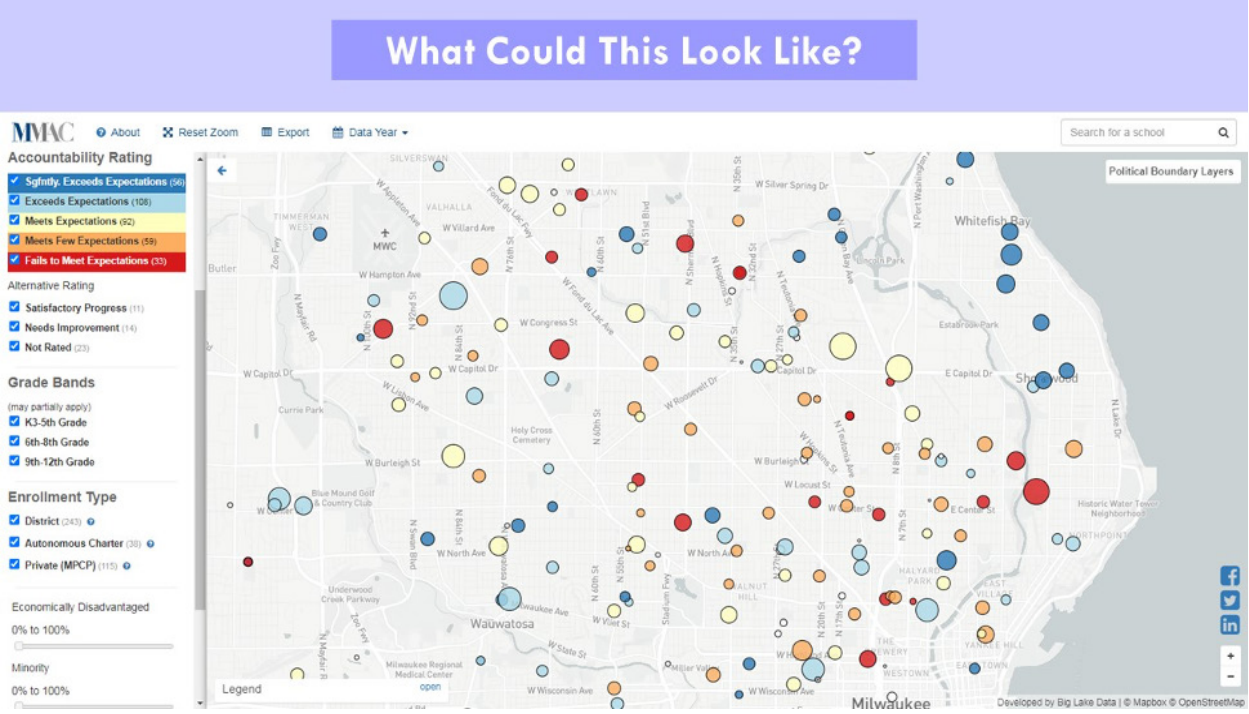
Take Real Votes on School Governance

Every four years, Wisconsin helps determine the US president. While it is not always pretty, Wisconsinites turn out by the millions because they understand the importance of who sits in the White House. Despite the outsized role that presidential politics play in our national discourse, however, local officeholders play a far larger role in determining day-to-day quality of life than does a president hundreds of miles away.

Perhaps no local election is more important than school board elections. Those education elections, bizarrely, are held in "nonpartisan" April elections, not November ones. Turnout is understandably low. In fact, just 20 percent of potential voters picked the last state superintendent,[79] compared with the 72 percent who last voted for president.[80] Think about that: One out of five Wisconsinites decides what Wisconsin children learn, how much money is spent on them, and how we improve their schools' performance.

Holding off-cycle, low-turnout school elections allows the biggest and highest-funding partisans—self-interested teachers unions—to dominate them. Democrat special interests outspent opponents almost four to one in the 2021 state superintendent

Figure 2. School Quality Map



Source: Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce, "Milwaukee School Quality Map," 2019, https://mkeschoolmap.org/map.

race.[81] We are handing the keys to a $12.7 billion vehicle, not to mention our children's futures, to the least representative group of elected officials we have.[82]

We need to end this school board surrender by moving all school board elections to November, aligning them with the more representative general elections. The more Wisconsinites who turn out, the more school boards will focus on whether our children have the skills they need to find purposeful work in Wisconsin. The alternative is closed schools, bloated pensions, and continued academic mediocrity.

We also need independent nonprofits to provide training and support for school boards to help them understand budgets, govern well, and develop fair metrics for student progress. Right now, our boards spend more time evaluating whether a superintendent hired the right vendor than they do on classroom outcomes. Shifting boards' mission from compliance to excellence will keep our students and state from being bystanders to prosperity. Our school boards need to demand evidence every month that how the adults are spending money is actually improving student learning.[83]

We can further demand real leadership and results by turning our state superintendent position into a governor-appointed and legislature-confirmed position. Wisconsin is the only state in America whose superintendent is not accountable to the governor, legislature, or state school board,[84] and the result is a half century of unions stifling adaptation.

The pandemic is just the latest of numerous failures. DPI was late providing guidance at every step, leaving schools to adapt their own rules from vague guidelines or, more likely, stay closed.[85] Early evidence suggests a massive increase in student failure rates as a result.[86] Three percent of all public school pupils moved to private schools or homeschooling to escape the mismanagement.[87]

Politicians respond to incentives. Once the governor appoints the superintendent, Wisconsinites can

show they no longer tolerate mediocre educational outcomes from either official.

Complete the Technical College Revival

Technical colleges are one of Wisconsin's hidden gems. In fact, 93 percent of students who graduate from these programs stay in their Wisconsin communities,[88] making them one of our most important tools to fight brain drain and invest wisely in our workforce.

Wisconsin took a crucial step toward revolutionizing its technical college system in 2017.[89] Drawing on success stories from around the country,[90] Wisconsin reorganized its two-year programs and reoriented them around common goals: easier entry points, program completion, quality education, and industry alignment.[91] Previously, students would struggle to choose career paths from an overwhelming list of options, assemble a random class assortment due to a lack of guidance, and, all too often, drop out after a semester with no consequences for the institution that let them down. The new system intends to give students counseling on the job market and a robust course sequence, increasing their odds of earning a diploma and a solid job.

Unfortunately, progress has not been fast enough. Fewer than half of our technical colleges actively plan course loads with students.[92] No school has full tutoring support in place to help students make up ground if they require it. Courses are offered when it is convenient for instructors, not working Wisconsinites. The technical college system set a 100 percent compliance goal for each college and each reform, and we owe it to our students to fulfill that commitment as soon as possible.

We should highlight the great work of technical colleges and ensure they have the resources and incentive to implement reforms. First, we should demand annual progress reports. Pressure drives performance. An annual review attended by federal, state, and local leaders would provide not only accountability but also a forum to discuss program needs. These reports should be thorough and go beyond those mandated by federal Perkins Loan requirements.[93]

Graduation rates vary by program, so we should separate data on certificate earners, associate degree holders, and apprentices so students know which programs are likely to best prepare them. At the same time, we should demand success rate data by race and income to ensure programs designed to break the poverty cycle are actually doing so. Political leaders can speed these reforms by helping our technical college system procure major grants that fund the work.[94]

Technical colleges are one of Wisconsin's hidden gems.

We must also reform how technical programs treat Pell Grant recipients. Currently, to qualify for federal scholarships, students must be enrolled in at least semester-long programs.[95] This requirement leaves behind hardworking Wisconsinites who wish to pursue short certificate-based programs focused on essential skills for their industry's evolving needs.[96] We need more flexible Pell requirements that will accommodate high-quality programs of any length to serve working people better.

We also need to increase funding for Wisconsin Fast Forward to expand innovation in how technical colleges train the next generation.[97] This program has businesses shape training for their own specific needs, which cuts bureaucracy and gets students the skills they need from the source. Ramping up technical college participation will create additional constructive partnerships across Wisconsin's diverse regions.

Finally, Wisconsin's technical college system should lead the education system as a whole. We should merge the two-year University of Wisconsin Colleges with our technical colleges to form one community college system. A single organizational structure would align curricula, improve credit transfers, and use college infrastructure more efficiently. It would model the adjustments the entire University of Wisconsin system should make in the wake

of the coronavirus pandemic, emphasizing specialized in-person instruction and virtual supplements instead of needless duplication.

Foremost, putting two-year colleges under the same performance reforms would provide them with renewed purpose, rigor, and output. Refocused community colleges would also generate more dual enrollment partnerships with local high schools to provide accelerated associate degrees for motivated students.[98] AP exams get students four-year college credit while still in high school, and we should promote the same for two-year colleges.[99] Students could substitute electives for technical courses, earning certifications that matter. These young men and women could graduate from high school with a diploma, an associate degree, and a rich variety of job prospects.

Create Apprenticeship Savings Accounts

College serves many young Wisconsinites tremendously. The idea that everyone needs to go to college, however, has led to frivolous coursework, crushing levels of debt, and years of postgraduation uncertainty for tens of thousands of twentysomethings. In fact, the average Wisconsin borrower leaves school with $31,550 in debt.[100]

Many who went to college with dreams of one day owning their own business and house end up back in their parents' basement, working as over-credentialed temps, owning nothing but credit card bills and rejection letters. Meanwhile, their high school friends who went straight into skilled work make $60,000 a year building military vehicles, fabricating pipes, or doing utility line work, and they own their own pickup and cottage.[101]

Wisconsin has a proud heritage of hard work and blue-collar trades, yet we make it difficult for the next generation to embrace this legacy and become self-sufficient early in life. Students who choose college benefit from the Edvest 529 college savings program, which allows parents to make tax-advantaged investments to save for their child's college tuition.[102] While the program allows Wisconsinites to pay for technical colleges, too, those who want to go straight into the workforce cannot use these funds for equipment or trade licenses.[103]

Wisconsin has a proud heritage of hard work and blue-collar trades, yet we make it difficult for the next generation to embrace this legacy and become self-sufficient early in life.

To fix this, Wisconsin can copy West Virginia's Jumpstart Savings Act, which allows families to make tax-free contributions to a 529-style account that covers costs to start a new business, purchase equipment, or obtain certifications or licenses for a particular trade.[104] We should build on this model both federally and in Wisconsin to allow kids to use up to $25,000 from their blue-collar 529s to pay for workplace training, tools, and more. Sequencing dual enrollment in high school and blue-collar 529s after graduation could turbocharge our working class and make trade work a first choice for thousands more students.

Companies cannot find good people to work with their hands because we have spent 30 years funneling students away from trades. Wisconsin is a blue-collar state. It is in our DNA. We should embrace that dignified heritage of hard work and invest accordingly.

Getting to Work

We can only save our state with the tools we have been given. We are not going to stumble on Texas-like oil

deposits or shift financial markets from Manhattan to Madison. We are not going to wake up to Florida's climate or Los Angeles' entertainment hub. Wisconsin's superpowers are our culture of humble, hard work and communities where we take care of one another. We do not need to be the coolest state in the country. We simply need to be the best state for those who want to work hard and raise a family.

We can get there if we rebuild the best educational system in the country. If we can lead the nation in education by 2030, all of our other problems become easier to solve. We can punch well above our weight by training and retaining the best workforce in the country.

Our best and brightest will stay here and raise families close to home, planting deep roots in their communities. Low-income children will no longer be left behind, and their communities will become safer. Entrepreneurs will start high-tech manufacturing businesses here, generating jobs and growth across the state. Our tax base will grow, allowing us to offer better services at lower costs. Snowbirds will come home to live near their Wisconsin-born and Wisconsin-educated grandchildren, keeping investment in our state.

This will not be easy, but it is both pressing and possible. We know what Charles Van Hise,[105] Polly Williams,[106] Howard Fuller,[107] and Tommy Thompson knew:[108] A world-class education remains life's great equalizer. It is the way we provide all Wisconsin children, regardless of the circumstances of their birth, a bright future that matches their promise.

We must match those reformers' vision and dedication to Wisconsin's children. By putting students first and preparing young people to work hard, we can save our state within the decade.

About the Author

Mike Gallagher represents Wisconsin's 8th Congressional District, encompassing Green Bay and northeastern Wisconsin. A Marine Corps veteran, Rep. Gallagher sits on the House Committee on Armed Services, where he is the ranking member on the Subcommittee on Military Personnel, and the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. He is a seventh-generation Wisconsinite, born and raised in Green Bay, and works to help his state provide all children with a high-quality education.

Notes

1. US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, "Real GDP by State: All Industry Total," 2021, https://apps.bea.gov/iTable/iTable.cfm. This rank excludes the District of Columbia and territories. Navigate through "Annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by State" to "GDP in Current Dollars" to find Wisconsin's 2020 GDP of $338.7 billion and Wisconsin's 2020 apportionment population of 5,897,473. US Census Bureau, "2020 Census Apportionment Results," April 26, 2021, https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2020/dec/2020-apportionment-data.html. Divide the former by the latter to get Wisconsin's per capita GDP of $57,427.72.

2. US Census Bureau, "Table E. Numeric and Percent Change in Resident Population of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico: 2020 Census and 2010 Census," April 26, 2021, https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2020/data/apportionment/apportionment-2020-tableE.pdf. Wisconsin had 3.6 percent growth in the 2010s compared to the United States' 7.4 percent growth.

3. US Congress Joint Economic Committee, Social Capital Project, *Losing Our Minds: Brain Drain Across the United States*, April 24, 2019, https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/republicans/2019/4/losing-our-minds-brain-drain-across-the-united-states. Gross brain drain measures the share of highly educated adults who leave the state they were born in versus the share of highly educated adults who stay.

4. Kristin Blagg et al., "America's Gradebook: How Does Your State Stack Up?," Urban Institute, March 2, 2020, https://apps.urban.org/features/naep. If all states were demographically similar, Wisconsin would rank 41st in fourth grade reading and 31st in fourth grade mathematics on the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

5. Nation's Report Card, "Wisconsin State Comparisons," 1996, https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile/overview/WI?cti=PgTab_ScoreComparisons&chort=1&sub=MAT&sj=WI&fs=Grade&st=MN&year=1996R2&sg=Gender%3A+Male+vs.+Female&sgv=Difference&ts=Single+Year&sfj=NP. Wisconsin ranked tied for fourth in fourth grade mathematics in 1996 and sixth in fourth grade reading in 1998.

6. Nation's Report Card, "Wisconsin State Comparisons," 2019, https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile/overview/WI?cti=PgTab_ScoreComparisons&chort=1&sub=MAT&sj=WI&fs=Grade&st=MN&year=2019R3&sg=Gender%3A+Male+vs.+Female&sgv=Difference&ts=Single+Year&sfj=NP.

7. Wisconsin ranked tied for 15th in fourth grade mathematics in 2019 and tied for 24th in fourth grade reading in 2019. This excludes the District of Columbia and territories. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, "WISEdash Data Files by Topic: Forward, Certified, 2018–2019," https://dpi.wi.gov/wisedash/download-files/type?field_wisedash_upload_type_value=Forward. On the 2019 Forward Exam, 40.9 percent (150,101 out of 367,437) of third through eighth graders in public schools scored "Proficient" or "Advanced" in reading. Additionally, 43.4 percent (159,437 out of 367,437) of third through eighth graders in public schools scored "Proficient" or "Advanced" in math. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) defines proficiency as an "understanding of and ability to apply the knowledge and skills for [a student's] grade level that are associated with college content-readiness." Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, "Forward Exam Data and Results," https://dpi.wi.gov/assessment/forward/data.

8. Nation's Report Card, "Wisconsin Student Groups and Gaps," 2019, https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile/overview/WI?cti=PgTab_GapComparisons&chort=1&sub=RED&sj=WI&fs=Grade&st=MN&year=2019R3&sg=National+School+Lunch+Eligibility%3A+Eligible+vs.+Not+Eligible&sgv=Not+Eligible&ts=Single+Year&tss=2019R3&sfj=NP. When sorted by students not eligible for the National School Lunch Program, Wisconsin ranked tied for 27th in fourth grade reading, two points below the national average, and tied for 12th in fourth grade math, one point above the national average, in 2019. This excludes the District of Columbia and territories.

9. Pulitzer Prizes, "The 2017 Pulitzer Prize Winner in General Nonfiction," April 10, 2017, https://www.pulitzer.org/winners/matthew-desmond. Matthew Desmond won a Pulitzer Prize for *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*. This book details mass evictions and inequality in Milwaukee.

10. Nation's Report Card, "Wisconsin Student Groups and Gaps, Grade 8," 2019, https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/

stateprofile/overview/WI?cti=PgTab_GapComparisons&chort=2&sub=MAT&sj=WI&fs=Grade&st=MN&year=2019R3&sg=Race%2FEthnicity%3A+White+vs.+Black&sgv=Black&ts=Single+Year&tss=2019R3&sfj=NP. Wisconsin's Black eighth graders scored 250 in math, one point above the nation's worst performances. Wisconsin's White fourth graders scored 249 in math, the national average for White students. Nation's Report Card, "Wisconsin Student Groups and Gaps, Grade 4," 2019, https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile/overview/WI?cti=PgTab_GapComparisons&chort=1&sub=MAT&sj=WI&fs=Grade&st=MN&year=2019R3&sg=Race%2FEthnicity%3A+White+vs.+Black&sgv=White&ts=Single+Year&tss=2019R3&sfj=NP.

11. Joel McFarland et al., *Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 2019*, US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, January 2020, https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2020/2020117.pdf. Table 4.1 shows a 67 percent four-year public high school graduation rate for Black Wisconsinites in 2017. The national average was 78 percent.

12. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, "WISEdash Data Files by Topic: High School Completion, Certified, 2019–2020," https://dpi.wi.gov/wisedash/download-files/type?field_wisedash_upload_type_value=hs-completion. In 2020, 58,860 regular diploma, equivalency diploma, or other graduation credential students graduated in four years. There were 64,995 seniors on time, which produces a 90.6 percent 2020 graduation rate. Wisconsin had a higher graduation rate in 1990 (92.9 percent). DPI calculated that number differently, including seniors who repeated the grade and excluding those who dropped out before then, likely slightly inflating the true rate.

13. Andrew G. Reiter, "U.S. News & World Report Historical Liberal Arts College and University Rankings," http://andyreiter.com/datasets. The University of Wisconsin–Madison ranked 32nd in 1996 and tied for 42nd in 2021.

14. University of Wisconsin System Office of Policy Analysis & Research, "Report on Remedial Education in the UW System: Demographics, Remedial Completion, Retention, and Graduation," October 2018, https://www.wisconsin.edu/education-reports-statistics/download/educational_statistics/2018-Remedial-Report-Final.pdf. Appendix B shows that 5,504 freshmen, or 19.0 percent, took remedial math in 2017.

15. University of Wisconsin System Office of Policy Analysis & Research, "Educational Performance," https://www.wisconsin.edu/accountability/educational-performance. Of the classes that entered in 2016, 45.8 percent graduated from any University of Wisconsin (UW) within four years; 69.8 percent graduated from any UW within six years, the commonly accepted standard for completion.

16. Nicola Fuchs-Schündeln et al., "The Long-Term Effects of School Closures," VoxEU, November 12, 2020, https://voxeu.org/article/long-term-effects-school-closures. "School and childcare closures have significant negative long-term consequences on the human capital and welfare of the affected children, especially those from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. This reduction in human capital accumulation is likely slowing the long-run growth prospects of countries, especially those whose economies are relatively human capital intensive, such as the US and Europe."

17. Ben Jordan, "MPS Says 30% of High School Students Failed Fall Semester, 11.5% Increase from Last Year," WTMJ-TV, March 24, 2021, https://www.tmj4.com/news/coronavirus/mps-says-30-of-high-school-students-failed-fall-semester-11-5-increase-from-last-year. "Milwaukee Public Schools says more than 30 percent of its high school students failed classes last fall under the virtual learning model. District data shows that's an 11.5 percent increase compared to the 2019–2020 school year."

18. Kati Anderson, "GBAPSD Looks to Address Failing Grades as Virtual Learning Continues," WBAY-TV, December 9, 2020, https://www.wbay.com/2020/12/10/gbapsd-looks-to-address-failing-grades-as-virtual-learning-continues. "Wiegand says 27 percent of the grades reported in the first six weeks of school were failing grades. At the same time last year, only about 10 percent of reported grades were Fs."

19. B. C. Kowalski, "How Wausau's District Compares with Others in Central Wisconsin," *Wausau City Pages*, February 8, 2021, https://www.thecitypages.com/how-wausau-s-district-compares-with-others-in-central-wiscon. "The number of high school students at D.C. Everest who had failing grades this year was the highest it has been in the three years provided to City Pages upon request."

20. Alec Johnson, "Nearly 28% of Waukesha School District High School Students Are Failing at Least One Class, Records Show," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, January 15, 2021, https://www.jsonline.com/story/communities/waukesha/news/waukesha/2021/01/15/nearly-28-waukesha-high-school-students-failing-class/4176423001. "In the first quarter of the 2019–20 school year, 269 high school students across the district failed at least one class. That number ballooned to 982 during the first quarter of the 2020–21 school year,

a 265.1% increase."

21. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, "PISA 2018 Results," December 3, 2019, https://www.oecd.org/pisa/PISA-results_ENGLISH.png. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development sometimes draws tests only from a certain portion of a country, as with China.

22. Andreas Schleicher, *PISA 2018 Insights and Interpretations*, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, December 3, 2019, https://www.oecd.org/pisa/PISA%202018%20Insights%20and%20Interpretations%20FINAL%20PDF.pdf. The United States' average placed it in the fourth of six levels in reading and the fifth of six levels in math. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Chapter 15: Proficiency Scale Construction," 2018, https://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisa-for-development/pisafordevelopment2018technicalreport/PISA-D%20TR%20Chapter%2015%20-%20Proficiency%20Scale%20Construction%20-%20final.pdf.

23. US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, "Education Expenditures by Country," May 2021, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cmd.asp. The US spends $13,600 per student in 2018 dollars, as of 2016. Estonia and Poland spend about 55 percent of that, $7,400 and $7,200, and rank in the top 10 in reading and math.

24. Andrew Ujifusa, "See What the Huge COVID-19 Aid Deal Biden Has Signed Means for Education, in Two Charts," *Education Week*, March 11, 2021, https://www.edweek.org/policy-politics/see-what-the-huge-covid-19-aid-deal-biden-has-signed-means-for-education-in-two-charts/2021/03. "Through this and two previous COVID-19 relief bills enacted in March and December of last year, public schools have received approximately $195 billion in aid from the federal government. That's nearly twice the $100 billion K–12 education received in the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, commonly known as the stimulus, to counteract the effects of the Great Recession."

25. US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, "Total and Current Expenditures per Pupil in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools: Selected Years, 1919–20 Through 2017–18," September 2020, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d20/tables/dt20_236.55.asp. This figure uses constant 2019 and 2020 dollars. It uses "current expenditures," which include classroom spending but not debt or building spending. $14,047 per pupil in 2018 divided by $10,234 in 1996 amounts to 37.3 percent growth.

26. Sarah Schwartz and Sarah D. Sparks, "How Do Kids Learn to Read? What the Science Says," *Education Week*, October 2, 2019, https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/how-do-kids-learn-to-read-what-the-science-says/2019/10. "Decades of research has shown that explicit phonics instruction benefits early readers, but particularly those who struggle to read."

27. Sarah Schwartz, "The Most Popular Reading Programs Aren't Backed by Science," *Education Week*, December 3, 2019, https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/the-most-popular-reading-programs-arent-backed-by-science/2019/12. "Units of Study for Teaching Reading was developed by Lucy Calkins, a researcher and the founding director of the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project. . . . Calkins declined an interview for this story through her publisher, Heinemann." The Education Week Research Center asked nationally representative special education, kindergarten, first grade, and second grade teachers what curriculum they used to teach reading, and 16 percent use Calkins' products. The numbers do not add up to 100 percent because schools may use multiple curricula. Assuming that the survey was representative, 16 percent of the 10,976,000 public school kindergarten, first, and second graders in 2018 is 1,756,000 students. US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, "Enrollment in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, by Level and Grade: Selected Years, Fall 1980 Through Fall 2029," August 2020, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d20/tables/dt20_203.10.asp.

28. Sarah Schwartz, "Lucy Calkins Says Balanced Literacy Needs 'Rebalancing,'" *Education Week*, October 19, 2020, https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/lucy-calkins-says-balanced-literacy-needs-rebalancing/2020/10. "This new document seems to signal a major change in instructional theory from the organization."

29. Donald J. Hernandez, *Double Jeopardy: How Third Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation*, Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2012, https://www.aecf.org/resources/double-jeopardy. Appendix II, Table I shows that 4 percent of students who read proficiently by third grade and 16 percent of students not proficient in reading by third grade failed to graduate high school on time. Additionally, 24 percent of Black students and 25 percent of Hispanic students not proficient in reading by third grade failed to graduate high school on time.

30. Foundation for Excellence in Education, "Comprehensive Early Literacy: Policy Summary," 2020, https://www.excelined.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/ExcelinEd.PolicyToolkit.K-3Reading.PolicySummary.2017.pdf. "The nation could be losing up to $2.2 trillion annually due to low adult literacy rates."

31. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, "WISEdash Data Files by Topic: Forward, Certified, 2018–2019." In 2019, 13,022 public school third graders out of 58,566 (22.2 percent) tested "Below Basic." Additionally, 35.3 percent of economically disadvantaged third graders tested "Below Basic" in 2019.

32. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, "Instructional Materials," 2019, https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/administrators/e-mail/Instructional_Materials_FINAL.xlsx. Wisconsin has 444 school districts and independent charter schools. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, "School Directory: Public District Search," https://apps6.dpi.wi.gov/SchoolDirectory/Search/PublicDistrictsSearch. Choose "Show All" and then "Search." Based on the listed adoption year, 159 districts have used or continue to use Units of Study for Teaching Reading, a number that includes large districts such as Green Bay, Madison, Oshkosh, Sheboygan, and Waukesha; 159 divided by 444 is 35.8 percent.

33. Nation's Report Card, "Mississippi State Comparisons, Grade 4," 2013, https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile/overview/MS?cti=PgTab_ScoreComparisons&chort=1&sub=RED&sj=MS&fs=Grade&st=MN&year=2013R3&sg=Gender%3A+Male+vs.+Female&sgv=Difference&ts=Single+Year&tss=2019R3-2013R3&sfj=NP. Unsurprisingly, Mississippi was also 50th of 50 states in eighth grade reading at that time. Nation's Report Card, "Mississippi State Comparisons, Grade 8," 2013, https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile/overview/MS?cti=PgTab_ScoreComparisons&chort=2&sub=RED&sj=MS&fs=Grade&st=MN&year=2013R3&sg=Gender%3A+Male+vs.+Female&sgv=Difference&ts=Single+Year&tss=2019R3-2013R3&sfj=NP.

34. Mississippi Department of Education, "Mississippi Ranks No. 1 in Nation for Score Gains on National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)," press release, November 12, 2019, https://www.mdek12.org/news/2019/10/30/Mississippi-Ranks-No-1-in-Nation-for-Score-Gains-on-National-Assessment-of-Educational-Progress-NAEP_20191030. "Mississippi is the only state in the nation to show significant increases in three of the four core NAEP subjects in 2019."

35. Nation's Report Card, "Mississippi State Comparisons," 2019, https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile/overview/MS?cti=PgTab_ScoreComparisons&chort=1&sub=RED&sj=MS&fs=Grade&st=MN&year=2019R3&sg=Gender%3A+Male+vs.+Female&sgv=Difference&ts=Single+Year&tss=-2019R3&sfj=NP. Because Mississippi refused to stagnate, Mississippi's students are now just one point behind Wisconsin's. If Wisconsin had matched Mississippi's 10-point growth since 2013, we would have ranked first in the nation in 2019, tied with Massachusetts.

36. Foundation for Excellence in Education, "Comprehensive K–3 Reading Policy: Model Policy," 2018, https://excelined.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ExcelinEdPolicyToolkit_K-3Reading_ModelLegislation_2017-1.pdf. "The parent of any K–3 student who exhibits a deficiency in reading at any time during the school year must be notified in writing no later than 15 days after the identification of the reading deficiency."

37. Mississippi Department of Education, "Majority of 3rd Graders Meet Higher Standard to Pass Reading Test," press release, May 22, 2019, https://www.mdek12.org/news/2019/5/22/Majority-of-3rd-Graders-Meet-Higher-Standard-to-Pass-Reading-Test_20190522. Asking students to meet high standards has led to children and teachers rising to meet them. Mississippi was able to raise its benchmarks for third grade reading after several years of success.

38. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, *2019 Educator Preparation Programs Annual Report*, 2019, https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/licensing/pdf/2019-WI-EPP-Annual-Report.pdf. Table 8b shows 979 passing students, 748 women and 231 men, in 2018. It shows 1,203 total test takers, 925 women and 278 men, that year; 979 divided by 1,203 yields an 81.4 percent passage rate for all students. A mere 130 Asian, Black, Hispanic, or multiracial students took the 2018 test, and only 39 passed it. (There were too few Indigenous test takers to show data.) That amounts to a 30.0 percent passage rate. These numbers represent first-time test takers. Additionally, DPI's totals between gender and race have a difference of 19 students, causing a small error.

39. Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services, "NCLEX Pass Rates—Board Approved RN Schools," https://dsps.wi.gov/Documents/2017NCLEXStatsRNApproved.pdf. In 2017, 3,537 students in registered nurse programs took the National Council Licensure Examination at Wisconsin nonprofit and for-profit colleges, and 3,217 students passed it. That produces a 91.0 percent passage rate. These numbers represent first-time test takers.

40. Helen F. Ladd and Lucy C. Sorensen, "Do Master's Degrees Matter? Advanced Degrees, Career Paths, and the Effectiveness of Teachers" (working paper, National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research, Arlington, VA, August 2015), https://caldercenter.org/sites/default/files/WP%20136_0.pdf. "This set of results essentially confirms the findings from prior studies that earning a master's degree does not lead to any test score improvements at the middle school level."

41. US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, "Highest Degree Earned, Years of Full-Time Teaching Experience, and Average Class Size for Teachers in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, by State: 2011–12," May 2013, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_209.30.asp. In 2012, the most recent year data are available, 55.1 percent of Wisconsin's 66,800 teachers had attained a master's degree as their highest level of education.

42. US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, "Estimated Average Annual Salary of Teachers in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, by State: Selected Years, 1969–70 Through 2019–20," September 2020, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d20/tables/dt20_211.60.asp. Wisconsin has spent 6.9 percent more on public schools in 2017 than it did in 2000, growing from $11,679 per student to $12,486 per student in fixed 2018 and 2019 dollars. US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, "Current Expenditure per Pupil in Fall Enrollment in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, by State or Jurisdiction: Selected Years, 1969–70 Through 2016–17," August 2019, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_236.65.asp. However, public school teachers make 5.4 percent less in 2020 than they did in 2000, dropping from $62,530 to $59,176 in constant 2019 and 2020 dollars.

43. Benjamin Scafidi, *Back to the Staffing Surge: The Great Teacher Salary Stagnation and the Decades-Long Employment Growth in American Public Schools*, EdChoice, May 2017, https://www.edchoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Back-to-the-Staffing-Surge-by-Ben-Scafidi.pdf. "Between FY 1992 and FY 2015, public school enrollment increased by 20 percent nationally. . . . The increase in teachers during this time period was 29 percent, about 1.5 times the growth in students. However, the growth in all other staff, those who are not teachers, was almost 2.5 times the growth in students. This disproportionate growth in all other staff matches the pattern present in American public schools for more than six decades."

44. Seth Gershenson et al., "The Long-Run Impacts of Same-Race Teachers," IZA Institute of Labor Economics, March 2017, http://ftp.iza.org/dp10630.pdf. "There is, in fact, a causal relationship between black students' exposure to same-race teachers in elementary school and longer-run educational outcomes, particularly among socio-economically disadvantaged students."

45. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, "WISEdash Data Files by Topic: Enrollment, Certified, 2020–2021," https://dpi.wi.gov/wisedash/download-files/type?field_wisedash_upload_type_value=Enrollment. In 2021, there are 829,935 children in Wisconsin's public schools: 8,914 are Indigenous, 34,497 are Asian, 73,483 are Black, 106,239 are Hispanic, 633 are Pacific Islander, 38,161 are multiracial, 844 are unknown, and 567,164 are White. Therefore, 31.7 percent of Wisconsin public school students are non-White.

46. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, "Public All Staff Report," 2021, https://publicstaffreports.dpi.wi.gov/PubStaffReport/Public/PublicReport/AllStaffReport. Select "2020–2021" for "Year" and "53-Teacher" for "Assignment Position." Download the report. As of May 3, 2021, out of 76,885 Wisconsin public school teachers, 688 are Asian, 1,346 are Black, 1,550 are Hispanic, 228 are Indigenous, 38 are Pacific Islander, 296 are multiracial, and 72,739 are White. That means 5.4 percent are people of color. Other reports have chronicled the growing gap. Anne Chapman and Ari Brown, *A Teacher Who Looks Like Me: Examining Racial Diversity in Wisconsin's Teacher Workforce and the Student-to-Teacher Pipeline*, Wisconsin Policy Forum, June 2020, https://wispolicyforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/TeacherWhoLooksLikeMe_FullReport.pdf.

47. US Department of Education, Office of Federal Student Aid, "Receive a TEACH Grant to Pay for College," https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/grants/teach. Students would then be able to use their grants at colleges that actually will help them secure a teaching career.

48. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, "Wisconsin Master Educator Assessment Process," https://dpi.wi.gov/licensing/apply-educator-license/wmeap. "In order to apply for the WMEAP, candidates must meet all eligibility requirements by submitting all of the following as part of the application: Documentation of a related master's degree."

49. John P. Papay et al., "Learning Job Skills from Colleagues at Work: Evidence from a Field Experiment Using Teacher Performance Data," *American Economic Journal* 12, no. 1 (February 2020): 359–88, https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/pol.20170709. "We

document meaningful improvements in job performance as a result of teachers working together in skill-matched pairs. . . . We find that the skill-matched partnerships improve teachers' job performance, as measured by their students' test score growth."

50. Saba Bireda and Robin Chait, *Increasing Teacher Diversity: Strategies to Improve the Teacher Workforce*, Center for American Progress, November 2011, https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED535654.pdf. "[Teach Tomorrow in Oakland] recruits promising paraprofessionals and other school staff who are interested in becoming educators, and supports them in completing a bachelor's degree and teaching credential, and finding a teaching position. . . . The program is funded through a variety of sources including the Transition to Teaching grant." The government has not funded the Transition to Teaching program since 2015. US Department of Education, "Transition to Teaching: Funding Status," August 31, 2015, https://www2.ed.gov/programs/transitionteach/funding.html.

51. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, "Public All Staff Report," 2021, https://publicstaffreports.dpi.wi.gov/PubStaffReport/Public/PublicReport/AllStaffReport. Select "2020–2021" for "Year" and "96-Paraprofessional" for "Assignment Position." Download the report. As of May 3, 2021, there are 13,600 paraprofessionals in Wisconsin public schools, 2,395 of which are in Milwaukee, Madison, Kenosha, Green Bay, and Racine. Of those, 65 are Asian, 739 are Black, 392 are Hispanic, eight are Indigenous, one is Pacific Islander, 28 are multiracial, and 1,162 are White. Therefore, 51.5 percent are people of color.

52. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, "Milwaukee Parental Choice Program—September MPCP Pupil Headcount History by School, 1990–91 Through 2020–21," https://dpi.wi.gov/parental-education-options/choice-programs/data/mpcp-historical. These numbers represent 86 Milwaukee Parental Choice Program schools that are in Milwaukee and open in 2021. Specifically, 8,012 is the sum of each school's enrollment in its first year in the program, and 25,841 is the sum of those schools' enrollment in 2021. School application materials identify addresses. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, "Schools Indicating an Intent to Participate in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP)—2021–22 School," May 25, 2021, https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/parental-education-options/Choice/Student_Application_Webpage/mpcp_2021-22_school_list.pdf.

53. Wisconsin Department of Education, "Accountability Report Cards," 2019, https://apps2.dpi.wi.gov/reportcards. Three traditional district schools are rated "Significantly Exceeds Expectations" out of 173, or 1.7 percent. There are three high-poverty district charter schools rated "Significantly Exceeds Expectations" out of 18, or 16.7 percent; one high-poverty non-district charter school out of 13, or 7.7 percent; and 14 high-poverty voucher schools out of 69, or 20.3 percent. In total, there are 18 high-poverty choice schools out of 100, or 18.0 percent. These numbers rely on the accuracy of 2019 data and the federal definition of a high-poverty school, which is any school where at least 75 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, "Concentration of Public School Students Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch," May 2021, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_clb.asp. These numbers exclude schools with no rating or alternative schools with an alternative rating. All Wisconsin, Racine, or Milwaukee Parental Choice Program schools must receive a choice student report card displaying voucher students' data, but they may also choose to receive an all-student report card displaying all students' data. These numbers use only all-student report cards when both are available.

54. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, "Comparative Revenue per Member: Single-Year Summary Data Files: 2019–2020 Comparative Revenue per Member," https://dpi.wi.gov/sfs/statistical/cost-revenue/comparative-revenue-member. This number is the average total revenue per student for a Wisconsin public school.

55. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, "2020–21 Funding Comparison for 'WI Choice Programs,'" https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sfs/pdf/FY21-ChoiceOptionsFundingTable.pdf. Independent charter schools receive $9,165 per student. Voucher schools receive $8,300 per elementary school student and $8,946 per high school student.

56. Anne Chapman, Betsy Mueller, and Rob Henken, *A Teachable Moment: Understanding the Complexities of Charter School Financing in Milwaukee*, Wisconsin Policy Forum, August 2018, https://wispolicyforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/TeachableMoment_Full.pdf. "MPS, like UWM and the City of Milwaukee, charges its charter schools an administrative fee intended to defray the district's administrative and oversight costs. The standard fee for NIC schools is 3% of the school's total per pupil payment." For every $9,165 Milwaukee charter schools receive, Milwaukee Public Schools takes $275. If that percentage holds true for the 9,257 charter students in Wisconsin in 2021, school districts would take $2,545,212 annually from charter schools.

57. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, "WISEdash Data Files by Topic: Enrollment, Certified, 2020–2021." There are 9,257 independent charter school students in Wisconsin. There are 45,954 voucher students in Wisconsin. Wisconsin Department of

Public Instruction, "Private School Choice Programs: Data and Reports: School Enrollment and Estimated Payment (MPCP, RPCP, WPCP & SNSP), 2020–21," https://dpi.wi.gov/parental-education-options/choice-programs/data. In total, there are 55,211 non-district choice students.

58. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, "Equalization Aid Formula," https://dpi.wi.gov/sfs/aid/general/equalization/formula. You can try and interpret the complicated formula yourself. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, "General Aid Worksheets—Current and Historical: 2020–2021 Reports: October 15 Certification Worksheet," https://dpi.wi.gov/sfs/aid/general/equalization/worksheets-general-aid.

59. Libby Sobic, CJ Szafir, and Jessica Holmberg, "Untapped Potential: WILL's Analysis of Wisconsin's Part-Time Open Enrollment Program and the Need to Expand Course Access," Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty, February 2020, https://www.will-law.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/research-brief-course-choice.pdf. "Students from all over the state use part-time open enrollment to take courses that their resident school district may not offer, such as foreign languages, chemistry, personal finance, and economics." The Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty compiled a list of courses students traveled to or took virtually in 2018 and 2019. Libby Sobic, CJ Szafir, and Jessica Holmberg, "Untapped Potential Appendices," Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty, February 2020, https://will-law.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Part-time-Open-Enrollment-report-Appendices.pdf.

60. Michael Q. McShane and Andy Smarick, "To Improve Rural Schools, Focus on Their Strengths," *Education Next*, April 8, 2019, https://www.educationnext.org/improve-rural-schools-focus-on-strengths-facilitate-school-choice-charter-conversions-solutions. "One potential solution is course access. Course-access programs allow students to take two or three courses per day from outside providers instead of their public school. . . . This approach can combine the best of school choice without sacrificing the cohesion of the school community or the operations of an existing school."

61. Robin Lake and Alvin Makori, "The Digital Divide Among Students During COVID-19: Who Has Access? Who Doesn't?," Center on Reinventing Public Education, June 16, 2020, https://www.crpe.org/thelens/digital-divide-among-students-during-covid-19-who-has-access-who-doesnt. "That same analysis also found approximately half of districts said they planned to distribute computers, tablets, or similar devices to students. Again, we saw a significant divide between urban districts (84.6 percent) and their rural and suburban counterparts (43.2 percent and 59.1 percent, respectively)."

62. US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, "Number and Percentage Distribution of 5- to 17-Year-Old Students, by Home Internet Access, Race/Ethnicity, and Locale: 2017," April 2019, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_218.71.asp. In total, 89.1 percent of rural students have some kind of broadband access. However, only 73.3 percent have fixed broadband, which is faster and more reliable. This squares with Pew Research Center polling that 31 percent of children in April 2020 had to use public Wi-Fi to do homework because their home internet was inadequate. Emily A. Vogels et al., "53% of Americans Say the Internet Has Been Essential During the COVID-19 Outbreak," Pew Research Center, April 30, 2020, https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2020/04/30/53-of-americans-say-the-internet-has-been-essential-during-the-covid-19-outbreak.

63. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, "Wisconsin Digital Equity—Home Internet Access Survey," https://wi-dpi.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=cf4b8ba0621847288eb1b3ea7a9dba4a. Dark blue areas indicate the least connected Wisconsin school districts, according to voluntary surveys.

64. Federal Communications Commission, "Successful Rural Digital Opportunity Fund Auction to Expand Broadband to over 10 Million Rural Americans," press release, December 7, 2020, https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-368588A1.pdf. "And the FCC's structuring of the reverse auction yielded significant savings, as competitive bidding among over 300 providers yielded an allocation of $9.2 billion in support out of the $16 billion set aside for Phase I of the auction. Importantly, the $6.8 billion in potential Phase I support that was not allocated will be rolled over into the future Phase II auction, which now can draw upon a budget of up to $11.2 billion in targeting partially-served areas (and the few unserved areas that did not receive funding through Phase I)." In addition to $9.2 billion in 2020, the Federal Communications Commission also allocated almost $1.5 billion in 2019 through the Connect America Fund Phase II. Federal Communications Commission, "FCC Authorizes Nearly $89.2 Million in Funding for Rural Broadband," press release, December 16, 2019, https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-361387A1.pdf.

65. Adam Satariano, "Inside a Pro-Huawei Influence Campaign," *New York Times*, January 29, 2021, https://www.nytimes.

com/2021/01/29/technology/commercial-disinformation-huawei-belgium.html. "Britain announced a ban of Huawei products last year; Germany and other European countries are debating restrictions of their own." In 2020, the United States identified Huawei and ZTE, two Chinese telecommunications giants, as national security threats, diminishing their power in American markets. David McCabe, "F.C.C. Designates Huawei and ZTE as National Security Threats," *New York Times*, June 30, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/30/technology/fcc-huawei-zte-national-security.html.

66. Ajit Pai, "Dissenting Statement of Commissioner Ajit Pai Re: Modernizing the E-Rate Program for Schools and Libraries," Federal Communications Commission, 2015, https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-330986A5.pdf. "Americans want a student-centered E-Rate program. That means a one-page application; a funding commitment process that would last no more than a week; additional funding targeted to rural and remote schools and libraries; an end to the outdated priority system so that local communities can make their own decisions; a dramatic reduction in the amount of money applicants would spend on consultants and the amount of time they'd have to spend on USAC appeals; and an increase in funding by up to $1 billion each year for next-generation services, all without raising fees one penny."

67. Adie Tomer, Elizabeth Kneebone, and Ranjitha Shivaram, *Signs of Digital Distress: Mapping Broadband Availability and Subscription in American Neighborhoods*, Brookings Institution, September 12, 2017, https://www.brookings.edu/research/signs-of-digital-distress-mapping-broadband-availability. "Congress and executive agencies should give immediate attention to reducing deployment costs. One promising way to do so—if politics and industry can align on implementation—is through 'dig once' policies, which allow for installing conduit or fiber optic cables during any right-of-way construction project (e.g., road construction)."

68. Christopher Mims, "Elon Musk and Amazon Are Battling to Put Satellite Internet in Your Backyard," *Wall Street Journal*, March 20, 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/elon-musk-and-amazon-are-battling-to-put-satellite-internet-in-your-backyard-11616212827. "Internet from space has obvious implications for potentially closing the rural/urban digital divide, not only for Americans but also the rest of the world. It could also encourage new ways of working and living, untethered from cable and fiber-optic internet connections."

69. Isla McKetta. "Starlink: Bridging the Digital Divide or Shooting for the Stars?," Speedtest by Ookla, May 5, 2021, https://www.speedtest.net/insights/blog/starlink-q1-2021. Although only in its trial stage, Starlink already outdoes wired broadband in download speed and latency in some American counties.

70. Public Service Commission, "Broadband Grants," https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/Programs/BroadbandGrants.aspx. Wisconsin has recently funded cable, digital subscriber line, fiber, and fixed wireless broadband, but we must prepare for satellite broadband once it opens to the broader public.

71. Kari Gensler Santistevan, *The Wisconsin Inter-District Public School Open Enrollment Program: A Report to the Governor and Legislature, 2019–20*, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/open-enrollment/pdf/2019-20-oe-leg-report.pdf. In 2020, 65,266 students attended a school outside of their assigned districts. As previously mentioned, 55,211 students are in independent charter schools or voucher schools in 2021. That makes a total of 120,477 children served by school choice. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, "Private School Choice Programs: Data and Reports: School Enrollment and Estimated Payment (MPCP, RPCP, WPCP & SNSP), 2020–21," https://dpi.wi.gov/parental-education-options/choice-programs/data.

72. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, "Open Enrollment Application Process 2021–2022," https://sms.dpi.wi.gov/OEParent. DPI provides parents with only a list of schools, the grades they educate, and their locations.

73. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, "Private School Choice Program (PSCP) Online Parent Application, 2021–22 School Year," https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/parental-education-options/Choice/Student_Application_Webpage/Parent_app_screen_prints_ENGLISH_2021-22.pdf. The application focuses more on verifying families' income than on helping parents make good decisions for their children.

74. Mike Ford and Erin Richards, "Student Turnover in Wisconsin Schools," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, October 5, 2018, https://projects.jsonline.com/news/2018/10/5/student-turnover-in-wisconsin-schools.html. Journalists and a researcher combined all 2016–17 school year mobility rates into one table. Out of 75,902 Milwaukee Public Schools students, 17,755 (26.05 percent) switched schools that year. Out of 7,169 Milwaukee independent charter school students, 1,246 (19.39 percent) did. In Milwaukee, then, 19,001 students out of 83,071, or 25.36 percent, moved among schools. Researchers have studied what happens to Milwaukee students who transfer.

Michael R. Ford, "School Sector Mobility in an Urban School Choice Environment," *Urban Education*, December 2019, 1–24, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0042085919894033.

75. Richard O. Welsh, "School Hopscotch: A Comprehensive Review of K–12 Student Mobility in the United States," *Review of Educational Research* 87, no. 3 (2017): 475–511, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/0034654316672068. "Research has found that there are many difficulties associated with switching schools such as acclimatizing to curriculum changes and school environment as well as struggling with subject matter. . . . Changing schools disrupts and weakens peer relationships, lowers social ties and school attachments as well as engagement in school and community, and increases the risk of underachievement. . . . Reynolds et al. reported that each additional move is associated with a reduction in reading and math achievement (d = –.10) and students who moved three or more times had considerably higher school dropout rates than stable students."

76. Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce, "Milwaukee School Quality Map," https://mkeschoolmap.org/map. Although an ideal system would provide more information to parents, it should be as easy to understand and as simple to use as the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce map.

77. Steven Glazerman et al., "The Choice Architecture of School Choice Websites," *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness* 13, no. 2 (2020): 322–50, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/19345747.2020.1716905. "Even seemingly mundane decisions about the order in which schools appear and whether data are presented graphically can lead parents toward one type of school or another. As we have argued, this is unavoidable. . . . Given what our results show about the substantial impacts for the default sort ordering of schools, the same could very well be true in the school choice context."

78. Corey A. DeAngelis and Will Flanders, "The Education Marketplace: The Predictors of School Growth and Closures in Milwaukee," *Journal of School Choice* 13, no. 3 (2019): 355–79, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15582159.2019.1595949. "We have shown that all three sectors are responsive, to some extent, to academic performance. Schools across sectors experience higher enrollments when they perform well academically. However, academic performance is only related to the risk of closure among the private school sector." While that may be true of individual district schools, competition holds school districts as a whole accountable. Keith P. Posley and Martha Kreitzman, "2021–22 Superintendent's Proposed Budget," Milwaukee Public Schools, https://mps.milwaukee.k12.wi.us/MPS-English/CFO/Budget--Finance/SuperintendentsProposedBudget.pdf. "The highly competitive nature of the K–12 education landscape in Milwaukee along with the decline in the number of school-age children impacts MPS enrollment."

79. Wisconsin Elections Commission, "2021 Spring Election and Special Legislative Election Results: Statewide Percentage Results, 4.6.21 Spring Election," April 6, 2021, https://elections.wi.gov/node/7421. In 2021, 914,434 people voted for a state superintendent. The Census estimates there were 4,555,837 voting-age Wisconsinites in 2019, which yields turnout of 20.1 percent. US Census Bureau, "Estimates of the Total Resident Population and Resident Population Age 18 Years and Older for the United States, States, and Puerto Rico: July 1, 2019," April 20, 2021, https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2010s-state-detail.html. Additionally, only 24.1 percent of registered Wisconsinites voted for state superintendent, as 3,788,770 adults had registered to vote by May 1, 2021. Wisconsin Elections Commission, "May 1, 2021 Voter Registration Statistics," May 1, 2021, https://elections.wi.gov/node/7426.

80. Wisconsin Elections Commission, "2020 Fall General Election Results: Statewide Results, All Offices (Pre-Presidential Recount)," November 3, 2020, https://elections.wi.gov/elections-voting/results/2020/fall-general. In 2020, 3,297,352 people voted for a president. The Census estimates there were 4,555,837 voting-age Wisconsinites in 2019, which yields turnout of 72.4 percent. US Census Bureau, "Estimates of the Total Resident Population and Resident Population Age 18 Years and Older for the United States, States, and Puerto Rico: July 1, 2019." Additionally, an incredible 86.5 percent of registered Wisconsinites voted for president, as 3,811,193 adults had registered to vote by December 1, 2020. Wisconsin Elections Commission, "December 1, 2020 Voter Registration Statistics," December 1, 2020, https://elections.wi.gov/node/7265.

81. Rory Linnane, "Special Interest Group Spending Tops $1 Million in Wisconsin Schools Superintendent Race," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, April 5, 2021, https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/politics/elections/2021/04/05/special-interest-group-spending-tops-1-million-wisconsin-superintendent-race/7095406002. Deborah Kerr received 26.2 percent of what Jill Underly did, $209,000 to $797,600. Underly won with the support of the teachers union, Planned Parenthood, and a major progressive advocacy group led by a 14-year Planned Parenthood employee. WisPolitics, "A Better Wisconsin Together: Nicole Safar to Lead Progressive Communications and Research Hub a Better Wisconsin Together as Executive Director," press release, June 8, 2020, https://www.wispolitics.

com/2020/a-better-wisconsin-together-nicole-safar-to-lead-progressive-communications-and-research-hub-a-better-wisconsin-together-as-executive-director.

82. US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, "Revenues and Expenditures for Public Elementary and Secondary Education: FY 18," August 2020, https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2020/2020306.pdf. Wisconsin spent $12.71 billion on primary and secondary public education in 2018 to 2019, $10.71 billion of which was direct education spending.

83. Will Flanders, "Wisconsin School Districts Have Administrative Bloat to Blame for Budget Failures," Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty, June 18, 2020, https://willlawandliberty.medium.com/wisconsin-school-districts-have-administrative-bloat-to-blame-for-budget-failures-972c2a2d9105. "The majority of districts fall below the 50% threshold in every year—meaning that for every teacher in the district, there is more than one employee in another role."

84. Education Commission of the States, "K-12 Governance: Chief State School Officer," November 2020, https://internal-search.ecs.org/comparisons/k-12-governance-chief-state-school-officer-03. Of the states that directly elect their state superintendent of schools, those of Arizona, California, Georgia, Idaho, Montana, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Washington, and Wyoming answer to a state education board with some governor-appointed members, and those of New York and South Carolina work with a state education board elected by the state legislature.

85. Scott Bauer, "Smaller Class Sizes, Flexibility Urged for Wisconsin Schools," Associated Press, June 22, 2020, https://apnews.com/article/ca7d20c4b49bfae562f3bb2f17660450. "The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's 87-page guidance document, dubbed 'Education Forward,' is not a mandate for Wisconsin's 421 public school districts, 26 independent charter schools and 792 private schools. . . . 'This guidance is designed to be used in consultation with local and tribal health departments, and we encourage school districts to work with them closely to make the best decisions for their communities.'"

86. Samantha West, "Compared to Normal Years, Nearly Twice as Many Appleton High School Students Failed a Class This Fall," *Post-Crescent*, February 12, 2021, https://www.postcrescent.com/story/news/education/2021/02/12/appleton-area-high-school-failure-rate-soared-during-fall-semester/6736529002. This is in addition to the variety of failing districts detailed earlier.

87. Annysa Johnson, Samantha West, and Alec Johnson, "Wisconsin Public School Enrollments See Biggest Drop in Decades in First Count Since COVID-19, Adding to Budget Challenges," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, October 15, 2020, https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/education/2020/10/15/wisconsins-2020-21-public-school-enrollment-drops-amid-covid-19/36521610001. "Enrollment in Wisconsin public schools fell by 3% this year, the largest dip in decades. . . . The biggest enrollment losses were in 4- and 5-year-old kindergarten, which are not required by Wisconsin law."

88. Wisconsin Technical College System, *Wisconsin Technical Colleges*, 2020–21, https://wtcsystem.edu/assets/Uploads/Publications/Report/2020-21-Guidebook.pdf. "93% of graduates live and work in Wisconsin."

89. Ben Konruff, "A Reflection of WTCS Student Success Center Progress and Data-Informed Next Steps," Wisconsin Technical College System Student Success Center, September 2020, https://wtcsystem.edu/assets/Uploads/Publications/Report/Action-Research-Student-Success-Center.pdf. The Jobs for the Future Student Success Center Network helps unite community colleges around goals as a system while allowing each institution freedom to retain their unique character. Wisconsin joined 15 other states in 2017. Jobs for the Future, "Student Success Center Network," https://www.jff.org/what-we-do/impact-stories/student-success-center-network.

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91. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, "Sixteen Career Clusters and Their Pathways," https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/acp/pdf/2020_05_13_16_Career_Clusters_and_Pathways_5-5-20.pdf. The Wisconsin Technical College System now provides 16 clusters that cover jobs our state needs.

92. Konruff, "A Reflection of WTCS Student Success Center Progress and Data-Informed Next Steps." Six out of 16 schools have made progress on metric 1C, "Students know which courses they should take and in what sequence." Zero out of 16 schools have completed metric 2B, "Special supports are provided to help academically unprepared students to succeed." Three out of 16 have completed or made progress on metric 3E, "The college schedules courses to ensure students can take the courses they need when they need them."

93. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and Wisconsin Technical College System, *Wisconsin Perkins V State Plan*, Spring 2020, https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/cte/CPA/2021_04_Final_PerkinsV_2020_State_of_Wisconsin_Plan_Updated.pdf. "For Perkins, a new dashboard will be launched (spring-summer 2020) that will provide an analysis of Perkins concentrators, Perkins indicators, and special populations (including race/ethnicity groups)."

94. Wisconsin Technical College System, "Ascendium Grant Will Help Close Equity Gaps," press release, January 26, 2021, https://www.wtcsystem.edu/impact/news/ascendium-grant-will-help-close-equity-gaps. "Specifically, the Ascendium grant funding will allow WTCS institutions to advance important reforms, including data-informed decision-making, guided pathways and leadership development."

95. Jaime Thomas et al., *The Effects of Expanding Pell Grant Eligibility for Short Occupational Training Programs: Results from the Experimental Sites Initiative*, US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, December 2020, https://www.mathematica.org/our-publications-and-findings/publications/the-effects-of-expanding-pell-grant-eligibility-for-short-occupational-training-programs-results. "Thus, Pell Grants are available only to students . . . who enroll in programs that last at least a typical semester (15 weeks). However, the rules may prevent low-income adults who need a leg up in the labor market from benefiting from occupational training programs that can be completed in less time and often at a lower cost than other programs." "Offering Pell Grants for very short-term occupational training programs increased program enrollment and completion by about 10 percentage points."

96. Wisconsin Technical College System, *Wisconsin Technical Colleges*. "Degrees for Every Need" explains the various types of certifications students can earn.

97. Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, "Wisconsin Fast Forward," http://wisconsinfastforward.com. Wisconsin Fast Forward's history is filled with business and workforce development partnerships. Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, "DWD Announces Wisconsin Fast Forward Grant Recipients," press release, February 23, 2021, https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/press/210223-wff-grant.htm. This year's grants covered the agriculture, construction, information technology, manufacturing, and transportation industries.

98. Wisconsin Technical College System, "Dual Enrollment: 2019–2020 Advanced Standing," June 22, 2021, https://mywtcs.wtcsystem.edu/educational-services/career-prep-dual-enrollment/dual-enrollment. There are 578 course agreements across Wisconsin for high schoolers to earn advanced standing in technical college. There are also 3,723 course agreements in Wisconsin for high schoolers to earn dual credit at any type of college. Wisconsin Technical College System, "Dual Enrollment: 2019–2020 Transcripted Credit," June 22, 2021, https://mywtcs.wtcsystem.edu/educational-services/career-prep-dual-enrollment/dual-enrollment. Every high school in Wisconsin should have such partnerships.

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101. US Bureau of Labor Statistics, "May 2020 National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates: United States," March 31, 2021, https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nat.htm. In May 2020, line installers and repairers made an annual average of $67,940. Structural metal fabricators and fitters earned $44,750 a year, on average.

102. Edvest, "10 Reasons to Save with Edvest," https://www.edvest.com/plan/reasons.shtml. "Wisconsin residents receive unique tax advantages and your earnings, if any, are free from federal income tax when used for qualified expenses."

103. Internal Revenue Service, "Qualified Education Expenses," December 23, 2020, https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/individuals/qualified-ed-expenses. "Qualified expenses are amounts paid for tuition, fees and other related expense for an eligible student that are required for enrollment or attendance at an eligible educational institution."

104. Jaime Baker, "WVNCC President Says Jumpstart Savings Act Is a Game-Changer," WTOV-TV, March 22, 2021, https://wtov9.com/news/local/wvncc-president-says-jumpstart-savings-act-is-a-game-changer. "It creates a way for individuals to start savings accounts after they graduate from a trade, technical, or vocational program for tools, equipment, licenses, certifications, and business

start-up costs. The program was approved unanimously in both chambers, making West Virginia the first state in the country to pass such a plan. . . . This new program will allow individuals a way to start saving money for those things early, and as money goes into the account, up to $25,000 can be deducted off income taxes with no capital gains taxes applied to the account as it grows."

105. University of Wisconsin–Madison, "The Wisconsin Idea," https://www.wisc.edu/wisconsin-idea. "'I shall never be content until the beneficent influence of the University reaches every family of the state.'"

106. Robin Harris, "For Maverick Polly Williams, the Mother of School Choice, the Point Was Always to Empower Parents and Improve Education for Black Children," 74, January 28, 2020, https://www.the74million.org/article/for-maverick-polly-williams-the-mother-of-school-choice-the-point-was-always-to-empower-parents-and-improve-education-for-black-children. "It was her efforts in the late '80s and early '90s to create the nation's longest-running private school voucher program that marked her career."

107. Howard Fuller, "The Origins of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program," *Education Next* 15, no. 3 (April 28, 2015), https://www.educationnext.org/origins-milwaukee-parental-choice-program-no-struggle-no-progress-fuller. "So, it is important to note that the program, which initially involved just seven schools and 337 children, started out with bi-partisan support."

108. Institute for Justice, "Milwaukee School Choice," https://ij.org/case/jackson-v-benson. "The product of an alliance between enterprising Democratic state legislator Polly Williams and Republican Governor Tommy Thompson, the program started as a modest proposal to deal with Milwaukee's educational crisis and slowly gained popularity. . . . In June 1998, the Wisconsin Supreme Court rejected the claims of choice opponents, allowing the expansion of the program to religious schools and extending educational opportunity to thousands of low-income Milwaukee children."