

Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty: New study that Act 10 led to improved test scores

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Most comprehensive study to date on effect of Act 10 on student achievement
October 3, 2018 - Milwaukee, WI - The Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty released the first study to date that examines the relationship between Act 10, the 2011 collective bargaining reforms, and student achievement in Wisconsin. [Keeping Score: Act 10's Impact on Student Achievement](#), a peer-reviewed study, authored by WILL Research Director Will Flanders and Director of Public Engagement and Policy Analyst Collin Roth finds that Act 10 led to improved math scores and no change in already high graduation rates.

Since 2011, Act 10 has transformed K-12 public schools. The law spurred the creation of a new teacher marketplace, new merit pay and incentive structures, and empowered district administrators to make decisions that prioritized students. Detractors have claimed that increased teacher contributions for healthcare and pension, mandated under Act 10, have had a negative impact on students.

To find the truth, WILL conducted the most comprehensive and sophisticated study to date on the impact of Act 10 on student outcomes. Open records requests were sent to every school district in Wisconsin to determine when Act 10 was implemented. With nearly 90% response rate, WILL was then able to conduct an

analysis using control variables to isolate the effect of Act 10 on standardized test score and graduation rates. The findings include:

A positive relationship between district implementation of Act 10 and students' math scores on standardized tests (changes in the tests made it difficult to draw fair comparisons for reading).

Neither a negative or positive relationship on graduation rates, already some of the highest in the country.

“Act 10 is arguably one of the most consequential pieces of legislation ever enacted in Wisconsin,” said WILL Research Director Will Flanders, Ph.D. “While opponents have tried to scapegoat the law as harmful to Wisconsin students, this study reveals that the innovation and staffing flexibility spurred by Act 10 has served students better than the previous system.”

“In education debates, all sides claim to be acting in the best interests of kids,” said WILL Director of Public Engagement and Policy Analyst Collin Roth. “What is clear from this data is: Wisconsin students benefitted from Act 10.”

This new report on Act 10 builds off of WILL's previous in-depth analysis of the law. A 2016 [study](#) by WILL examined the impact of Act 10 on the teaching workforce. A 2018 WILL [report](#) documented how school districts employed merit pay to incentivize teachers.