

WisDems: MEMO: As Wisconsin heads back to school, Walker's education cuts still hurt as much as ever

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Contact: Courtney Beyer, courtneyb@wisdems.org

Back to school day should be a time filled with optimism, new challenges, and new opportunities. But as kids get ready for another school year here in Wisconsin, the damage done by Governor Scott Walker's anti-education agenda looms as large as ever. Driven by partisan politics and personal ambition, Walker has methodically worked to dismantle and deregulate the state's education system. Through his two terms as Governor, Walker has slashed education funding, antagonized educators, and forced students to suffer the consequences.

His terrible record is clear. On funding Wisconsin schools and supporting its teachers and students, Scott Walker has earned himself a failing grade.

Record Cuts

As soon as he took office, Scott Walker declared war on public education. Walker's first budget made record cuts to education funding, [eliminating](#) \$800 million from public schools. School districts had to deal with a median decrease in aid of nearly 10%. But he didn't stop there. Years after his initial cuts, Walker [pushed through](#) more reductions in funding. Headlines and editorials across the state describe the cuts using words like [savages](#), [dismember](#), and [travesty](#), and they still might not have adequately captured how much damage was done.

These cuts have been so devastating, schools across the state have gone to referendum to raise to properly fund their school systems. Since 2011, more than 1 million Wisconsinites [have voted](#) to raise their own property taxes because Scott Walker and the Republican legislature have not adequately funded our public schools.

Over the last eight years, Tony Evers' budget proposals would have provided \$2.4 billion in additional education funding, while holding the line on taxes. Walker's budget proposals would leave Wisconsin school with \$63 million less in funding than when he took office.

Walker also signed off on a controversial special needs voucher program for private schools, while providing no funding for Wisconsin's primary special education aid. Tony has put our most vulnerable student first, proposing more funding for special education aid in every budget.

Attacking Educators

As if the record funding cuts weren't hard enough on educators already, Walker went after their paychecks too. Act 10 gutted teacher bargaining power, and effectively cut their take home pay. Just 5 years after Act 10, the median compensation for Wisconsin teachers had [dropped](#) by 12.6%. Now Wisconsin teacher pay [ranks](#) below the national average and lower than each one of its Midwest neighbors. So not only did Walker ask Wisconsin educators to do more with fewer resources, he paid them less to do it.

With poorer working conditions and lower pay, it's no shock teachers fled the state in droves. The year after Act 10 was passed, the teacher exit rate nearly [doubled](#) from 6.4% to 10.5%, and remains at an elevated level of 8.8%. With so many educators leaving, Wisconsin schools are filled with less experienced teachers. Nearly a quarter have [less than five](#) years of experience.

Walker's proposed solution to the rapidly growing teacher shortage was [cutting time in the classroom](#) and [lowering qualifications](#) for new hires. That's the Walker education legacy: less time in the classroom, fewer qualified teachers.

Students Suffered

The deteriorating conditions took their toll on Wisconsin students. The numbers

don't lie. Now, Wisconsin [spends](#) about \$1,000 less per pupil than before Walker took office and [ranks below](#) six other Midwest states.

Lower income and minority communities have especially suffered. Under Walker, Wisconsin has the [largest achievement gap](#) between black and white students in the entire country. Walker also ended a class size reduction program that [had been shown](#) to raise achievement and graduation rates in low income schools.

Walker pushed a partisan agenda, and students suffered across the board.

Conclusion

Of all the terrible policies Scott Walker has implemented in his eight years as governor, his relentless attacks on public education might be the worst. Walker systematically stripped schools of their resources, drove away talented educators, and forced students to get by with less. All together his policies have resulted in fewer students graduating and fewer kids prepared for the future.

Now that he's in an election year, Walker is making all sorts of promises in an effort to gloss over his record of destruction and failure. Unfortunately for him, the results speak for themselves, and Wisconsin families won't be fooled.

For too long, Walker has played politics with our schools, and people are fed up. Wisconsin's education problem starts at the top. The only way to get back on track to fully funding our schools and supporting our students is to get rid of Scott Walker once and for all. This November, Wisconsin will elect Tony Evers, who has spent his life dedicated to education, as its next Governor.