

Institute for Reforming Government: Struggling K-12 Students Should Have Access to Courses with New Federal Funds Coming to Wisconsin

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Madison, Wis. — The Institute for Reforming Government strongly recommends Gov. Tony Evers utilize the \$1.5 billion in new federal stimulus funds from the American Rescue Plan to ensure K-12 students struggling with their education have access to the schooling they need. Failure rates have skyrocketed and tens of thousands of students simply did not show up for “virtual instruction” after schools were closed during the pandemic. To ensure Wisconsin makes educating our children a priority, federal funds should be targeted to provide these “missing students” with the opportunity to take courses to reduce the learning gap. The policy proposal can be found [here](#).

“We cannot leave these missing students behind, they need a path toward success,” said C.J. Szafir, President of IRG. “Ample federal funding is being sent to Wisconsin and the Evers administration should utilize these dollars to ensure our students who are failing ‘virtual’ school are caught up and ready to learn when schools finally re-open.”

Recommendations:

1. Funds are directed to schools based on 2020-21 enrollment numbers and must be used for any supplementary education services chosen by parents. Funds would be “performance-based,” meaning the provider of each course does not receive full payment until the student successfully completes the course.

2. School districts will match 50 cents on each state dollar and may use other federal funds they receive to do so, within federal limits. They may set appropriate limits on how much funding each student may receive; however, they may provide more and give priority to “missing students” who return to school.

3. Any existing school (public, choice, or charter) or college and university in the state may provide Education Recovery services to other schools as long as they are offering in-person instruction to their own students. DPI will maintain a list on its website of these and additional course offerings. Third-party providers may apply as well. All providers must demonstrate that they meet federal requirements for “evidence-based” practices and must receive an approval or denial by DPI within 30 days of application.

4. Schools will be responsible for ensuring funds are allocated to summer, after-school, and other programs in accordance with federal requirements and will receive the majority of state administration funds for this purpose. A small amount will remain with DPI or an entity they designate so they may review and approve course providers.

The IRG’s [policy proposal](#) details why it is important that the Evers administration addresses the crisis of failure rates among students who don’t participate in “virtual instruction.”