

WILL: Wisconsin can fund students, not systems

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The News: For too long, the value of Wisconsin students have been determined by a complex school funding formula that filters money to buildings and systems. Students are simply worth more, or less, depending on where they happen to live or what type of school they attend. This needs to change. The Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty (WILL) published a new report, [Fund Every Kid: Reforming Wisconsin's School Funding Formula](#), that provides an overview of the current school finance system and proposes the adoption of a dynamic student-centered funding system. The Quote: WILL Research Director, Will Flanders, said, "The future of education in Wisconsin cannot be financed by the formula of the past. The current school finance system stands as a barrier to the next innovative and exciting reforms that prioritize students and families over buildings and systems. We need change now." The Problem: The current school funding formula is a complex combination of state, local and federal aid. Funding in districts is largely based on antiquated revenue limits that have cemented in place funding gaps for 25 years. Students are worth more, or less, depending on where they happen to live, or whether they attend a choice or charter school. Even worse, the current funding system utilizes a three-year rolling average of enrollment that allows districts to receive funding for students they no longer educate. This current model is a barrier to reform. Weighted Student Funding: Wisconsin can fund students, not just buildings and systems. A system of weighted student funding would provide the same level of funding for each student regardless of school sector, or home district. Students would receive extra revenue based on characteristics like poverty, disabilities, and English language learners, but otherwise would be valued the same. The advantage of this system would be to create a dynamic student-centered funding system that allows for the expansion of new and innovate education models. We can get more money flowing into the classroom and not get bogged down in administrative costs. Finally, weighted student funding would unshackle

students and schools from an opaque and complex formula that relies too heavily on the property wealth or poverty of a given community.

Why Now? Wisconsin was once on the leading edge of education reform. Today, we're being left behind. More and more states are implementing new and innovative education reforms like Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) and tax credit scholarships. But Wisconsin's current school finance model stands in the way of adopting similar programs. Reforming school finance is a critical first step towards a brighter education future in Wisconsin.

-> [WILL Coalition Letter](#) featuring EdChoice, ExcelinEd, Reason Foundation and Wisconsin Federation for Children