

Gov. Evers: Budget proposals help bolster state's education workforce

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LODI — Gov. Tony Evers today will visit Lodi Elementary School to discuss the school's involvement in the local ["GROW initiative"](#) that was supported by an up to \$264,000 Workforce Innovation Grant last year to create a pipeline of highly qualified teachers who want to work in rural districts and to highlight initiatives in his 2023-25 biennial budget proposal to bolster the state's education workforce, including continuing "grow your own" initiatives and the successful Workforce Innovation Grant Program.

"If we want to make sure our kids can get caught up and achieve at their highest potential, then we have to make historic investments in K-12 education so our schools have the resources to keep class sizes small and retain and recruit talented folks to join our classrooms," said Gov. Evers. "From investing in bolstering our homegrown educator pipeline and special education aid to expanding school-based mental health services and healthy meals for kids, my budget provides the largest increase in K-12 schools and education in state history, and I call on the Legislature to join me in doing what's best for our kids by approving this critical investment."

According to a 2022 survey done by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, about 90 percent of school districts and independent charter schools are having trouble filling positions. Additionally, a [Wisconsin Policy Forum report](#) also showed public sector workers, which includes educators and staff, left Wisconsin's workforce in 2021 at the highest rate in approximately two decades.

The GROW school districts, which include Cambridge, Lodi, Sauk Prairie, and Wisconsin Heights, used their Workforce Innovation Grant to award five \$10,000 scholarships to college seniors who graduated with education degrees in December 2022 or intend to graduate with education degrees in May 2023. In exchange for

the scholarship, the students agree to be interviewed at a participating district and, if offered a position, teach in the district for three years. The GROW effort continues to expand to offer additional scholarships and training opportunities, with the goal of each district offering a \$1,000 scholarship to one of their high school seniors intending to pursue an education degree, 10 alumni receiving \$2,000 scholarships to help with their general education credits, and seven alumni receiving \$10,000 scholarships when they enter schools of education.

The governor's 2023-25 biennial budget proposal builds on this successful work by investing \$200 million over the biennium to continue the successful Workforce Innovation Grant program, which funded the GROW Initiative. Additionally, the governor is proposing a more than \$16 million investment over the biennium to address the teacher shortage plaguing schools across the state, including specific funding for "grow your own" initiatives and incentives for student teachers.

Gov. Evers also knows the value experienced teachers provide to their communities and leverages that value amid the shortage by proposing to authorize state agencies and local units of government, including schools, to rehire a retired annuitant teacher under certain circumstances to address workforce recruitment and retention issues, making it easier for districts to hire experienced educators and staff.

More information about the governor's proposals to address the teacher shortage to help keep class sizes small and improve student outcomes is available below.

Continuing the Workforce Innovation Grant Program

The governor's biennial budget includes a \$200 million investment to continue the successful Workforce Innovation Grant Program to provide long-term solutions for businesses to find workers and individuals to obtain family-supporting jobs. This investment includes a specific focus of \$100 million to bolster the state's healthcare workforce, but the remaining \$100 million would be used for regionally based solutions to the workforce challenges facing local communities, much like the GROW Initiative.

Recruiting and Retaining Talented Educators

In order to enhance the ability of school districts to recruit and retain teachers, the governor is proposing a more than \$16 million investment to bolster the education workforce in Wisconsin. The governor is proposing:

- \$5 million for grants to support “grow your own” initiatives to bolster Wisconsin’s educator pipeline, which may include providing current employees with stipends to gain additional higher education credits, licenses or certifications; engaging with community organizations; and supporting student organizations with “future teacher” missions;
- \$9.4 million to provide stipends to student teachers and interns;
- \$2 million to provide stipends to teachers who agree to train and oversee student teachers or interns; and
- \$50,000 for stipends to school library interns.

Rehiring Retired Educators

Gov. Evers is proposing to bolster Wisconsin’s workforce and pipeline with experienced professionals by authorizing state agencies and local units of government, including schools, to rehire a retired annuitant to address workforce recruitment and retention issues, if at least 30 days have passed since the employee left employment; at the time of retirement, the employee does not have an agreement to return to employment; and upon returning to work, the employee elects to not become a participating employee and continue receiving their annuity. An online version of this release is available [here](#).