

# Wisconsin Public Education Network: Gap-widening budget deserves failing grade, Wisconsin students deserve better

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The budget moved forward by legislative Republicans and signed by Gov. Evers today fails more than 820,000 children who depend on strong Wisconsin public schools. After years of deliberate undermining of our public schools, it is time to hold Wisconsin accountable for meeting the needs of our children.

This budget squanders the opportunities and responsibilities that came with an enormous surplus by deliberately maintaining a funding system that does real harm to kids while simultaneously delivering massive, permanent giveaways to private voucher schools and “independent” charter schools. These schools are now *guaranteed* more direct aid than most public schools receive from the state, and more than many are even *allowed* to spend per pupil.

Despite misleading rhetoric, this budget [doesn't even provide enough in new spending authority to public schools to keep pace with inflation](#), and that spending authority isn't matched by state aid for most districts. In failing to meaningfully meet current needs, it cements a system of winners and losers and widens the existing gaps across the state: [a full 39% of public school districts will receive less state aid](#) next year than they did this year. The bottom line is that kids will struggle and local taxpayers will pay more, while districts statewide continue to report crisis-level budget decisions that require more belt-tightening, cuts, and school closures.

Meanwhile, increasing our [“worst in the nation”](#) special education reimbursement

by a measly 1.8% to reach a still-shameful 33.3% mark fails to close the [\\$1.25 billion annual special education funding gap](#), or reduce funding discrimination against public school students with disabilities. Private voucher schools will continue to receive a 90% special education reimbursement *on top of* increased voucher payments.

***We call on the state to repair some of this harm by using the additional resources freed up in the Governor's vetoes to direct critical aid to students with disabilities and students in poverty now,*** and we call on members of the public to demand nothing less.

**It's long past time to hold the state accountable for its persistent refusal to meet its constitutional obligation to the students attending our public schools.** If lawmakers refuse to do their jobs, it's time to call on the courts to force them to do so. Until then, Wisconsin deserves a solid "F" for failing to meet the needs of its children.