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## **Evers' public education budget a path to close gaps, open doors for students**

Parents and educators around the state were quick to applaud for Governor Evers' education [budget](#) tonight.

"Wisconsin desperately needs to invest responsibly in closing our gaps and opening up opportunities for our kids and our communities," said Heather DuBois Bourenane, Executive Director of Wisconsin Public Education Network. "Governor Evers has found a way to do that with a budget that meets our priority needs first, and shows that we *can* afford to do right by our kids. Which is a good thing, because this pandemic has proven we can't afford not to. Addressing mental health needs and meeting the state's 2/3 funding obligation, while prioritizing the needs of rural students, students in poverty, students with disabilities and English Language Learners is exactly what our school districts need to plan for and meet our children's pandemic needs."

"We're already hearing from people who are paying close attention to this budget. They are excited. And they should be. Governor Evers' budget puts additional resources into English Language Learner classrooms for the first time in over ten years. Right now these programs are shamefully underfunded. And it's even better for kids with disabilities- during the last budget Evers provided the first increase in special education funding for local districts in ten years. His current proposal builds on that to provide 50% reimbursement for local school districts. This is a great step along the path to providing a 90% reimbursement to public schools - which is the current reimbursement rate for private voucher schools."

"This budget invests in priority needs and puts spendable dollars in the classroom where they're needed most. We CAN afford to support our public schools while holding the line on taxes. And there is absolutely no excuse for not doing it."

"The Governor has done his part in putting forward a budget that puts kids first.. Now let's do ours in making sure that budget becomes a reality for them. Let your lawmakers know you support a budget that invests in closing gaps and opening doors for Wisconsin's children."

Madison parent Anna Stevens, member of Madtown Mommas and Disability Advocates, says "People assume students with disabilities just get what they need because it's the law. The reality is, they're getting the bare minimum if they get their needs met at all, and that carries over into general education. When we underfund special education, we fail all kids. And all kids deserve better. This budget gives districts the power to fulfil their responsibility to all students."

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"I have taught English Language Learners in Milwaukee Public Schools since 1999," said Carrie Yanko, a teacher in Milwaukee Public Schools. "I was born in central Wisconsin and still have many family members there. The migrant population in these rural districts is an important part of the school community, but not large enough in some districts to receive funding. This money will provide all of us, rural and urban, opportunities for professional development, materials, and support to enhance student and family learning opportunities. Regardless of location, these students and families are working hard to better themselves and others. The funding will build bridges, understanding, and communication instead of walls."

Jenni Hofschulte, Wisconsin Public Education Network organizer and president of Parents for Public Schools Milwaukee, notes that "for too long we have undervalued the mental health of our children. This budget finally makes the mental health of our children a priority funding line, eliminating the need to compete for scarce grants to meet kids' most basic needs. This stable funding gets to the heart of the problem and solves it. We can't have thriving schools if our children aren't thriving. Our students are the heart of our schools, and our public schools are the heart of our communities."

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