

# D IS FOR DISMANTLE



Institute for One Wisconsin  
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## Preface

Wisconsin has always been a leader in public schools. We lead the nation in high school graduation rate and our test scores are well above the national average. This success is an inter-generational gift that has been bestowed upon our children since early German settlers to Wisconsin brought with them a great tradition from their homeland: community-based, public education.

However, there is a long-held belief among many on the Right that public schools are simply not an appropriate role of government and should be privatized through the use of vouchers. One of the staunchest supporters of this extreme view is Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker.

Even though privatization voucher efforts have proven a failure in Milwaukee, Walker and his allies are propping-up the pseudo “Milwaukee Miracle” and using it as a template to demolish public schools throughout Wisconsin and replace them with a privatized voucher system. However, Walker and his allies know that this task will not be easy -- the vast majority of Wisconsinites treasure their local public schools.

In this report, we will explore Governor Walker's strategy to decimate public education in Wisconsin through a sophisticated three prong attack: 1) Undermine public confidence in our schools and teachers by smearing them with bogus attacks, 2) Make the biggest cuts ever to public schools in Wisconsin, and, 3) As schools are being weakened by the first two actions, simultaneously push for statewide voucher programs.

Though this report focuses on the smear campaign and the budget cuts, Walker's attack on teachers and schools cannot be properly characterized without recognizing his assault on teachers' unions. Unions play an important role in public education for both teachers and students. Efforts to eliminate the public unions are not about cost-savings, as Governor Walker admitted in testimony to Congress. A new report found that despite Walker's assertion that his efforts to dismantle unions would allow school districts to meet education needs, both union and non-union districts suffered staff losses, program cuts and increased class sizes because of the major budget cuts. While unions fight to ensure that teacher's salaries are fair and adequate to attract high-quality professionals, they also fight to ensure that classes are small, schools are safe, public teachers are licensed and well-qualified, and many other areas to help their students succeed.

In his efforts to break unions while pulling the financial rug out from school districts – Walker's plan to weaken Wisconsin education and its defenders at the same time is laid bare.

## Executive Summary

We do have an education crisis in Wisconsin. But it's not what you think.

Governor Walker's cuts to public education and his smear campaign against Wisconsin's schools and teachers are putting our children at risk. When Governor Walker took office Wisconsin led the nation in graduation rates, ranked in the top-tier of ACT test scores, and received high marks from local parents.

In his campaign to dismantle public education Walker used phony assertions about failing schools and wealthy teachers to justify the largest cuts to education since the Great Depression. The budget cuts were unnecessary and unfair. Walker gave over two billion dollars in new tax breaks to corporations and the wealthy, meanwhile budget cuts hit poorer school districts the hardest.

It's a recipe for failure.

Governor Walker has created an educational crisis to rationalize his efforts to privatize schools in Wisconsin with expanded school choice programs. Wisconsin cannot afford to subsidize private education for the wealthy at the expense of our children and local schools. At a time when local school districts are trying to maintain excellence and adapt to the millions of dollars lost in state aid and new revenue restrictions; the state cannot afford an expansion of school vouchers without compromising the quality of education for public school students in Wisconsin.

Milwaukee is home to the longest running school choice program in the United States – the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program – and has served as a model for school choice advocates including Wisconsin's Governor Scott Walker. In his 2011-2013 budget, Walker increased funding for programs that support private schools at the same time that he cut state aid to public schools by hundreds of millions of dollars. Walker sought to expand the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program to all of Milwaukee County. In addition he tried to expand it to cities such as Green Bay and Racine, to increase funding for school choice at about \$12 million to pay for an estimated 3,000 additional students<sup>1</sup> and to raise enrollment caps. The Green Bay expansion was stalled, but with so much at stake, Wisconsin voters deserve to know more about the organizations behind the efforts to advance school choice, and whether or not it is good for Wisconsin's children.

This report evaluates the unique challenges Milwaukee faces as a large and relatively poor region and considers the testing data and graduation rates of its public and school choice programs. We find that when comparing apples to apples Milwaukee's Public Schools fare better than the choice program.

Moreover, we examine the assertion that choice programs save taxpayers money and the viability of increasingly broad implementation of school choice across the State of Wisconsin. Experts find that the gap between tuition and expenses raises questions about how much voucher programs can expand.

The findings in this report demonstrate that Walker has intentionally misrepresented Wisconsin's teachers and schools in a concerted effort to discredit Wisconsin's education system and allow for greater privatization.

## Key Findings

- Wisconsin's Graduation Rate is #1 in the United States and Among the Best in the World
- Wisconsin is a National Leader in ACT Scores
- Four out of Five Wisconsinites Give their Public School Teachers High Marks
- Walker Misrepresented Testing Data to Smear Wisconsin Teachers and Students
- Walker Undermined Schools by Making the Deepest Cuts since the Great Depression
- Education Cuts were Unnecessary
- Walker's Budget Resulted in Larger Class Sizes and Reductions in Teachers and Programs
- Education Cuts hit Poorer School Districts the Hardest
- Wisconsin Teachers Earn Less than the National Average
- Milwaukee Public Schools Exceed Milwaukee Parental Choice Program
- Graduation Rates When Students with Disabilities and High-Mobility Students are Taken into Account
- Milwaukee Public Schools Outperform Milwaukee Parental Choice Program Voucher Schools in "Apples to Apples" Standardized Tests
- Milwaukee Parental Choice Program Schools Are Not Financially Viable

## Chapter 1: The Wisconsin Educational System: A National Leader Under Attack

### Finding One: Walker and the Right Wing are Selling Their Tax-Dollars-for-Private-Schools Scheme by Smearing Public Schools and Creating a Phony Education Crises

If Governor Walker were to tell Wisconsinites that he wants to destroy their public schools as part of his right wing, Milton Friedman-inspired agenda, it wouldn't fly. So, he has generated a phony education crisis: Our schools are too expensive and they're failing. Why, after all, spend money on something that is failing? Walker himself disingenuously stated, "Wisconsin's educational system is failing our children."<sup>2</sup> In fact, the exact opposite is true: Wisconsin's schools are among the best in the world and, as a percent of GDP, Wisconsin spending on education has dropped in recent years.

#### Finding 1A: Walker's Categorical Claim That "Wisconsin's Education System is Failing" Is False

By any measure, Wisconsin's education system is not failing; rather Wisconsin has one of the best education systems in the world.

#### Wisconsin's Graduation Rate is #1 in the United States and Among the Best in the World

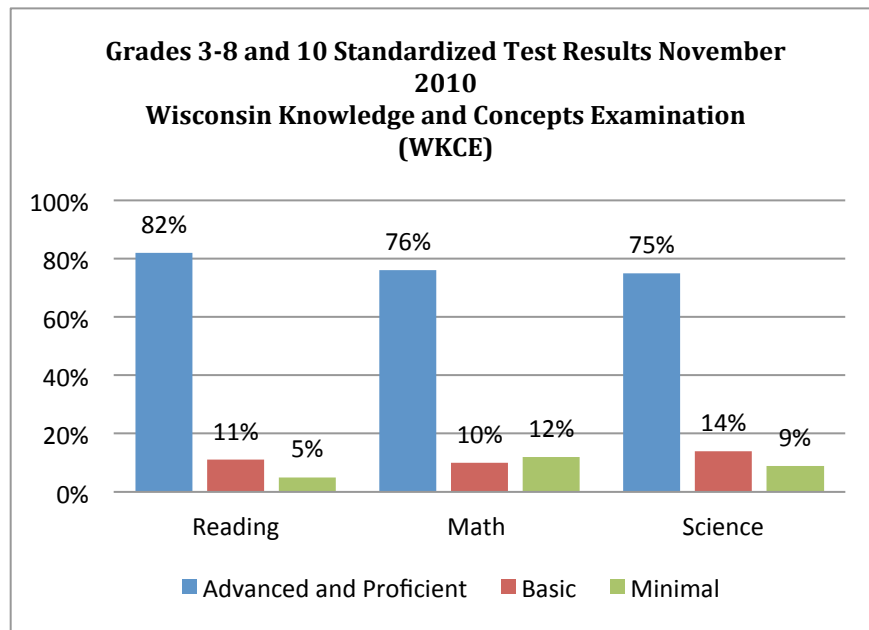
Most education experts agree that one of the most important indicators of a successful education system is the graduation rate. Wisconsin has led the nation in the graduation rate three out of the last five years and has held their graduation rate around 90% for the last 40 years.

Top Ten States by Graduation Rate			
1. Wisconsin	90.7%	6. New Jersey	85.3%
2. Vermont	89.6%	7. New Hampshire	84.3%
3. Minnesota	87.4%	8. Massachusetts	83.3%
4. North Dakota	87.4%	9. Missouri	83.1%
5. Iowa	85.7%	10. Nebraska	82.9%
<i>Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Freshman graduation rate, 2008-09 (Released in 2011)<sup>3</sup></i>			

In fact, if Wisconsin were a country, our graduation rate would among the world's best, as the following table demonstrates.

<b>Wisconsin's Graduation Rate Compared to Other Countries'</b>			
1. Germany	100%	6. Korea	91%
2. Finland	97%	<b>6. Wisconsin</b>	<b>91%</b>
3. Greece	96%	8. Ireland	90%
4. Japan	93%	9. Switzerland	89%
5. Norway	92%	9. UK	89%

*Source: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Upper Secondary Graduation Rates<sup>4</sup>*



### **75% of Wisconsin Students Are Advanced or Proficient in Reading, Math and Science**

According to the 2010-Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE), the standardized test required by the No Child Left Behind Act, 75% of Wisconsin students scored in the top two categories: advanced or proficient.<sup>5</sup>

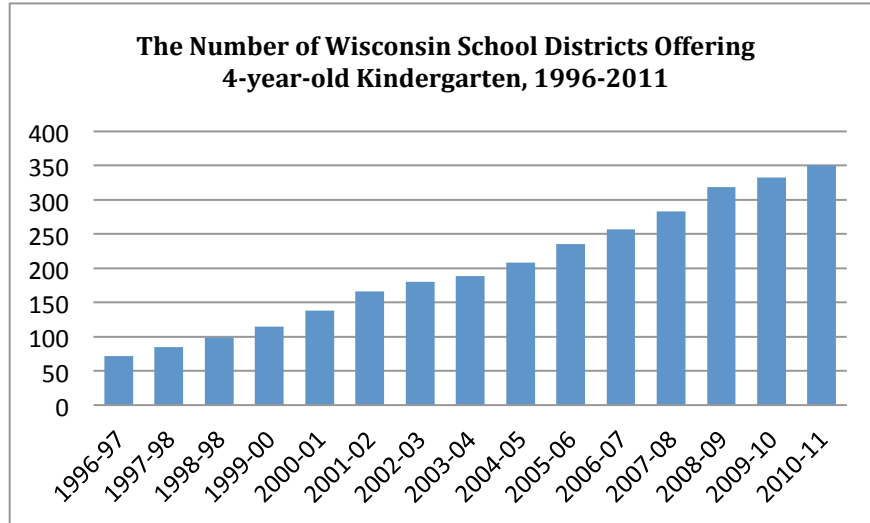
### **Wisconsin is a National Leader in ACT Test Scores**

Among states where at least 70% of graduating students take the ACT, Wisconsin ranks third in the nation. This is an especially notable accomplishment considering that all of Milwaukee Public Schools' students-- Wisconsin's most challenged school district-- are required to take the test, while in most other school districts, only those planning on attending college take the test.

<b>Top Ten 2011 ACT Test Score Among States Where at Least 70% of Students Were Tested<sup>6</sup></b>	
1. Minnesota (22.9)	6. Kansas (22)
2. Iowa (22.3)	7. South Dakota (21.8)
3. Wisconsin (22.2)	8. Utah (21.8)
4. Nebraska (22.1)	9. Ohio (21.8)
5. Missouri (22.1)	10. Idaho (21.7)

### Wisconsin is a National Leader in Four Year Old Kindergarten

Wisconsin is one of only a handful of states that have over half of its four-year-olds enrolled in four-year-old kindergarten. Four-year-old kindergarten has beneficial effects on early brain development and provides early learning opportunities,<sup>7</sup> especially beneficial for children from immigrant families, non-English speaking families Hispanic families, and those that are economically disadvantaged.<sup>8</sup> This is an area where Wisconsin has attempted to mirror other industrial countries, where four-year-old kindergarten is commonplace.



350 of Wisconsin’s 425 school districts offered four-year-old kindergarten in the 2010-2011 school year, a number that is nearly five times the school districts offering the service in 1996.<sup>9</sup> The map below created by the National Institute for Early Education (NIEE) represents the percentage of four-year-olds served in Wisconsin pre-K relative to other States. NIEE ranks Wisconsin sixth with respect to access for four-year-olds to pre-K services.<sup>10</sup>

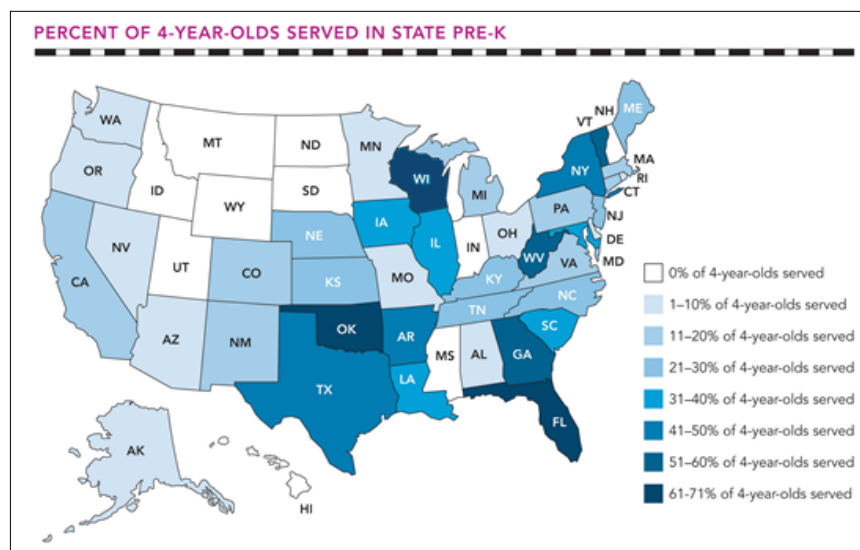


Image © 2010 The National Institute for Early Education Research

## **The Vast Majority of Wisconsinites and Americans Give Their Local Public Schools High Marks**

Every year Gallop does a poll measuring parents' view of the public schools their children attend. In the most recent poll 77% gave their local school an "A" or "B" and only 1% gave their school an "F".<sup>11</sup>

Interestingly, when the same parents were asked to judge the nation's schools as a whole, only 18% gave the nation as a whole an "A" or "B" and 6% gave the nation as a whole an "F." In other words, 77% gave the school they are most personally familiar with high marks, but gave schools that they are not familiar with low marks – a disconnect that is attributable to the constant attack on public schools from the right wing and bad reporting in the media. In Wisconsin, there are similar findings, with a recent poll by Rasmussen Reports showing that 77% of Wisconsin residents have a favorable opinion of public school teachers.<sup>12</sup>

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### **Finding 1B: Walker Falsely claims "1/3 of Wisconsin Fourth Graders Cannot Read at Even a Basic Level"**

In September of 2010, Scott Walker released a press statement saying, "Fully one-third of our state's fourth graders can't read at even a basic level – this is completely unacceptable".<sup>13</sup> Saying that a 1/3 of fourth graders can't read may be an alarming statement, but test results prove Walker is wrong when he says this.

As part of President George Bush's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, Wisconsin administers statewide standardized tests called the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examinations (WKCE). The conservative group Wisconsin Taxpayers issued a report analyzing the results from the WKCE and found that the WKCE "results provide useful information on academic progress."<sup>14</sup> If Governor Walker had reviewed the most recent WKCE results, he would find that only 4% of Wisconsin's 4<sup>th</sup> grade public school students cannot read at a basic level. Among students without a disability or English as a second language, the percent of students that cannot read at a basic level *is less than two percent*.

Rather than using the WKCE testing data, Walker was referring to a statistic from the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) test, which only tests a handful of Wisconsin students and has been widely criticized by a wide variety of groups, including the National Research Council (NRC) who said the NAEP tests are "fundamentally flawed" and "not believable."<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, NAEP claims that nationwide 34% of American fourth graders can't read at a basic level, a contention that is belied by the fact that the United States recently scored second in third grade reading tests among industrialized nations.<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, if Walker is sincerely concerned about fourth grade reading, he should be ensuring: 1) schools have qualified, fairly-paid teachers, 2) that all students in Wisconsin have access to four-year-old kindergarten, and 3) that all elementary schools have small class sizes. These three areas are all proven to increase fourth grade reading scores, but cost money. However, instead of increasing funding for Wisconsin's schools, he's doing the exact opposite and cutting spending -- which threatens education for Wisconsin's fourth graders and all students.

**Find 1C: Walker Misrepresented Testing Data to Smear Wisconsin Teachers and Students**

In recent months, Governor Walker has repeatedly distorted one of Wisconsin's many NAEP test scores as a representative sample that Wisconsin schools as failing. Specifically, Walker and other public school opponents, focus on fourth grade reading -- statistically, the weakest part of Wisconsin schools report card -- and point out that Wisconsin's 2009 score of 220.14 is "30<sup>th</sup> in the nation," "bottom half of states," etc. While the 220.14 number is correct, the reality is that Wisconsin was *ahead* of the national average of 219.60 and that only 18 states have what the NAEP defines as having statistically significant higher score.<sup>17</sup>

In fact, Governor Walker's ranking is a fabrication: The NAEP doesn't release state comparisons as rankings, but rather the number of states that are significantly better or worse than Wisconsin. When they release the data they even put out a warning not to put the data in a ranking format, saying "It is important to consider whether apparent differences are statistically significant because the scores themselves are estimates and are variable, depending on sampling and measurement."<sup>18</sup>

In addition, NAEP State Coordinator Bert Stoneberg has said using NAEP test score data for rankings is "inappropriate." He even wrote a seven page article for the journal Practical Assessment, Research and Evaluation entitled, "Please Don't Use NAEP Scores to Rank States," warning politicians not to misuse NAEP data to rank states.<sup>19</sup>

Since Walker is bringing up NAEP test scores, why doesn't he discuss all the scores? Wisconsin ranked above the national average score in all a categories of the NAEP test in 2009. Below is a table of all the 2009 test scores—a very different picture of Wisconsin's schools than the "failing" one Walker is trying to paint:

<b>2009 NAEP Test Scores<sup>20</sup></b>		
	<b>Number of States "Significantly Higher" According to the NAEP's Comparison of States</b>	<b>Average Score Above National Average?</b>
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	5	Yes
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	18	Yes
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Science	7	Yes
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math	8	Yes
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading	11	Yes
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Science	5	Yes
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Writing	5	Yes

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**Finding 1D: Walker and His Allies Typically Attack All of Wisconsin's Schools by Attacking the Milwaukee School District**

The Milwaukee School District is one of 425 school districts in Wisconsin and represents about 10 percent of the students enrolled in Wisconsin public schools, yet the vast majority of right wing criticism toward Wisconsin's public schools is routinely focused on the Milwaukee school district.<sup>21</sup> The reason is clear: The Milwaukee school district, due to economics and poverty, has more challenges than any other school district in the state and, therefore is more vulnerable to right wing attacks. On the other hand, when Wisconsin is recognized for a statewide achievement-- such as having the nation's highest graduation rate -- many of Wisconsin's right wing think tanks and politicians routinely turn a blind eye to the achievement.

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**Finding 1E: The Right Wing Often Falsely Characterizes the United States' Education System as Being near The Bottom In the World**

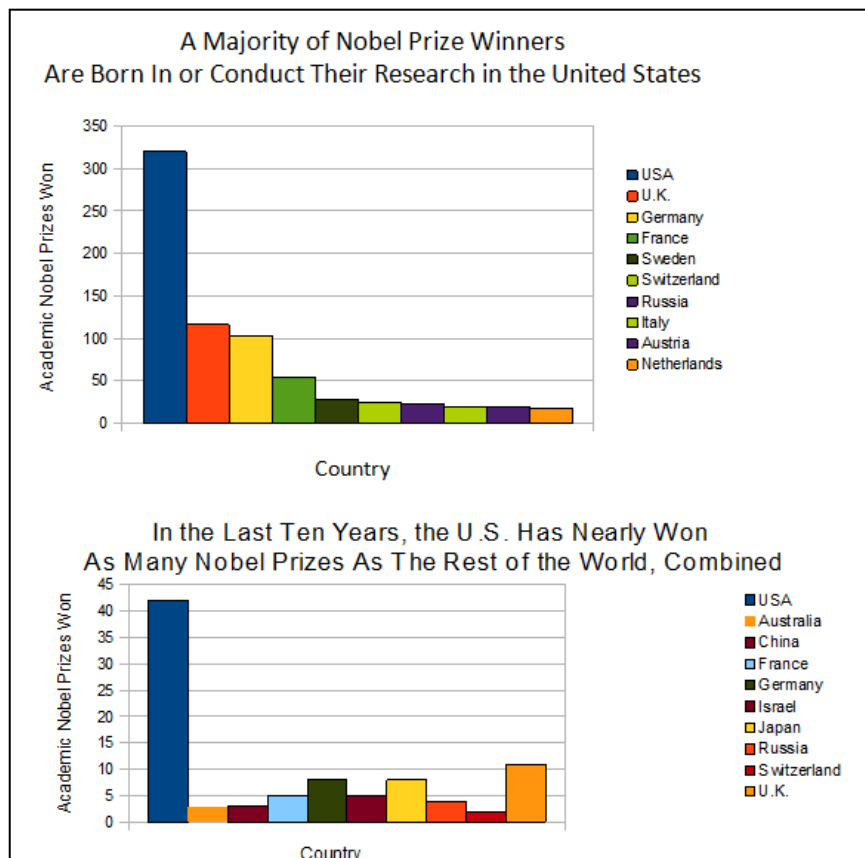
State Senator Glenn Grothman (R-West Bend) claimed, "Wisconsin schools are not that great right now... when the United States test scores are bad compared to other countries and Wisconsin test scores are bad compared to other states... we are worse than average, on national scores, United States is way worse than other countries on state scores we are worse than other states."<sup>22</sup>

Grothman's assertion is simply not true. Among similarly large and diverse countries, we fair very well. We could, of course, do better but the right typically fails to mention that the small countries that do better than us on test scores typically have few poor people and fraction of the income inequality we have in the United States. In addition, most international countries that do better in tests offer their citizens many more public services, including early-childhood education. Nevertheless, nearly 99% of American citizens can read and write -- putting us near the top of the list for the most literate nations. If we look at the top ten largest countries in the world by GDP, the United States ranks among the top tier:

<b>Literacy Rate of the Top Ten GDP Countries<sup>23</sup></b>	
United States	99%
China	92.2%
Japan	99%
India	61%
Germany	99%
Russia	99.4%
United Kingdom	99%
Brazil	88.6%
France	99%
Italy	98.4%

**The U.S. is a leader in Nobel Prize Awards**

There is no greater international academic award in than the Nobel Prize. Historically, The United States has generated the most Nobel Prize awards in academics (physics, medicine, mathematics and economics).<sup>24</sup>



As mentioned earlier the U.S. often does not finish well in many international tests with smaller countries because we have such a diverse population compared to the other countries we are competing against. However, the United States actually has a very large proportion of its students that finish toward the front of international tests, but we also have a large proportion of students that finish toward the bottom. In fact, the United States is the only country in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to have this trait, which brings overall test scores down. However, if you were to take the top quarter of American students and match them up against the top quarter of the other OECD countries, our students perform better than the average of the other countries top students.

Therefore, the United States does not have a failing education system. The United States has an achievement gap that is directly proportional to a student's family socioeconomic status. The United States has the highest income inequality among OECD nations, excepting Mexico and Turkey, and with levels of inequity increasing rapidly since 2000 "continuing a long-term trend that goes back to the 1970s".<sup>25</sup>

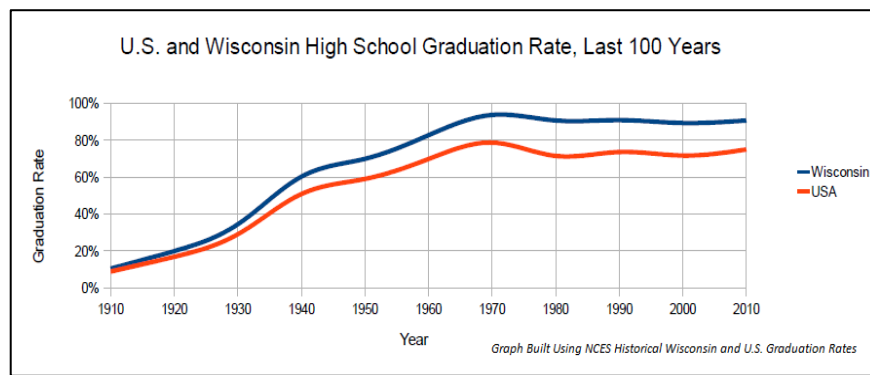
### A Closer Look at Finland

Finland is usually touted as global leader in education and, as such, the right wing often likes to make comparisons with the United States. However, such a comparison really isn't really fair considering that Finland has about the population of Wisconsin and almost 100% of the population is native born. Further, in Finland the percent of students living below the poverty line is about a quarter of the number of children living in poverty in the United States.

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**Finding 1F: Even Though Wisconsin's Graduation Rate is #1 in the Nation and Has Held Steady the Last 40 Years, Right Wing Groups Continue to Falsely Claim that the Drop-Out Rate is a "Growing" Problem**

In an outrageous attack on Wisconsin's public schools, pro-voucher groups The Maclver Institute and the Friedman Family Foundation released a report with the headline, "The Growing Cost of Wisconsin's Drop Out Rate"<sup>26</sup> and suggested that private voucher schools would somehow solve the problem of high school drop outs.



First, let's look at the facts. This report came out in 2009. As stated earlier, Wisconsin has the nation's top graduation rate and has been first or second in graduation rate the last five years. In fact, if we look at the last 40 years, Wisconsin's graduation rate has held steady at around 90% and has time and again exceeded national averages.<sup>27</sup>

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**Finding 1G: The Reality is that in the Last 40 Years Wisconsin's Adult Population Has Gone From Being Very Uneducated to Very Well Educated**

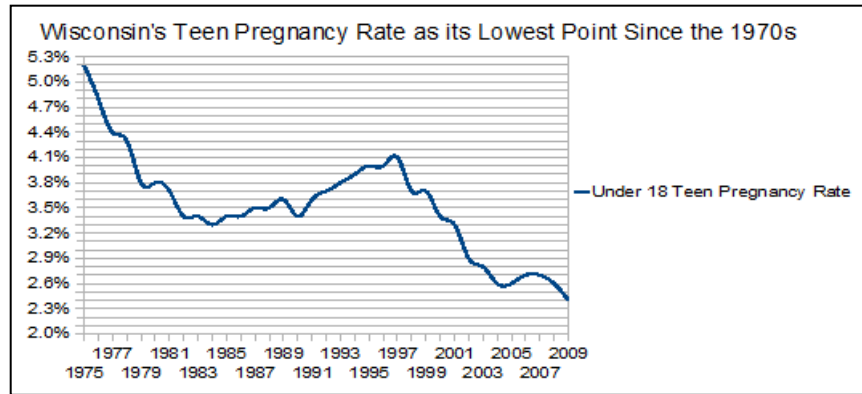
What makes the report even more scurrilous is that prior to Wisconsin reaching the impressive 90% graduation rate, Wisconsin's public schools were singularly responsible for educating Wisconsin: 100 years ago, only 10% graduated from high school, while today only about 10% don't graduate from high school.

As Table 1 (found in the Appendix) demonstrates, if we just go back 40 years, most Wisconsin counties (those highlighted) had populations where the *majority of adults over age 25 had not graduated from high school*.<sup>28</sup> Today, 89% of Wisconsin's adults over age 25 have graduated high school.<sup>29</sup>

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**Finding 1H: The Right Wing Fails to Mention Drivers That Actually Cause Students to Drop-Out**

While right wing groups like the Maclver Institute painstakingly document Wisconsin's (low) drop-out rate and (high) graduation with no sense of scale, they fail to mention the leading causes of drop-outs: low-income, parents dropped out of high school, physical and mental disabilities, and teen pregnancy.



**Less than 60% of Under-18 Mothers Never Graduate High School<sup>30</sup>**

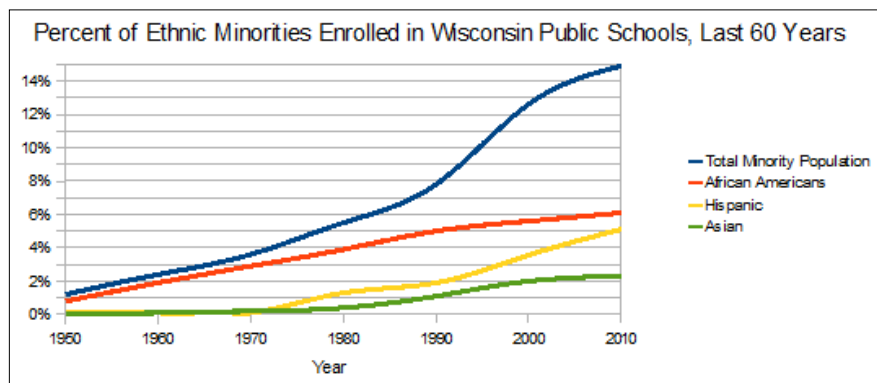
Teen pregnancy is a huge obstacle to graduating from high school not only for the mother, but often times the father as well. One reason why Wisconsin's graduation rate is so high and drop-out rate is low is because of a coordinated effort by Wisconsin's public schools and organizations like Planned Parenthood teaching students about preventing pregnancy. In fact Wisconsin's teen pregnancy rate is at its lowest point since the 1970s.<sup>31</sup>

However, the same right wing that criticizes public schools for drop-out rates, routinely tries to sabotage public school efforts to reduce teen pregnancy. In fact, recently introduced legislation (Senate Bill 237) by Senators Grotham and Mary Lazich (R-New Berlin) eliminates comprehensive sex-education in Wisconsin's classrooms required by the Healthy Youth Act. The bill repeals the Healthy Youth Act, and is opposed by the Wisconsin Medical Society because of its failure to provide students with medically accurate information.<sup>32</sup> The bill passed the State Senate and has yet to be considered by the State Assembly, as of November 15, 2011.

**Wisconsin Has Gone From a Nearly All-White State to a Very Diverse State**

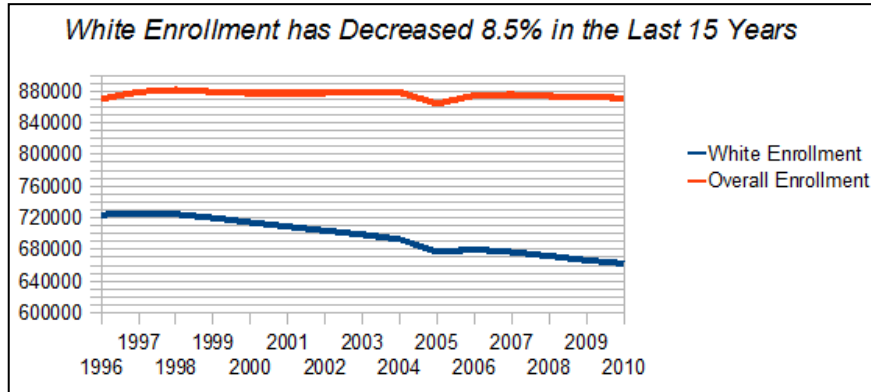
Below is a graph showing how Wisconsin's overall population has changed since 1950. Up until 1970, Wisconsin was largely a homogeneous, white state, but from 1970 to the present, the minority population has more than quadrupled. While this represents an exciting time in Wisconsin's history, there are often unique challenges to incoming ethnic minorities, such as English as a second language.

Because recent immigrants and people that move from one state to another tend to be younger, they also tend to be more likely to have school-age children – thus, resulting in a larger influx of minorities in schools than the overall population.



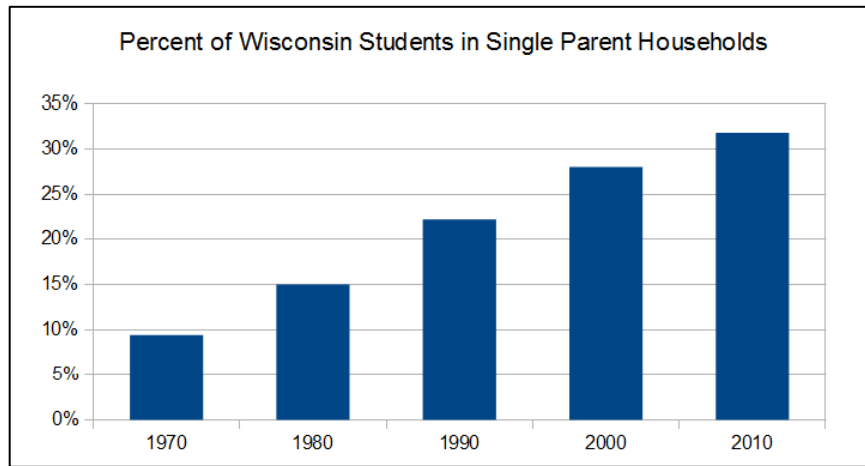
As the graph above demonstrates, today in Wisconsin schools, about one in five students are ethnic minorities, while in 1970 the number of minority students was about one in

seventeen.<sup>33</sup> In addition, in the last 15 years white enrollment has declined by about 10 percent, while during the same time period, Hispanic enrollment has more than doubled.<sup>34</sup>



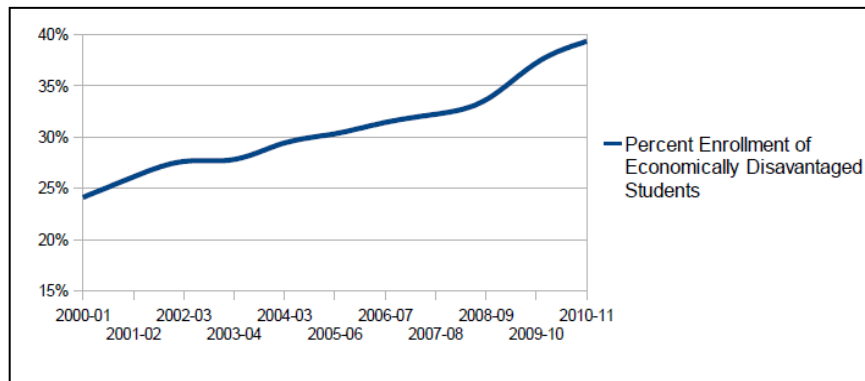
**One in Three Wisconsin Children Live In a Single Parent Household**

In 1970 one in ten children lived in single parent households, but now that number is nearly one in three.<sup>35</sup>



**8.7% of Low-Income Students Drop Out of High School<sup>36</sup>**

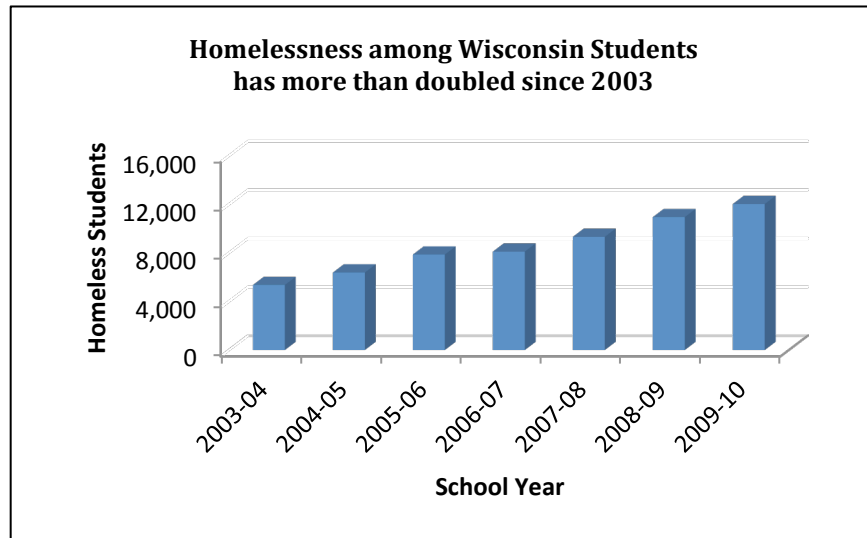
Wisconsin has seen a dramatic increase in economically disadvantaged students the last ten years.<sup>37</sup>



**Enrollment of Homeless Students Has Increased 125% in Recent Years**

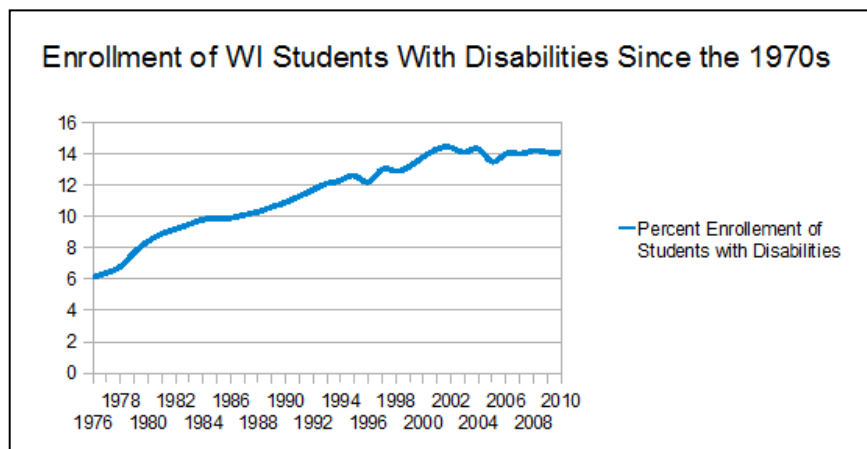
Since the 2003-04 school year, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction has tracked Wisconsin's homeless students enrolled in public schools. Between the 2003-04 and 2009-

10 school years, the number homeless children increased from 5,354 to 12,027 -- an increase of 125%.<sup>38</sup> According to the Campaign to End Child Homelessness, 58% of children are enrolled in school and 42% are below school age.<sup>39</sup> In other words, combining school age children with below school age children, Wisconsin's total homeless child population is 20,736. These figures do not include the approximately 1,100 high school age children who are homeless, not accompanied by an adult, and not enrolled in public school.



#### 37.6% of Students with Disabilities Drop Out of High School<sup>40</sup>

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates that children and youth ages 3-21 with disabilities be provided a free and appropriate public school education. While IDEA is one of the greatest progressive accomplishments in a generation, it also presented teachers and school districts with new challenges. In addition, as the graph demonstrates, the percentage of students covered under the IDEA has grown steadily since 1979 when the initial enrollment of IDEA students was around 6%.<sup>41</sup>

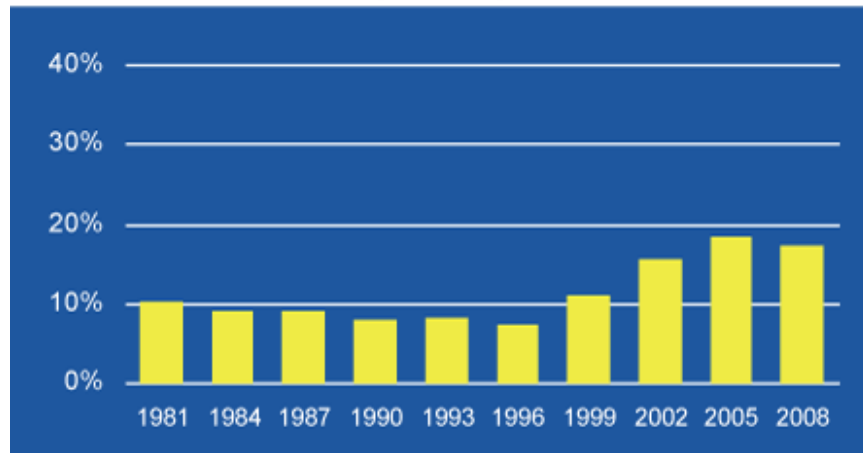


#### Schools Serving Students with Disabilities Chronically Under-Funded

Another challenge for local school districts under IDEA has been that students with disabilities cost approximately twice as much to educate as students without disabilities. To help defray this cost, the Federal Government agreed to pay 40% of the cost of each disabled student. However, as the graph below demonstrates, since 1981, the Federal Government has paid only a small fraction of the 40% it agreed to pay:

**Every Year Since 1981 Congress Has Failed to Live Up to Its 40% Funding Responsibility**

**The Federal Record on Fully Funding IDEA Grants to States**



Source: U.S. Department of Education and Congressional Research Service, selected fiscal years, FY 1981-2008.

*Image © National Education Association<sup>42</sup>*

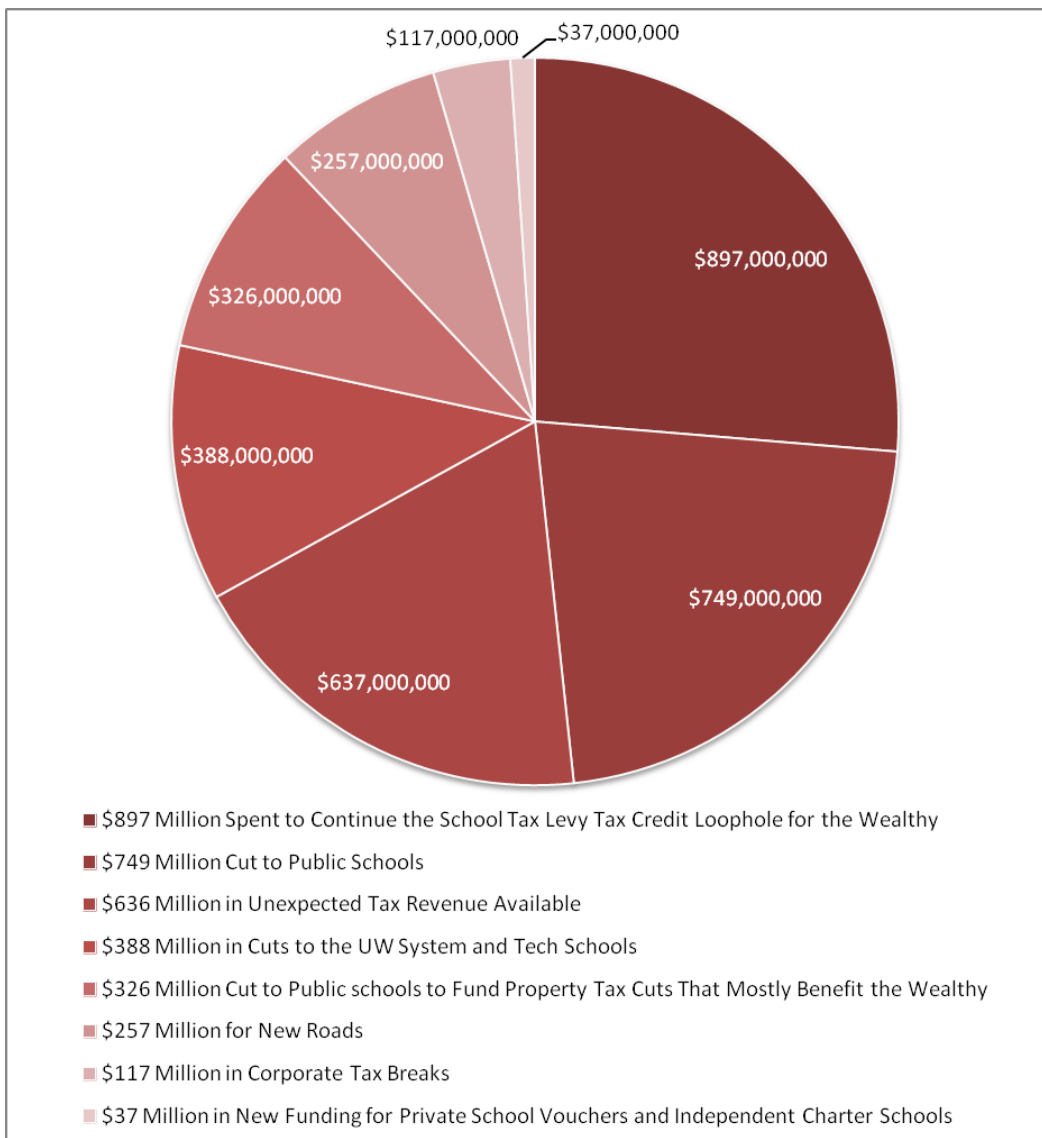
The lack of federal funding for the IDEA has placed an incredible burden on local school districts, especially small districts that may have an unusually high number of students with disabilities. It's also not fair to the students with disabilities who shouldn't have their education threatened by lack of funding. In spite of the heroic efforts of public schools, students with disabilities are much less likely to graduate from high school than other students and this has had an impact on the graduation rate.

## Chapter 2: With Historic Budget Cuts, Walker Creates a Real Education Crisis

### Finding Two: Walker Has Directly Weakened Schools By Making The Deepest Education Cuts in Wisconsin since the Great Depression

Governor Walker's budget cuts state funding to public schools by \$749 million, diverted \$37 million from public schools to new voucher and independent charter programs, and requires local school districts to cut their property taxes by \$326 million.<sup>43</sup> This all adds up to a loss of revenue to public schools of over \$1.6 billion – far and away the biggest cut to public education in state history.<sup>44</sup> Referencing a University of Wisconsin study of the impact of the cuts and revenue restrictions, State Superintendent Tony Evers said public-school children could suffer the greatest state cut to education since the Great Depression.<sup>45</sup>

#### The Biggest Cuts to Education since the Great Depression were Unnecessary



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**Finding 2A: Cuts Could Easily Be Avoided By Choosing Kids over Corporate Tax Breaks**

Despite the constant refrain from Governor Walker that “we're broke,” the reality is that if our state had the same percent of our GDP going to tax revenues as we did in the 1990s, we would be talking about budget surpluses instead of deficits right now. But, making such an adjustment to our tax system would require the wealthy and corporations to pay their fair share, which Governor Walker is unwilling to do. In fact, Governor Walker is not only unwilling to ask the wealthy to pay their fair share -- his budget literally takes money out of the life blood of the middle class -- our public schools -- and gives it to the wealthy in a wide variety of schemes ranging from tax cuts to cash vouchers to wealthy families to cover their private school tuition.<sup>46</sup>

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**Finding 2B: Walker's Budget Resulted in Larger Class Sizes and Reductions in Teachers and Programs**

Nearly every school district in Wisconsin has been hit by deep cuts in state education funding.<sup>47</sup> The Department of Public Instruction together with the Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators released their updated annual Budget Survey Analysis on November 15 2011 with stark findings about the impacts of Walker's Budget.<sup>48</sup> The report noted that 97% of the public school districts “will receive less school aid in the 2011-2012 school year than they did in the previous year.” The median decrease for districts was about 9.98%.

The total amount cut from school aid this year is \$749 million dollars but together with revenue restrictions there is a \$1.6 billion dollar loss in revenue authority over the two year budget period (2011-2013). Despite the drastic cuts the report notes that the cuts to education were part of a budget that increased state spending by nearly two percent and increased funding for students in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program by 10% this year. The following are key points from the report:

**Job Loss**

- Nine out of ten students attend a district that had a net loss of staff in one of four staffing areas surveyed. The report notes that the loss of experienced educators has had a large impact across the state, resulting in teachers and staff that are less experienced, younger and face higher student teacher ratios than the teachers they replaced.
- The report finds a total of 3,447 education jobs have been lost including 4,866 retirements this year alone.

**Program Cuts**

- Staff reductions have resulted in cuts to essential support and learning programs. Three in four students attend a district that reduced staff in one such program, and one in five attend a district that reduced five or more of these programs.
- Programs impacted by the cuts range from reading and early childhood programs to services for Students with Disabilities.

The percentage of students impacted by these program cuts follows:

- 43% of students have reduced library, technology or media services.
- 43% of students have reduced services for students with disabilities or English language learners.

- 38% of students have reduced social services or counseling.
- 34% of students have reduced at risk or drug prevention programming
- 22% of students have reduced reading and early childhood programs.

### **Class Size**

- There are more students per teacher this year. According to the report, fewer staff leads to class size increases with nearly six in ten students attending a district with increased class sizes in K-12 and four in ten students attending a district specifically with increased class sizes in elementary grades.
- The median student teacher ratio in Wisconsin increased from 13.27 in the 2010-11 school year to 13.53 in the 2011-12 school year.

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### **Finding 2C: Cuts to School Districts Will Hit Harder Next Year**

Perhaps the most discouraging information in the report points to the outlook for schools across the state next year. Half of all the districts reported that they had used one-time federal funds to offset the budget cuts. These funds will not be available next year to help school districts make up for the cuts in state aid. And “two out of three districts reported that they expect to have as deep or even deeper cuts next year. Only one out of 10 expect to have fewer cuts next year.”

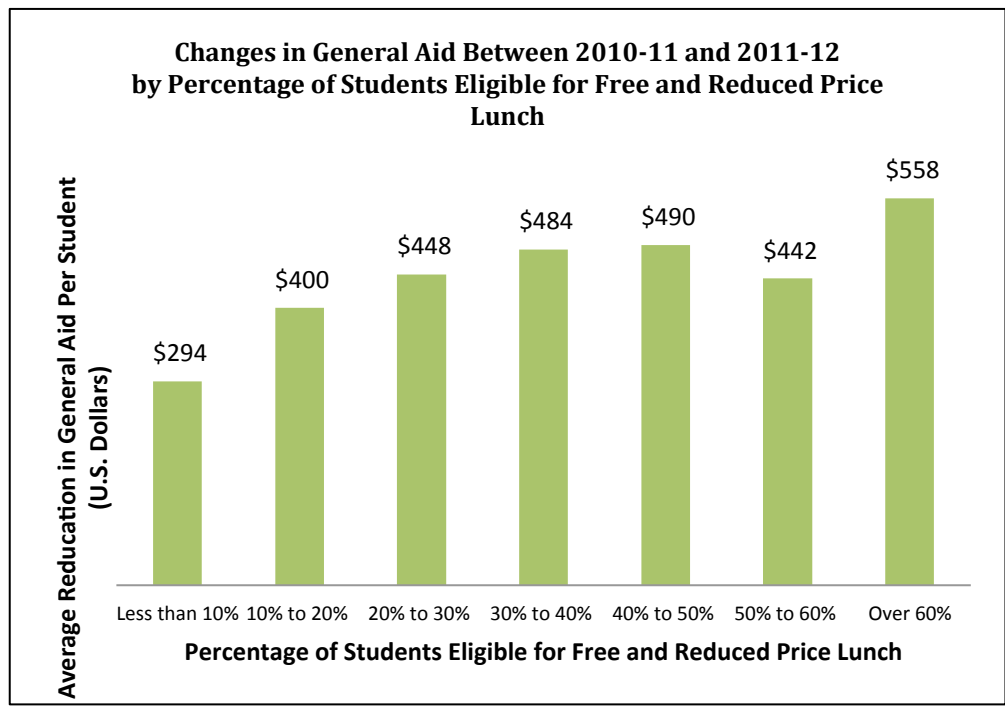
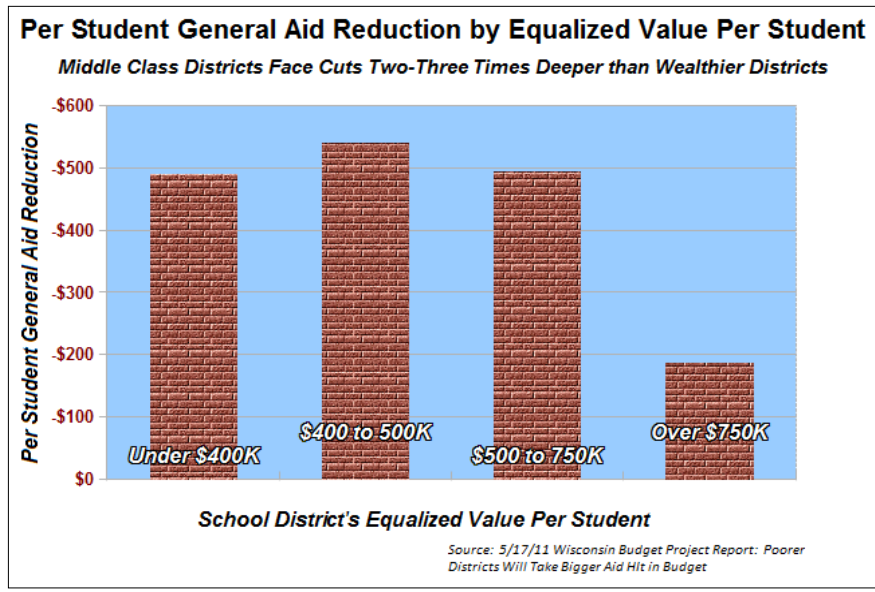
As School District Superintendent Evers said upon the release of the report:

*We must fight for our children's education... The state budget has had negative consequences for kids, and there is a better way... Choices were made last time, and choices can be made in the future, and these choices need to be changed.*<sup>49</sup>

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### **Finding 2D: Walker's Budget Cuts to Middle Class School Districts Are Much Deeper than Wealthy Districts**

As the chart below demonstrates, Governor Walker's education cuts are two to three times deeper for middle class districts than wealthier districts. In addition, these same wealthy districts will be getting the lion's share of Governor Walker's property tax cut. Moreover, if the data are analyzed based on the percentage of students who are eligible for the Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL) program it becomes clear that districts with more poor students face larger school aid cuts (see second graph below).<sup>50</sup>



**Finding 2E: Walker Refuses to Try Superintendent Tony Evers' Commonsense Plan to Close the Wealthy's \$897 Million School Levy Tax Credit Loophole**

DPI Superintendent Tony Evers and Wisconsin's legislative Democrats have called for closing the school levy tax credit and directing the 897 million dollars to our public schools, instead of the wealthy. University of Wisconsin Professor Andrew Reschovsky, in his recent report, "A Critical Review of Property Tax Relief in Wisconsin: The School Levy Credit and the First Dollar Credit," found:<sup>51</sup>

- The levy tax credits benefit people that own property in the state, but reside in another state.

- About half of the school levy tax credit provides tax relief for people’s property that isn’t their primary residence.
- Among homeowners, the largest credits flow to owners of expensive homes. Even before receipt of the credits, many of these homeowners face below-average property tax burdens relative to income. Many Wisconsin residents bearing the largest burdens relative to income receive little benefit from the two credits.
- On a per student basis, property owners in the property-wealthiest school districts are allocated school levy credits that are nearly **seven times** larger than those going to property owners in the poorest school districts.
- The first dollar credit results in larger percentage reductions in property taxes for owners of less valuable properties. Nevertheless, the allocation of the first dollar credit to *parcels* results in much higher than the average property relief per student flowing to the property-wealthiest school districts.

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**Finding 2F: Wisconsin Cuts to Education Are the Second Deepest in the Nation of Schools Analyzed**

Recently the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) studied 24 states and found Wisconsin made second biggest cut in per-student spending, as Chart 1 in the Appendix illustrates.<sup>52</sup>

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**Finding 2G: Janesville Representative of the Deep Cuts Most Districts Are Being Forced to Make**

The Janesville school district, which serves about 10,000 students, was forced to cut 100 full time positions for the 2011-12 and will have to cut an additional 125 full time positions in the 2012-13. The majority of these positions being cut are classroom teachers, which results in significantly larger class sizes. School districts all across Wisconsin are facing the same funding crises as Janesville and being forced to make similar draconian cuts.<sup>53</sup>

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**Finding 2H: Walker is Attempting to Redirect Funding Away from Public Schools Through Vouchers and Independent Charter Schools**

In what Governor Walker has described as the first step of making private school vouchers a statewide scheme, he has proposed changing the Milwaukee Parent Choice Program from a system that is limited to just low-income Milwaukee children to a system that gives vouchers to students, regardless of economic need or whether or not they are already going to private school. And, Walker wants this to happen immediately not only in Milwaukee, but also in the Green Bay, Beloit and Racine.

Recently the Republican-controlled legislature voted to expand the Milwaukee voucher program only to Racine and to keep the vouchers limited to low-income families, however, Walker has made it clear that he wishes to expand vouchers to the entire state and do away with income eligibility restrictions.

In addition, Governor Walker wants to create a new statewide government body made up of political appointees to oversee creation of new charter schools. Walker's new charter plan will not only bypass local school board control, but also:

- Allows *non-licensed individuals* to teach in charters.
- Repeals the cap on virtual (online) charter school open enrollment.
- Repeals the use of General Purpose Revenue for new charters and has charter funding be the first draw from state equalized aid that is disbursed to public schools. Reduces state aid for public schools, forcing local property tax payers to support the expansion of independent (2r) charter schools while funding for their schools is cut.

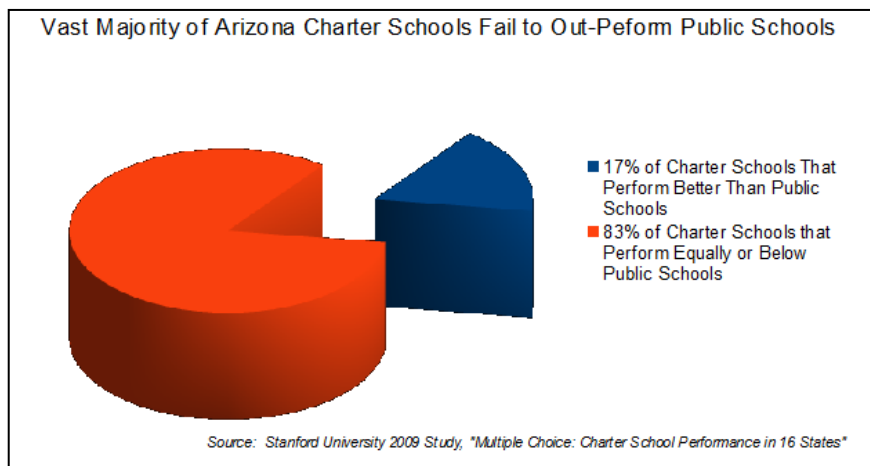
In essence, this charter scheme is materially the same as private vouchers schools: government funding without the oversight of locally elected school board members.

### **Charter Schemes Are Less Successful Than Public Schools**

Charters schools are somewhat common across the United States. Classically, an educator approaches the local school board and asks to start a new school within the district, with public funds. Typically these schools start out very well, but decline quickly. A recent Stanford University study on charter schools in 16 states found that “on average, charter school students can expect to see their academic growth be somewhat lower than their traditional public school peers.”

At least in the scenario above, the local school board can give the green light to a charter school and can pull the plug if they don't like the results. Governor Walker is pushing a program similar to Arizona's where charter schools are easy to create and have little oversight. In fact, Walker is proposing that local school boards are taken completely out of the loop and that a new board, appointed by the governor and other politicians, would green light new charter schools.

The logical question, therefore, is if charter schools are already under-performing on a small scale, does their performance increase if they are widely available. We need look no further than Arizona, where they have made charter schools widely available-- the same Stanford University study found that the increase led to poorer results on a much greater scale. In fact, the title of press release announcing the results bluntly states, “Charter Schools in Arizona Perform Significantly Below Their Traditional Public School Peers.”<sup>54</sup>

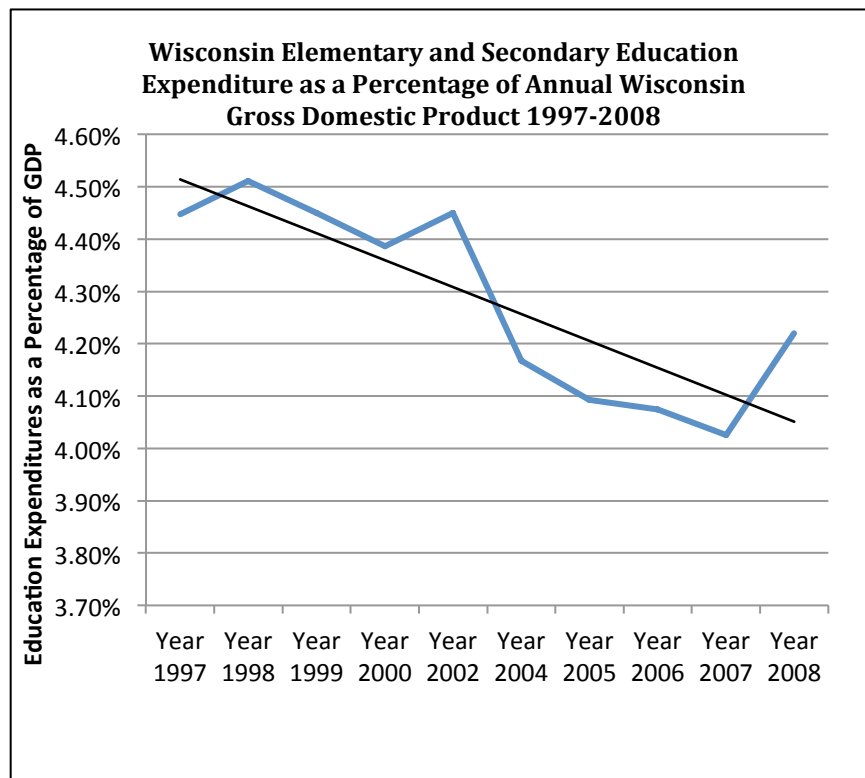


## Chapter 3: Wisconsin Spending on Education and Teacher Salaries Has Been Declining for Over a Decade

### Finding Three: Walker's Claim that Education Spending is "Out of Control" is Not Based in Reality

#### As a Percent of Wisconsin's GDP, Education Spending Decreased between 1997 and 2008

Between 1997 and 2008 education spending was generally declining as percent of Wisconsin's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Spending dropped by about a quarter of a percent -- not a small number considering that every .1% represents about 260 million dollars.<sup>55</sup>



#### Finding 3A: Wisconsin Teachers Earn Less than the National Average, Yet Governor Walker and His Allies Routinely Characterize Teachers as Wealthy Fleecers Making \$100,000 a Year

Despite the popular conception presented by the right wing that teachers are overpaid and their salaries are rising out of control, the reality is that Wisconsin's teacher's salaries have actually *dropped* since the Wisconsin Legislature enacted the Qualified Economic Offer (QEO) law in 1993. The QEO law and the revenue controls that restrict the amount of money school districts can raise were enacted in order to limit school spending. The Wisconsin Education Association Council found that "under the QEO, school boards have the option of unilaterally limiting pay and benefits for K-12 teachers so long as the combined increase is 3.8%. The law allows school districts to avoid true collective bargaining regarding compensation and important school quality issues."

As rising health insurance costs have eaten up most of the 3.8% total compensation target, teacher salaries in Wisconsin have dropped by roughly five percent since the QEO was enacted.<sup>56</sup> The National Center for Education Statistics puts Wisconsin's average teacher salary at \$51,264 and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction data put the average salary at \$49,093.<sup>57</sup> By both measures, Wisconsin teachers earned below the national average of \$55,202 for the 2009-10 school year.<sup>58</sup>

U.S. Senator Ron Johnson recently repeated a popular right wing spin of Wisconsin teachers making a six figure salary: "It looks like the total cost of a teacher on average in Wisconsin is about \$75,000 and that's working nine months out of the year. If you annualize that, that's close to \$100,000. This is what teachers will do: They'll benchmark what they can make in the private sector versus what they're getting in the public sector. And the marketplace will take care of that."<sup>59</sup>

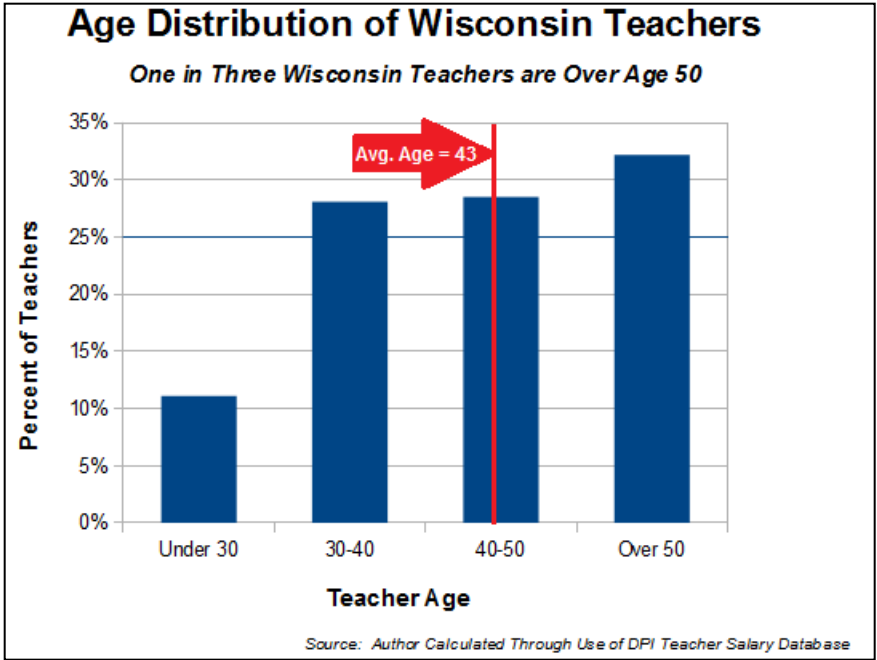
While Johnson is correct that the total *cost* to employ the average school teacher in Wisconsin is approximately \$75,000, this cost is not the same thing as the employee's salary. The average salary is \$51,264 per year and, like most professional jobs, it comes with benefits such as health insurance and pension contributions. But, even with pension and health insurance, the amount of the teacher's salary isn't \$75,000, because this number includes thousands paid by the employer in non-benefit payroll expenses, including payroll taxes and Worker's Compensation Insurance. In addition, the claim that teachers only work 3/4 of the time isn't true either. The average worker in the United States works 1,768 hours a year,<sup>60</sup> while the average Wisconsin teacher works 1,748 hours a year.<sup>61</sup>

**As the chart below shows, a Wisconsin teacher's salary varies greatly depending on experience:**

	<b>Average Salary</b>	<b>Average Benefits</b>	<b>Average Total Salary + Benefits</b>
First Year Teacher (Age 25)	\$34,008	\$13,645	\$47,653
Average Teacher (Age 43)	\$50,834	\$18,923	\$69,757
Average Top Teacher Salary Paid in Wisconsin School Districts (Age 59)	\$64,274	\$23,926	\$88,200

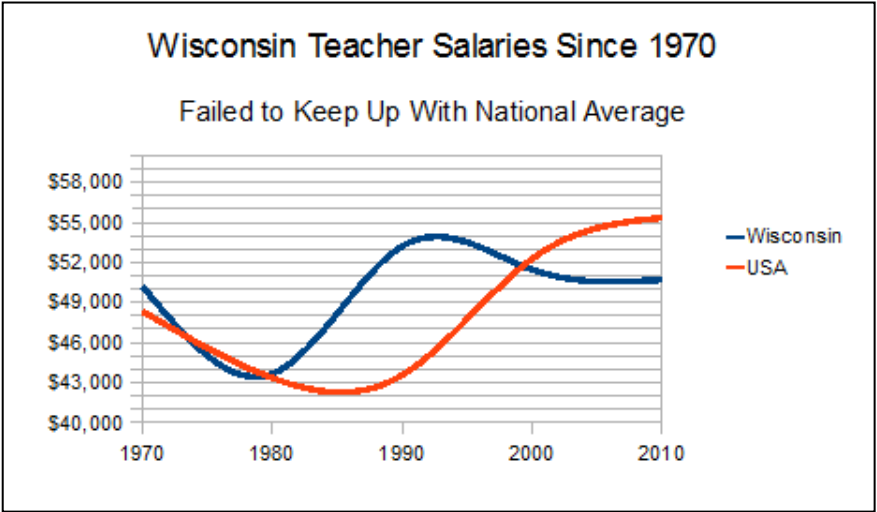
*Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction*

An analysis of Wisconsin's teachers shows that approximately one in three are over the age 50, which is part of a national trend as the Baby Boomer generation continues to move toward retirement. Considering that the average age of teachers is 59 and numerous teachers are retiring earlier than they had planned because of Governor Walker's deep cuts in public schools, Wisconsin is expected to experience a teacher shortage in coming years. In fact, in 2009 the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) said that the nation is expected to lose half of their teachers in the next ten years in what will be the "largest teacher retirement wave in history."<sup>62</sup>



In addition, it's important to point out that because Wisconsin has such a large portion of teachers over 50 and these experienced workers are earning the most in their career, the current teacher age distribution skews the overall average teacher salary and benefits.

In addition, 54.8% of Wisconsin's teachers have a Master's degree and 0.3% have a Doctorate, making Wisconsin's teachers the 13<sup>th</sup> most educated in the country.<sup>63</sup> However, despite this high level of training and experience Wisconsin teachers are paid below the national average-- an unfortunate turn of events, considering 20 years ago Wisconsin was a national leader in fair compensation of their teachers.



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**Finding 3B: In a Dishonest Attempt to Reduce the Number of Teachers, the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute (WPRI) and Other Right Wing Groups Routinely Attempt to “Muddy the Water” and State That Smaller Class Sizes Have No Effect on Student Achievement**

In a recent report on class sizes, WPRI asserted, “It is time for Wisconsin to reexamine its impetuous rush to implement smaller classes.” However, anyone that’s ever been to a children’s birthday party knows that the size of the group of kids matters when it comes to trying to get anything done, much less teach anything.

Republican Senator Lamar Alexander conducted a study on class size when he was Governor of Tennessee called the Tennessee Project STAR (Student/Teacher Achievement Ratio). This study demonstrated with great certainty that reducing the class size to 13-17 students in grades K-3 substantially increases student performance in all subjects.<sup>64</sup>

After Project STAR, Wisconsin developed a similar program called the Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) program in the 1996-97 school year to improve student achievement in low-income areas in grades K-3 by lowering class sizes to no more than 15 students per teacher. SAGE and comparison school students’ academic learning were measured at the beginning and end of the first-grade year, and again at the end of the second-grade year. The students’ scores were compared to those of students in matching comparison schools serving similar populations of students, with the following results:<sup>65</sup>

- SAGE first-grade students performed consistently better than comparison students in mathematics, reading, language arts, and total scores for the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills.
- The achievement gap lessened between white and African-American students in the SAGE smaller classes in the first grade, in contrast to a widening of the gap between white and African-American students in the larger classes of the comparison schools.

Second-grade SAGE students’ academic achievement remained higher than that of the comparison school second-graders, but the difference did not increase substantially.

It has been a goal of Wisconsin educators to bring the SAGE class-size to all elementary class rooms in Wisconsin, Wisconsin’s elementary average class size is currently 19.6 – well outside the SAGE ideal of 15 students and still lagging behind most other states (see Table 2 in the Appendix).<sup>66</sup>

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**Finding 3C: In a Broadbrush Attack, the Right Wing Often Attacks Public Schools By Repeating the Myth That the United States Spends More on Education Than Any Other Country**

The United States ranks 43<sup>rd</sup> on education spending in the world according to the CIA World Fact Book. The list of countries in front the United States includes New Zealand, Belgium, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and France.

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**Finding 3D: Wisconsin is Accused of Having the “Highest Per-Pupil Spending in the Midwest,” Even Though Wisconsin Ranks in the Middle of Great Lakes States**

The above attack splashed on the front page of right wing Christian News Service, Drudge Report and other right wing news outlets, but the truth is that over the last decade, Wisconsin has spent approximately the same per pupil as our neighboring states and 2010-11 is no different: According to the most recent figures released from the National Education Association, Wisconsin's per pupil total education expenditures is at the median of the Great Lakes States.<sup>67</sup>

**Wisconsin spending per pupil falls in the middle of the Great Lakes states spending levels.**

<b>State</b>	<b>Spending</b>
Illinois	\$11,457
Michigan	\$11,595
Wisconsin	\$11,429
Indiana	\$10,120
Ohio	\$9,528

*“Vouchers are not an end in themselves; they are a means to make a transition from a government to a market system.”*

Milton Friedman

Milton Friedman is among the most influential economists in the last 50 years. And he did not limit his opinions to economic policies, which resulted in massive job loss, depressed wages, exponentially-increased corporate power, historic levels of concentration of wealth into the accounts of the super-rich and the near-collapse of the American economy during the presidency of George W. Bush.



Friedman's view expressed time and again was that our education system needs to be “radically restructured” and that the best way to do that was to “make them private.” In 1955, Friedman first introduced the world to his idea of vouchers in his article “The Government's Role in Education.” As the title suggests, Friedman asserted that the government shouldn't have a role in educating children and that best way to eradicate public school was by giving parents vouchers that they could use to send their children to private schools.

He advanced many of the right wing ideas that have contributed to deepening inequality and a shrinking middle-class; trickle-down economics, free trade, union-busting, deregulation and privatization. And now the right wing wants the American education system to reflect Friedman's laissez-faire approach. Friedman's view of public schools follows his economic philosophy that government involvement is bad in almost every circumstance. As Nobel Prize winning economist Paul Krugman said, "he slipped all too easily into claiming both that markets always work and that only markets work. It's extremely hard to find cases in which Friedman acknowledged the possibility that markets could go wrong, or that government intervention could serve a useful purpose."<sup>68</sup> Friedman's theories have shaped our current economic system.

Wisconsin is not only ground-zero for the union-busting movement, but also the movement to end public schools. Governor Walker has stated repeatedly that he wishes to expand the “success” of the Milwaukee voucher program to the rest of the state of Wisconsin. Such an action would weaken public schools in Wisconsin.

This chapter debunks the right-wing myth that the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP) outperforms Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS). In addition, we will discuss how MPS outperforms MPCP, from student graduation rates to academic achievement and how the right-wing has succeeded in spinning the opposite to the public and the media.

### **Milwaukee Has Socioeconomic and Sociodemographic Challenges Unlike Any Other City in Wisconsin**

It is impossible to discuss education in Milwaukee without first acknowledging the prevalent socioeconomic and sociodemographic factors that put a student at risk for struggling or even dropping out of school. For example, two of the top factors that have a direct relationship with failure in school is being in a low-income family and having parents that did not graduate from high school. Out of Wisconsin’s top ten largest cities, Milwaukee leads in both of those categories.

<b>Top Ten Largest Wisconsin Cities:</b>	<b>% of Children Below Poverty Line</b>	<b>% of Adult Population with No HS Diploma</b>	<b>Drop Out Rate</b>
Milwaukee	34.9%	20.3%	31.8%
Racine	22.1%	16.8%	23.1%
Green Bay	22.1%	14.7%	20.1%
Kenosha	21.3%	14.0%	16.2%
Madison	15.8%	5.8%	15.4%
Janesville	15.6%	13.5%	14.1%
Oshkosh	9.7%	13.9%	9.4%
Appleton	14.3%	8.7%	8.6%
Eau Claire	14.1%	8.8%	6.0%
Waukesha	13.4%	8.5%	1.6%

*Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey Selected Economic Characteristics: 2005-2009 and Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction<sup>69</sup>*

### **Finding Four: When You Compare “Apples to Apples” Milwaukee Public Schools have a Higher Graduation Rate than the Milwaukee Private Voucher Schools**

In January of 2011, Robert Warren, PhD of the University of Minnesota conducted a study on behalf of School Choice Wisconsin comparing graduation rates at Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP) schools and Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS).<sup>70</sup> He found that between the 2002-03 and 2008-09 school years, 1,205 out of 1,735<sup>1</sup> MPCP students graduated from high school, a rate of 69.5%, while the graduation rate of MPS students was only 58.8%. School Choice Wisconsin promoted the results as proof that MPCP's graduation rates were higher than MPS. However, the numbers that School Choice Wisconsin released are not an “apples to apples” comparison, because they do not take into account important sociodemographic differences between the two student populations.

The Institute for One Wisconsin (IOW) contacted Dr. Warren who acknowledged that sociodemographic differences in MPS and MPCP student populations may account for the graduation rate differences. Dr. Warren assisted the Institute in the proper method to adjust

<sup>1</sup> Adjusting for 9<sup>th</sup> grade retention.

his earlier “straight-run” graduation rate analysis to account for those sociodemographic differences including adjustments for students with disabilities and high-mobility.<sup>2</sup>

The Institute for One Wisconsin recalculated the rates taking into account the differences in the two student populations and the graduation rates did, indeed, change significantly. In fact, when all differences are taken into account, MPS has a higher graduation rate.

### **Students with Disabilities Adjustment**

U.S. Department of Education data show that on average 36.7% of students with disabilities (SwD) drop out of school.<sup>71</sup> MPS has a larger proportion of SwD than MPCP partially accounting for the difference in overall graduation rates. Between the school years of 2002-03 and 2008-09, 18.7% of the MPS graduating classes were SwD and those students' graduation rate was 53.2%. Meanwhile according to testing results approximately 1.6% of MPCP students had disabilities.<sup>72</sup> The Wisconsin Department of Instruction also estimates that “around one percent” of MPCP students are SwD.

### **High-Mobility Adjustment**

“High-mobility” is a term to describe students whose families frequently move in and out of schools districts, often times repeatedly in a single year. Stanford University Education Professor Russell Rumberger is an expert on high-mobility students and says, “There is overwhelming evidence that mobility during high school diminishes the prospects for graduation: students who changed high schools even once were less than half as likely as stable students to graduate from high school, even controlling for other factors that influence high school completion.”<sup>73</sup>

In 1996, the Milwaukee non-profit PAVE released a study finding that 30% of Milwaukee Public School students were highly mobile, while only 6% of MPCP students were “highly-mobile.”<sup>74 75</sup> In fact, there are not only thousands of Milwaukee Public School children that are highly-mobile, but approximately three thousand students in the Milwaukee school district were identified as homeless in the 2009-2010 school-year.<sup>76 77</sup>

Using Dr. Rumberger’s analysis we can adjust graduation rates for high-mobility students. If we conservatively estimate that the graduation rate of highly-mobile Milwaukee Public School students is half the rate of “stable students,” graduation rates for highly-mobile students would be approximately 35.5%.<sup>3</sup>

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## **Finding 4A: MPCP's Graduation Lags Behind Milwaukee Public Schools When Students with Disabilities and High-Mobility Students are Taken into Account**

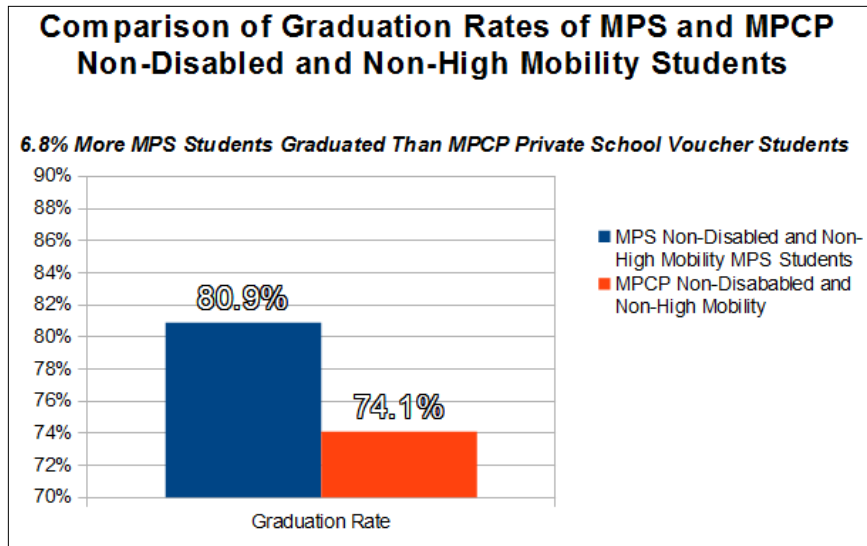
### **Calculating Non-Disabled and Non-High Mobility Students Graduation Rates**

Recognizing that there is an overlap of students that are highly-mobile and students with disabilities graduation rates can be adjusted to account for both factors. If we conservatively estimate that half of the students with disabilities are also highly-mobile, we get a graduation rate of 80.9% for MPS and 74.1% for MPCP, for students that are non-disabled and non-high mobility.

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<sup>2</sup> Note: Dr. Warren assisted and advised on the initial methodology, but did not calculate the adjustments.

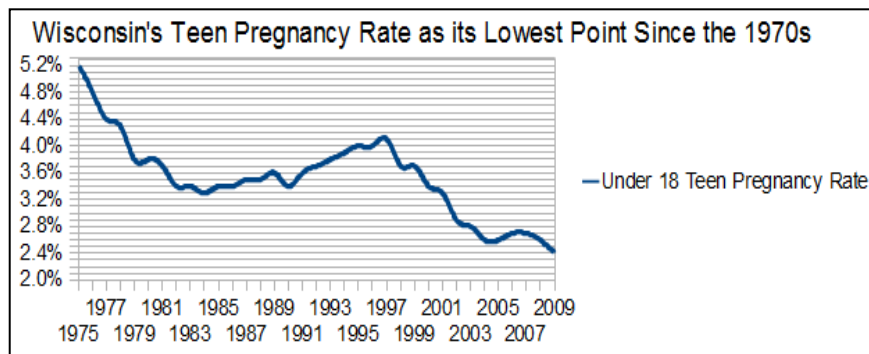
<sup>3</sup> Based on author's calculation that the “stable student” graduation rate in Milwaukee is 71%.



#### Teen pregnancy lowers graduation rates for Milwaukee students

Teen pregnancy is one of the main reasons high school students drop out. In fact less than 40% of teenage mothers that have a child before age 18 ever graduate.<sup>78</sup> In addition, frequently the father of the child is forced to drop out as well. In the Milwaukee Longitudinal Study's recent report on graduation, they polled 68 parents of both MPCP and MPS drop-outs and found that approximately 7-8% of students had to leave school to "take care of or support his/her family" in both MPCP and MPS, likely caused by teen pregnancy.<sup>79</sup> The survey also asked whether students dropped out because the "Child is/was pregnant" or "Child got married and had a baby," or "Child has mental health issues". In this case MPCP had a much higher rate of drop-outs attributed to this category (13.5%) while MPS parents reported only 5% of students dropping out for one of these causes. It is possible that nearly 20% of MPCP's dropouts could be attributable to teen pregnancy. However, it is difficult to disaggregate how many students dropped out related to pregnancy versus mental health issues and would be impossible to recalculate the graduation rates based on this data. Therefore it might be more useful to discuss the dramatic impact that teen pregnancy has on Milwaukee students more generally.

The study authors posit that the difference in teen pregnancy rates between MPS and MPCP may be related to Catholic doctrines opposing contraception and abortion taught in many of the MPCP religious schools. In addition, MPS frequently collaborates with Planned Parenthood in teen pregnancy prevention strategies and some MPS schools may offer more support to young parents.



In the last ten years, Milwaukee and the entire state of Wisconsin has experienced a sharp drop in the teen pregnancy rate.<sup>80</sup> Many consider increased educational efforts toward educating teens about pregnancy prevention largely responsible for this drop.

### **Milwaukee Public School Students are as Economically Disadvantaged as Voucher Students**

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction categorizes Economically Disadvantaged students as those that are participating in the Free and Reduced Lunch program, which requires a student be below 185% of the poverty line. The USDA, however, estimates that approximately only three-fourths of the students eligible for the Free and Reduced Lunch program actually participate. Therefore, given that 83% of Milwaukee Public School students participate in the Free and Reduced Lunch program and at least another 10-15% could likely participate in the program, it's fair to say that almost the entire student population is economically disadvantaged. Meanwhile, MPCP requires students to have incomes below 175% of poverty line initially and 220% in subsequent years to be considered economically disadvantaged. Of the 2,727 students studied, only 58% were eligible for the Free and Reduced-Price Lunch program.<sup>81</sup> In other words, not all MPCP students meet the technical definition of Economically Disadvantaged and many MPS are Economically Disadvantaged, but not reported. Based on this analysis, MPS and MPCP are nearly identical from an economic standpoint and an adjustment does not need to be made in this area.

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### **Finding 4B: MPCP Has Numerous Sociodemographic Advantages over MPS**

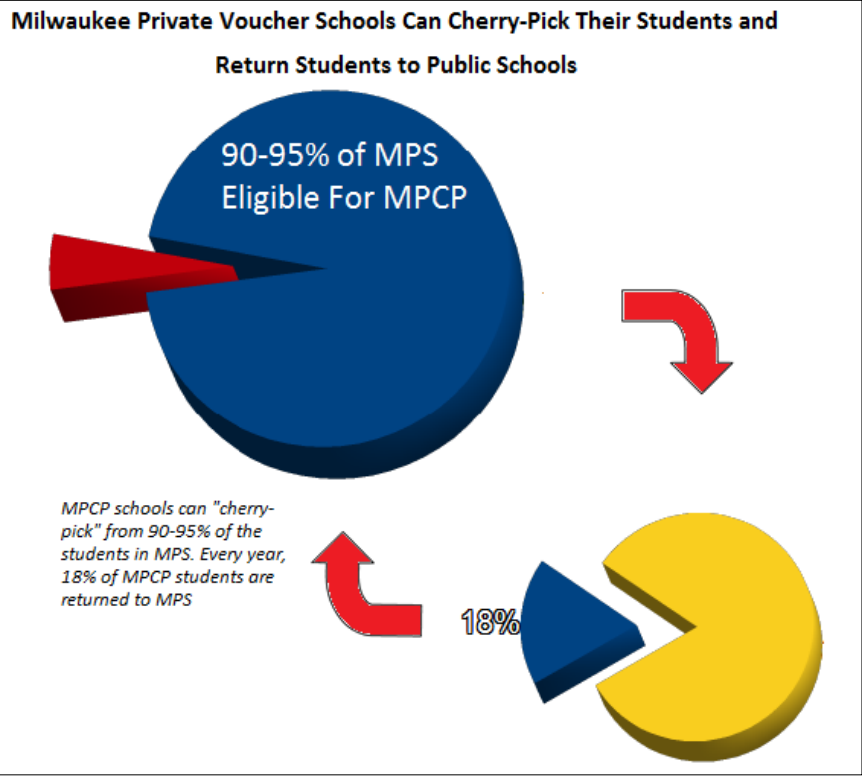
Parent surveys illustrate that MPCP has several sociodemographic advantages over MPS with the exception of teen pregnancy.<sup>82</sup>

- MPCP families are slightly more likely to own their home, compared to MPS.
- MPS families are slightly more likely to be on food stamps than MPCP families.
- MPCP families are much more likely to attend church or other religious service regularly.
- MPS students are much more likely to have been suspended in the last year for disciplinary reasons.
- MPS students have much higher rates of absenteeism.
- MPCP families were slightly more likely to have a two-parent household.

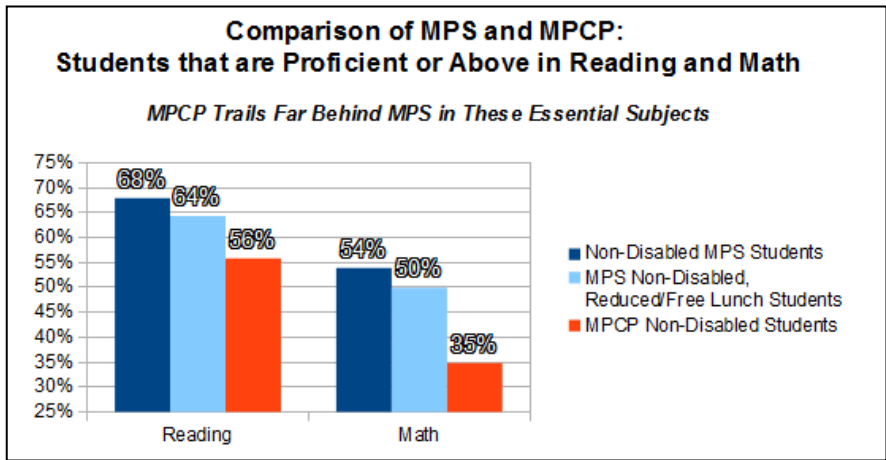
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### **Finding 4C: MPCP Voucher Schools Can “Cherry-Pick” and “Throw-Back” Students**

MPS, as a regular public school, is obligated to open their doors to all students, regardless of their disability, race, religion or anything else. MPCP, on the other hand, may choose or “cherry-pick” its students through an application process. In addition, 18% MPCP students switch back into MPS every year, allowing MPCP to constantly be culling-out students that are not working-out.<sup>83</sup> In fact, the Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau found that only 40 percent of a tracked sample 2,727 MPCP students remained in MPCP for longer than three years-- indicating that MPCP schools are culling-out approximately 60 percent of their students over a three year period, and nearly all of those students are returning to MPS.<sup>84</sup>

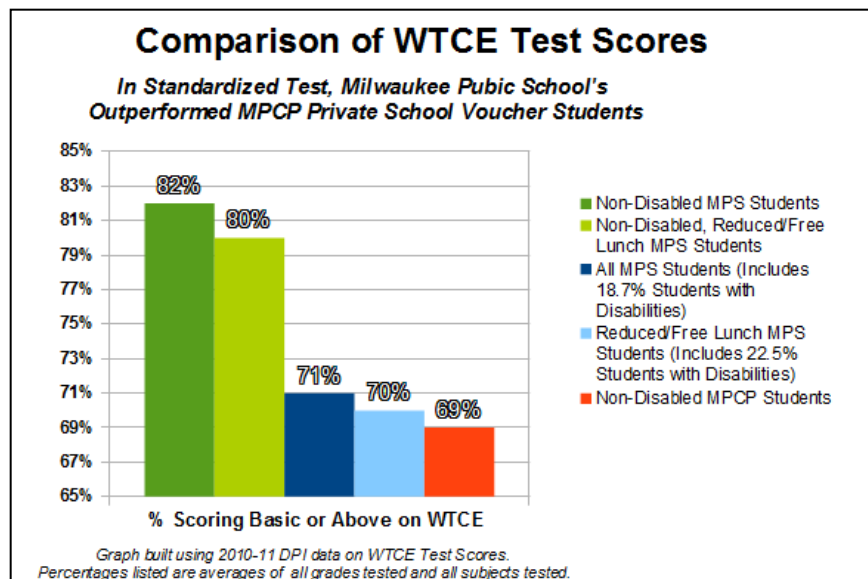


**Finding 4D: MPS Outperforms MPCP in "Apples to Apples" Standardized Tests**



In 2010, for the first time, nearly all of the MPCP schools participated in the same standardized test as MPS: the Wisconsin Knowledge Concepts Examination (WKCE).<sup>85</sup> The 2010 test results represent a true "apples to apples" comparison of academic achievement. MPS outperformed MPCP in all areas as illustrated in the chart below. In the comparison of non-disability students, MPCP lags further behind MPS.

When all the tested grades are combined (grades 3-8 and 10) and students without disabilities are compared; 68% of MPS students are proficient or advanced in reading while only 56% of MPCP students are proficient or advanced in reading. A similar difference is reflected in math scores, 54% of MPS non-disability students are proficient or advanced in math but only 35% of MPCP non-disability students tested as well.



## Finding Five: MPCP Schools are Not Financially Viable

Part of the right-wing's promotion of voucher schools is that if enacted on a large scale, they would save taxpayers money. Why? Because vouchers cost the State of Wisconsin \$6,442 a student, while state and local Wisconsin taxpayers spend, on average about eleven thousand per student, per year. The problem with this math, however, is that it assumes that \$6,442 spent on vouchers covers the total cost to educate MPCP students-- it does not.

### Finding 5A: MPCP Schools are Heavily Subsidized by Religious Donations and Right-Wing Donors

Most MPCP schools are heavily subsidized by the larger religious infrastructure supporting the schools as well as a broad range of right-wing benefactors that have a vested interest in the program. About half of MPCP students go to a parochial school in which as much as 50% of the educational costs are covered through private donations, institutional support and reduced salaries paid to nuns, priests or monks that have taken an oath of poverty.<sup>86</sup> In addition, right-wing organizations give MPCP schools millions of dollars every year.<sup>4</sup>

We do not know their exact finances, because they are private institutions and are not required to share of their financial information with the state. We do know, however, that several MPCP schools have closed their doors because they were not heavily subsidized by non-voucher revenue.<sup>87</sup>

### Finding 5B: Nationwide, Private Schools Without Religious Sponsorship Spend About As Much Twice Per-Pupil as Public Schools

A recent study by the Education and the Public Interest Center (EPIC) found that private schools without religious sponsorship spend almost twice as much, per student as public schools.<sup>88</sup> The author of the study, Rutgers University Professor Bruce D. Baker said, "There

<sup>4</sup> Analysis of The Lynde and Harry Foundation, PAVE and others.

are a lot of urban legends that drive the policy discussions" and told the Washington Post that "private schools tend to be costlier than the commonly accepted figures in policy debates, especially conversations about school vouchers."<sup>89</sup>

Also of note, the study found that in 2007-08, secular private schools spent \$20,100 per student, public schools \$10,100 and that nonparochial Catholic schools tended to spend approximately the same as public schools and that Christian schools spent \$7,100 per student.<sup>90</sup> In addition, if adjustments are made for public schools serving nearly all children with disabilities, which cost twice as much to educate as a non-disability student), public schools arguably spend less per-student than Christian schools. "Baker, the study's author, said that the gap between tuition and actual expenses raises questions about how much voucher programs can expand."<sup>91</sup>

As previously discussed, MPCP schools are allowed to cherry-pick their students and throw-back the students they don't want -- from both an academic as well as financial perspective. This leaves the MPS with a student body that has much higher proportions of students with disabilities and other student groups that are more expensive to educate than the typical MPCP student.

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### **Finding 5C: Wide-Spread School Vouchers Won't Save Taxpayer Money**

Supporters of school vouchers assert that voucher programs will save taxpayers millions of dollars-- even though a larger scale voucher program would cost at least the same and likely more, than is currently spent on education. Many voucher schools rely on private subsidization, a model which is not easily expandable, because there are simply not enough churches or large institutions poised to subsidize schools if all were privatized. Additionally, the private institutions are not accountable to the taxpaying public and cannot guarantee the longevity and security of their subsidization efforts.

### **Finding Six: Organizations and Academics Praising MPCP And Attacking MPS Almost Always are Heavily Funded by Right-Wing Deep Pockets**

Most Americans support their local schools and teachers. Nevertheless right-wing think tanks and academics serve the effort to expand voucher programs by regularly creating reports designed to erode confidence in the value and quality of our public education system. This is where the "science" of right-wing think tanks serves the conservative agenda.

The largest Wisconsin school system is the Milwaukee Public School district. Milwaukee schools comprise the most students and the most ethnic and socioeconomic diversity of any district in the state. Anti-public education zealots and opportunistic profiteers have targeted MPS because of its size and the challenges. And, of course, Milwaukee has the nation's longest-running voucher system—making attacks against MPS valuable to the right-wing effort to replace public schools with a voucher system.

A review of the funding sources of academics and organizations that regularly praise MPCP schools and attack MPS demonstrates that with few exceptions they are also major donors to other right-wing causes. While this relationship is somewhat expected among right-wing "issue advocacy" groups, it's alarming when it occurs at public universities-- including the

University of Wisconsin-- where we rely on the information they convey to be unbiased and truthful.

### **American Federation for Children**

American Federation for Children (AFC) established in January 2010 is a reincarnation of a school choice advocacy group previously named All Children Matter. AFC sought to influence Wisconsin elections most recently through flyers, TV ads and robocalls to protect Milwaukee Senator Alberta Darling from the August 2011 recall effort. Darling has received indirect support through literature and television ads, and direct financial support from AFC's leader Betsy DeVos – an influential right-wing donor who revealed in a 1997 Op-Ed in Roll Call:

*"I know a little something about soft money, as my family is the largest single contributor of soft money to the national Republican Party... I have decided, however, to stop taking offense at the suggestion that we are buying influence. Now I simply concede the point."*

All Children Matter was forced to dissolve and regroup as AFC after it was fined over \$5 million in Ohio for illegal campaign donations. The group reformed with the same Executive Director and major donors and continues to advance voucher programs by promoting voucher-friendly candidates and legislation. AFC has been a proud cheerleader of the Walker administration's efforts to advance the Milwaukee voucher program and expand it across Wisconsin.

### **Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation**

Over the last three decades, the conservative Bradley Foundation has become a powerful player in shaping national politics and advancing pro-market ideas by supporting a variety of think tanks, publications and academics. The organization founded by the Bradley Family which made over a billion dollars in the sale of its Milwaukee based electrical controls company, has spent almost as much as the Koch or Scaife foundations combined between 2001-2009. "All told, the Bradley Foundation dispersed more than \$350 million in grants from 2001 to 2010 to hundreds of institutions, ranging from arts organizations and school-choice groups in Wisconsin to prominent national policy organizations, a Milwaukee Journal Sentinel review shows."<sup>92</sup>

"Its financial resources, its clear political agenda, and its extensive national network of contacts and collaborators in political, academic and media circles has allowed it to exert an important influence on key issues of public policy. While its targets range from affirmative action to social security, it has seen its greatest successes in the areas of welfare "reform" and attempts to privatize public education through the promotion of school vouchers."<sup>93</sup> The Bradley Foundation has advanced school choice in Wisconsin, as a model for the nation by supporting the initiatives, funding some of the schools and contributing millions of dollars to the academic institutions charged with monitoring the program.

Governor Walker has been closely linked to the Bradley Foundation. Michael Grebe, CEO of the Bradley Foundation headed Walker's campaign and his transition into the Office of Governor. In addition major conservative advocacy groups, the MacIver Institute, Americans for Prosperity and the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute receive hundreds of thousands of dollars in support from the Bradley Foundation. Those same groups have advocated in support of Walker's policies and in the form of TV ads, earned media and publications, specious reports and mailings to Wisconsin voters.<sup>94</sup>

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**Finding 6A: The School Choice Demonstration Project -- the Organization Responsible for Evaluating MPCP -- is Led and Funded by Right-Wing School Choice Advocates**

In 2005, the Wisconsin legislature passed Act 125, which put an organization called the School Choice Demonstration Project (SCDP) in charge of providing a “non-partisan” and “unbiased” evaluation of MPCP.

So what is the SCDP? According to the Wisconsin Legislative Fiscal Bureau, it is a “national collaboration of researchers designing school choice program evaluations which is currently based at the University of Arkansas.” However, a closer look at this group reveals that it’s almost completely funded by right-wing, pro-voucher individuals and organizations.<sup>5</sup>

The SCDP is part of the University of Arkansas’ “Department of Education Reform”. SCDP was created from a 100 million dollar endowment from the far right-wing family that owns most of Wal-Mart. The 100 million gift was one-third of a total 300 million dollar gift the family gave the University of Arkansas back in 2005.

The head of the Department of Education Reform and the SCDP is Jay P. Greene, a well-known conservative activist. Prior to coming to the University of Arkansas to start the SCDP in 2005, he was a senior fellow at the right-wing Manhattan Institute.<sup>95</sup> The Manhattan Institute itself is a well-known right-wing think tank founded by Bill Casey in 1978 and funded in part by the Koch brothers, Exxon-Mobil, the family that owns most of Wal-Mart and the Wisconsin based Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation.

When it was announced that Greene was coming to the University of Arkansas to start SCDP, Rich Nagel, the head of the Arkansas Education Association said, “Greene has devoted his career to promoting vouchers and other measures aimed to weaken or dismantle public schools. The Manhattan Institute, where he has worked for the past five years, is a far-right think tank funded by a handful of right-wing foundations and dedicated to eliminating the public schools.”

Unfortunately, Nagel’s concerns about Greene have proven true: Greene has taken the far right-wing politics of the Manhattan Institute with him to the SCDP. In a recent paper, he made his radical opposition to public schools clear: “If it is an educational fantasy we are indulging in, there will be no government-operated schools, no compulsory education, and no taxes or regulation.”<sup>96</sup> His latest book “Why America Needs School Choice” published in 2011, reaffirms his strong support of school choice programs.

Greene also, in his own words “maintained an affiliation” with the Manhattan Institute while he was SCDP, but has recently “switched” right-wing organizations and now is also now a fellow at the right-wing Goldwater Institute as well as the Bush Institute. In addition, Greene has been frequently criticized by the Economic Policy Institute president Larry Mishel for using “pretend social science” and “persistent misuse of data” in his research.<sup>97</sup>

It should be no surprise, therefore, that the SCDP is at the forefront of repeating the right-wing mantra about MPCP: that it outperforms MPS and does it at a fraction of the cost. As discussed in the previous section these conclusions are unfounded.

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<sup>5</sup> NOTE: The authors of this report are concerned about potential bias in the data reported by the School Choice Demonstration Project, as outlined in this section. Nevertheless, the project does have a robust collection of reports and data which we have occasionally referenced at other points in this report.

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**Finding 6B: Right-Wing Group Pressured UW Pollster to Hide Poll Showing a Majority of Wisconsinites Opposed the Milwaukee Voucher Program**

Although right-wing groups claim that their funding to universities researching vouchers does not influence the outcome of the research, the reality is that Institute for One Wisconsin's sister organization, One Wisconsin Now (OWN), uncovered a huge smoking gun that proves that contention absolutely false.

In early 2010 OWN found, through an open-records request of University of Wisconsin professor Ken Goldstein's emails, that the right-wing group Wisconsin Policy Research Institute (WPRI) had successfully pressured Goldstein to remove the results from a press release and a power-point presentation of a state-wide poll showing a majority of Wisconsinites opposed the Milwaukee voucher program. Worse, they convinced Goldstein to present only information showing Milwaukee results, (where a majority supported the voucher program), leaving the public and reporters the impression that the voucher program was popular, when in reality, a majority of the state opposed it.

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**Finding 6C: Right-Wing's WISTAX Launches Scurrilous Attacks on MPS**

On public education, the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance (WISTAX) serves the conservative agenda by creating reports designed to erode confidence in the value and quality of our public education system. The board members of WISTAX are central to conservative causes, organizations, business interests and fundraising for Republican politicians as documented by WISTAX Watch.<sup>6</sup> More than 90 percent of WISTAX board members' giving since 1994 has gone to Republican or non-partisan conservative candidates.

The manipulation of data and selective use of statistics by WISTAX to support the conservative agenda on education is displayed in the WISTAX December 2008 report in "The Wisconsin Taxpayer" entitled, "Milwaukee Schools in a National Context."<sup>98</sup> The report creates the impression that MPS spends its resources poorly, does poorly on standardized tests and the Milwaukee community does not pay its fair share to support MPS.

Readers of this WISTAX report on MPS are left with three distinct impressions about Milwaukee Public Schools:

- Too much is spent on MPS and its employees.
- Milwaukee is not paying its fair share for MPS.
- MPS is not teaching its students effectively.

WISTAX makes the case for change by creating the impression Milwaukee compares poorly with other states and school districts. In its analysis, WISTAX says "To put MPS in a national context, it was compared to 15 other districts nationwide." WISTAX determined the best indicators to achieve this result were:

- City and school district size
- Household income

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<sup>6</sup> WISTAX Watch is a project of One Wisconsin Now. <http://wistaxwatch.org/>

- Percent of the population with a college degree

The WISTAX indicators do not include a direct measure of poverty rates for district children, though it is a major influence in MPS. Among the 16 districts, MPS is third in the number of children in poverty and fifth in the poverty rate. As well, it has the fourth most students.

Educating children living in poverty is more costly than educating more affluent children, because there is a less stable support structure in the child's life and community. WISTAX chooses to ignore poverty rates and instead includes a miasma of suspect comparisons using statistics for percent of the population over 25 with a college degree and average household income of 35-44 year olds. WISTAX also includes percent of students eligible for free or reduced lunch and percentage of students with individualized education programs.

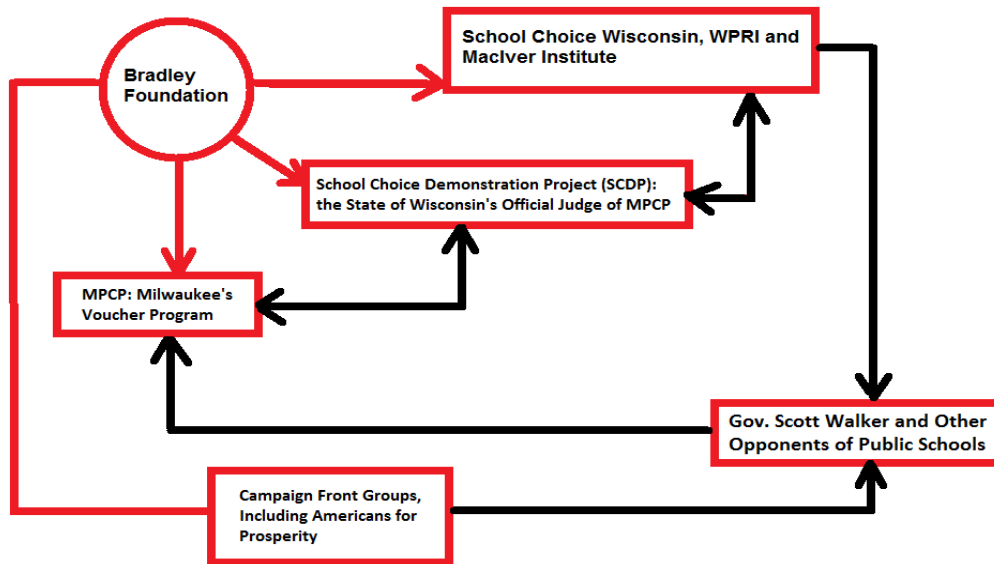
Why is poverty not included? Using data from the same time period as the WISTAX report finds MPS is actually the nation's 28th largest school district and has the 12th most children in poverty (39,231). More telling, of the 70 largest school districts in the nation, MPS has the third highest percentage of children in poverty – a staggering 32.5 percent. While a handful of the districts compared to MPS in the WISTAX report may have similar poverty percentages, there are only two with similar poverty populations.

The manipulation of data by WISTAX to create the impression MPS is failing and not worth the investment of public dollars is insidious – particularly when conservatives will use this biased report to argue for the continued extraction of public dollars from the children of MPS. Consider this observation from the International Monetary Fund, no bastion of liberalism, about the continuing cycle of poverty as it relates to education:

*The reason is simple: when any child fails to acquire the basic skills needed to function as a productive, responsible member of society, society as a whole — not to mention the individual child — loses. The cost of educating children is far outweighed by the cost of not educating them. Adults who lack basic skills have greater difficulty finding well-paying jobs and escaping poverty. Education for girls has particularly striking social benefits: incomes are higher and maternal and infant mortality rates are lower for educated women, who also have more personal freedom in making choices.*  
[International Monetary Fund, 2004]

**Finding 6D: Pro-MPCP Forces Largely Funded by a Small Group of Right-Wing Deep Pockets**

**The Bradley Foundation Spends Millions Each Year to Protect and Promote Milwaukee's Voucher Program**



As the cliché goes, if you want to figure out who’s behind something, you have to follow the money. Most of the forces pushing vouchers are a small group of right-wing deep pockets that includes the Bradley Foundation, the Koch brothers, hedge fund mogul Julian Robertson, and the family that owns Wal-Mart. Below is a flow-chart describing how just one of these organizations – the Bradley Foundation – has created a vast web to protect and promote MPCP. They fund the SCDP, which judges the MPCP, which is also funded by the Bradley Foundation. They fund a variety of think tanks, which promote the “findings” of the SCDP praising MPCP and attacking MPS. And, of course, they fund policy makers such as Scott Walker, who does his part to protect, promote and expand MPCP to the rest of the state.

This report examined the campaign to discredit Wisconsin and Milwaukee public schools by right-wing groups and school choice advocates. We find that these same groups are seeking to influence Wisconsin elections and policy. Meanwhile groups funded by the same deep-pockets are responsible for the official monitoring and evaluation of the Milwaukee choice program.

School choice advocates are promoting unfair analysis to advance vouchers throughout Wisconsin not as an end in themselves, but as Milton Friedman said, as a “means to transition from a government to a market system.”

## Conclusion

Public schools are America at its best, because they allow those who are willing to work hard to live up to their full potential and realize the American Dream. For most in Wisconsin, this dream only became reality in the last few decades when graduating from high school became commonplace. Today Wisconsin still leads the nation in high-school graduation rates bringing students closer to realizing their goals.

We need to protect the American Dream and insure Wisconsin continues to be a leader in education by keeping our schools strong. Schools need adequate and reliable funding and protection and support from elected officials.

In chapter four we discussed where the Right's motivation to destroy public education originates. Earlier we have illuminated Governor Walker's strategy to realize these policies in Wisconsin. It is now up to supporters of public education -- on the Left and Right-- to stand-up to Walker and fight for our schools.

This report has shown that even though the Milwaukee voucher schools are able to cherry-pick their students, throw-back the students they don't want, and are heavily subsidized by religious and right-wing deep pockets, they still lag behind Milwaukee Public Schools in key areas of academic attainment and achievement.

Yet, advocates for privatization press on. Not only do Governor Walker and the rest of the right-wing want to continue vouchers in Milwaukee, but they want to expand them to the rest of the state. It's worth bearing in mind that vouchers were never about improving education. As discussed earlier vouchers are a means to end public schools.

The good news is that the vast majority of Wisconsinites support their local public schools and would be alarmed if they knew the real "choice" with vouchers is public schools living or dying. The challenge to progressives is getting word out and letting their friends and neighbors know about this very real threat to our public schools.

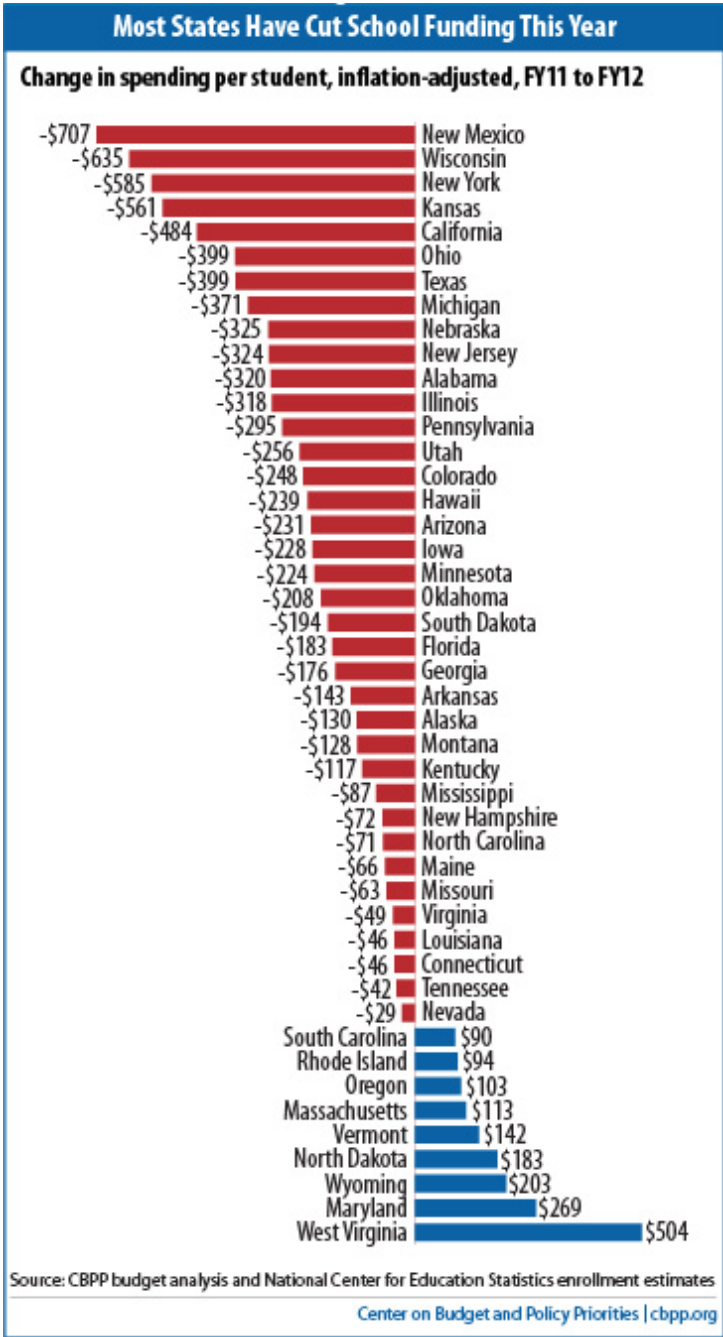
Table 1

<b>Percent of Adult Population That Graduated From High School, Comparison of Wisconsin Counties in 1970 and 2010</b>					
<b>County</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>2010</b>
Adams	38%	84%	Marathon	48%	88%
Ashland	47%	84%	Marinette	48%	89%
Barron	44%	86%	Marquette	45%	83%
Bayfield	48%	87%	Menominee	31%	82%
Brown	58%	90%	Milwaukee	54%	84%
Buffalo	46%	84%	Monroe	49%	88%
Burnett	40%	83%	Oconto	41%	87%
Calumet	49%	92%	Oneida	55%	93%
Chippewa	47%	88%	Outagamie	56%	92%
Clark	41%	80%	Ozaukee	63%	93%
Columbia	54%	91%	Pepin	43%	87%
Crawford	45%	85%	Pierce	53%	87%
Dane	71%	94%	Polk	51%	87%
Dodge	44%	86%	Portage	54%	87%
Door	49%	91%	Price	41%	86%
Douglas	54%	89%	Racine	52%	88%
Dunn	50%	91%	Richland	47%	86%
Eau Claire	60%	91%	Rock	60%	87%
Florence	47%	88%	Rusk	44%	83%
Fond du Lac	52%	88%	St Croix	59%	88%
Forest	39%	83%	Sauk	48%	88%
Grant	52%	88%	Sawyer	45%	85%
Green	51%	90%	Shawano	44%	87%
Green Lake	48%	86%	Sheboygan	51%	88%
Iowa	55%	90%	Taylor	38%	82%
Iron	45%	88%	Trempealeau	42%	89%
Jackson	42%	83%	Vernon	41%	86%
Jefferson	52%	88%	Vilas	52%	92%
Juneau	46%	87%	Walworth	60%	89%
Kenosha	48%	88%	Washburn	46%	88%
Kewaunee	45%	90%	Washington	54%	92%
La Crosse	60%	93%	Waukesha	68%	95%
Lafayette	53%	89%	Waupaca	46%	87%
Langlade	44%	87%	Waushara	43%	83%
Lincoln	44%	87%	Winnebago	57%	90%
Manitowoc	50%	91%	Wood	55%	89%

**Table 2**

<b>Ranking of States by Public Elementary School Class Size</b>			
<i>Wisconsin's Average Class Size of 19.6 is in the Bottom Half of States</i>			
<b>Top Half of States</b>		<b>Bottom Half of States</b>	
North Dakota	16.4	Kansas	19.5
Vermont	16.8	Wisconsin	19.6
Maine	16.9	Oklahoma	19.7
Georgia	17.6	New Jersey	19.8
Texas	17.7	Arkansas	19.8
Tennessee	17.7	Iowa	20.0
South Dakota	17.9	Maryland	20.2
New York	18.0	Hawaii	20.6
Louisiana	18.1	Rhode Island	20.7
Virginia	18.2	Pennsylvania	20.8
Montana	18.2	Ohio	21.2
Florida	18.3	Colorado	21.2
South Carolina	18.5	Indiana	21.3
West Virginia	18.6	Delaware	21.4
Wyoming	18.7	Illinois	21.4
Massachusetts	18.7	California	21.5
New Mexico	18.8	Nevada	21.5
Nebraska	18.8	Kentucky	22.1
Alabama	18.9	Washington	22.8
New Hampshire	19.0	Oregon	23.3
Alaska	19.0	Minnesota	23.3
Mississippi	19.3	Arizona	23.5
Missouri	19.4	Idaho	23.7
North Carolina	19.4	Utah	24.0
Connecticut	19.4	Michigan	24.5

Chart 1



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