

Principles for Public Policy

Wisconsin Education Association Council 2017-18

NURTURING SCHOOLS

Safe and welcoming schools that ensure time to learn and teach, up-to-date learning materials, and educator input are essential to student success. WEAC supports policies that include:

Educator Involvement. There is a close relationship between positive school climate and educator voice in discussions of working conditions and school decision-making. All decisions should include meaningful input from educators who will ultimately implement policies.

Mandatory Preparation Time. To do their best for students, educators need dedicated duty-free preparation time during the work day.

Class Size Limits. Small class sizes allow for one-on-one interaction between students and educators. Additionally, any student-teacher ratios used to determine policies should reflect actual student-teacher contact, rather than based on all campus instructional personnel.

Safe Schools. Students and staff deserve a safe place to learn and teach. Public policy should embrace diversity and protect immigrant students and their families. School discipline policies should be solution-based and recognize the need for adequate staff and resources, as well as collaboration with and support for, educators.

Equitable Funding. Wisconsin can ensure quality education by providing the funding needed for all students to achieve educational excellence. Specifically, policies should be developed to:

- Provide more funds for schools with high numbers of low-income students by placing weights in the state school aid formula.
- Fully fund special education in public schools. The state currently only funds 26 percent of these high costs, while special needs vouchers at private schools are fully funded.
- Guarantee per-pupil increases that at a minimum keep up with the cost of inflation.
- Increase the state's commitment to rural schools including sparsity and high-cost transportation aids, broadband access and grants to hire and keep qualified educators.

Equitable Access and Diversity. Equitable access to diverse public schools, including measures that increase diversity and diminish segregation, should be pursued.

Local Control. The authority of locally elected school boards to govern in the best interest of students should be recognized, including when it comes to school district referendums and takeovers.

STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES

All students, regardless of their ZIP code, deserve the support, tools and time to learn from early childhood through adulthood. This means more one-on-one attention, inviting classrooms, a well-rounded curriculum, and solutions like these:

Community Schools. The Community Schools model of education offers a sustainable solution for struggling districts that privatizers cannot offer. Policies to create partnership funding between local school districts, the state and community partners should be advanced.

Enhancing Services for Students. A range of services should be supported including access to mental and general health practitioners, counselors, psychologists, social workers, school nurses and other specialists. Opportunities in career, trades and technical education should be advanced.

High-Stakes Testing. Too much focus on high-stakes testing takes away valuable time for learning. More focus should be placed on the availability of one-on-one instruction and educational opportunities.

Universal Preschool. School readiness should be invested in through early childhood programs, including funding for optional, quality pre-kindergarten programs for all three- and four-year-olds.

QUALITY EDUCATORS

All students deserve caring, qualified teachers and education support professionals. To attract and keep the best in our classrooms, our Association supports:

Wisconsin Retirement System. Preservation of Wisconsin's fully funded retirement system is key so educational employees can plan for retirement without worrying about changing or reducing benefits.

Supporting Educators throughout Their Careers. Wisconsin needs high standards for teacher certification and preparation programs. Programs should balance the art and science of teaching, and alternative certification programs should receive regular review to ensure quality. WEAC supports:

- Incentives and financial support for paraprofessionals who pursue teacher certification, as well as continuing education and staff development for educators.
- Prohibitions against an individual supervisor/employer from taking away a teaching license.
- Comprehensive induction programs.
- High-quality mentoring, including funding for training, compensation and release time.
- Incentives and financial support to enable staff development that is ongoing and includes components for educators to provide feedback and direct change.
- Professional development around Culturally Responsive Teaching practices.

Student Loan Debt Relief. Borrowers should be able to refinance their student loans the same as they can with mortgages. Loan forgiveness and scholarships should be developed for teachers and education support professionals in high-needs disciplines and hard-to-staff schools.

High-Quality Instructors in Technical Colleges. Wisconsin's Technical Colleges need committed, professional educators with certification and experience in their fields as appropriate. Policies should emphasize the educational role of Technical College instructors, including supporting preparation time, the ability to use professional judgement, and access to professional development.

[END]

