

POWER Education Blueprint

Parental Options for Wisconsin Enable Results

Student learning must be the goal of all efforts, every day, in every Wisconsin school. Every policy, every expense, every instructional practice, every decision must be based on its impact on children's learning.

With that singular goal in mind, Wisconsin families should be anticipating a new school year with optimism. Instead, the pandemic has exposed glaring and fundamental weaknesses in our system. This is visible at school board meetings across the state. Parents are turning out in large numbers, pressing for clear answers. There has been an awakening.

Many Wisconsin children have lost up to a year of progress in districts that paid more attention to demands from organizations than parents. Nearly everyone knows of a student who faltered during COVID. Too often we watched as our K-12 system held parents at arm's length and forgot that schools exist to provide education to kids. Our system provides too few options.

The most important action we can take — for kids, families, communities, employers, and taxpayers — is to provide the widest possible range of education options and put parents in charge of choosing what is best for their children.

We need to give every Wisconsin family the right to choose the schools best for their children. All kids must have a choice from among all options, whether they are traditional public, private, home schools, charter, or virtual schools. And all kids must have the ability to attend their local public school in-person.

The Wisconsin policy that has produced proven results for a limited number of families should be extended to all. No family should be excluded. Options must be available to every child growing up in Wisconsin without regard to where their families live, how much money they make, or what challenges they face.

A system accountable to parents will reward schools and teachers for success and innovation. When parents are free to leave, the school is motivated to earn their enrollment and so has reason to listen and work with them. Improvements come from that collaboration. This encourages districts to attract and retain students. The competition for students is a driver of quality like none other. It lets parents vote with their feet and choose schools that work best for their children.

