

EDUCATION

Wisconsin's economy is moving in the right direction. The unemployment rate is the lowest it's been in years, and wages are growing. Unfortunately, employers often struggle to find qualified, skilled workers for well-paying jobs. We continue to have unacceptably high percentages of students who are not proficient in math and reading, and the achievement gap is leaving students behind on the path to career success. The following reforms will help address our state's education challenges, help students develop the "soft skills" to advance their career, and better prepare students to successfully enter the workforce.

✔ SUPPORT SCHOOL CHOICE AND CHARTER SCHOOLS

In 1990, Wisconsin led the nation by creating the parental school choice program in Milwaukee to bring education options to low-income students stuck in failing public schools. Since then, it has been expanded statewide so that students anywhere have the ability to get a great education. Moving forward Wisconsin should continue to lead and innovate in this area by removing enrollment caps, expanding eligibility criteria, expanding authorizers of public charter schools, and exploring education savings accounts for students.

✔ APPRENTICESHIP & INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Apprenticeships and internships give students hands-on experiences that lead to meaningful job opportunities. Students with an apprenticeship or internship are also more likely to stay with an employer long term. We need to do more to give students practical work experience while they are in high school. Wisconsin should incentivize schools to partner with their local employers to offer students these important real-world career experiences as part of their high school coursework. At the university level, all UW System graduates should be required to have an internship in their field as part of their coursework.

✔ EXPAND DUAL ENROLLMENT

Wisconsin should continue to expand dual enrollment opportunities so that more students can earn college credits through the UW System or private colleges and universities, or make progress toward a degree or certificate through the Wisconsin Technical College System while they are in high school.

✔ BRING BACK INDUSTRIAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Many students no longer have an opportunity to explore technical education or receive hands-on training in our schools, despite the desperate need for these vanishing skillsets from our workforce. School districts should bring these important classes back to expose students to these broad career options.

✔ CAREER COUNSELORS ON STAFF

Too often we hear of guidance counselors overwhelmed by a multitude of tasks, leaving little to no time to help students make career decisions. Having dedicated career counselors on staff would ensure that school districts are able to help students sift through career options and make class choices accordingly.

✔ CAREER PLAN CURRICULUM FLEXIBILITY

Once a student has identified a career through the Academic & Career Planning process, districts should have flexibility with respect to breadth requirements in order to allow students to place a greater focus on classes directly related to their career preparation.

✔ CAREER DEVELOPMENT REPORT CARDS

Add criteria to existing school report cards that measure how well a school prepares students for career development, including having access to industrial arts and technical education classes, STEM curriculum tracks, dual enrollment opportunities, apprenticeships/internships as part of their coursework, career counselors on staff, etc.

✔ NEW FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

Public education currently receives more state funding than ever before. New education funding should be tied to items that ensure students have broad career opportunities, including industrial arts classes, dual enrollment, and having a career counselor on staff, etc.

