

# EDUCATION REFORM<sup>POLL</sup> RESULTS

MAY 2023

**WMC**  
FOUNDATION

The WMC Foundation recently commissioned a poll to assess voter attitudes with respect to education funding and education reform issues.

The poll was conducted by OnMessage Inc. from May 9, 2023 through May 11, 2023 among 700 likely voters statewide.

Sixty-percent of respondents were called on a cell phone, and forty-percent on a landline.

The partisan voting behavior of respondents was 40.8% Democratic, 12.1% ticket splitters, and 38.8% Republican. The poll respondents were 51.6% female, and 48.4% male. The poll has a margin of error of +/- 3.8%.

# EDUCATION REFORM

## POLL RESULTS

**WMC**  
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# 70%



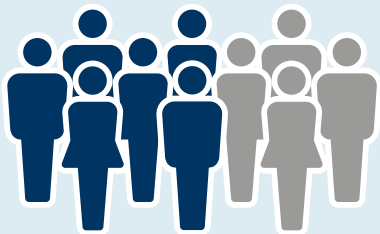
of Wisconsin voters support school choice.

School Choice has bipartisan support in Wisconsin – earning a majority of support from Democrats, Republicans and Independents.

89% Republicans

67% Independents

53% Democrats



6 in 10 Wisconsinites support narrowing the funding gap between public schools and choice schools.

# 63%



of voters support expanding school choice in Wisconsin.

# 74%

of Wisconsinites oppose plans for the state Supreme Court to make School Choice illegal.



# POLL: Education Reform Policies Popular with Wisconsinites

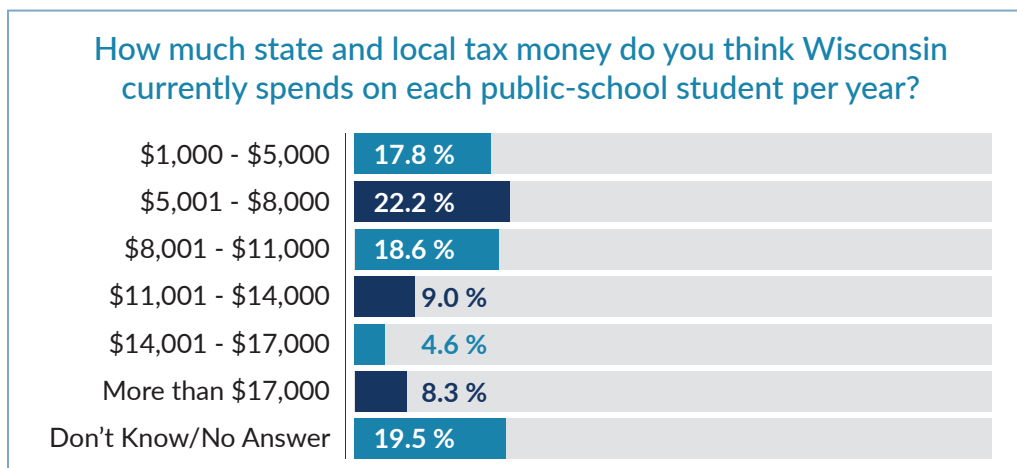
## 70% Support School Choice & 59% Back Equitable Funding for All Schools

A new poll found education reform has significant support amongst Wisconsinites, including narrowing the funding gap between public schools and choice schools, and expanding the state's school choice opportunities for students. WMC Foundation – an affiliate of Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC) – conducted the scientific poll to gauge public sentiment on a variety of educational issues.

### THE POLL'S FINDINGS

According to the poll results, Wisconsinites overestimate the academic performance of students at public schools while simultaneously underestimating the amount of funding public schools receive from taxpayers.

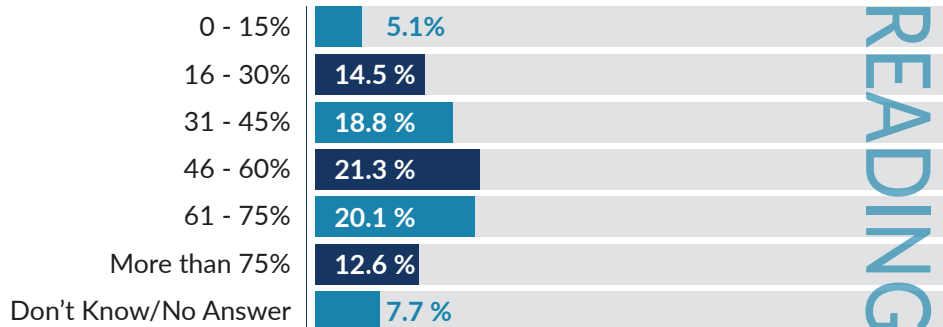
On average, Wisconsin taxpayers spend about \$15,000 per year on each public school student. However, 68 percent of poll respondents estimated funding to be less than that – including 40 percent of Wisconsinites who believe funding is below \$8,000 per student each year.



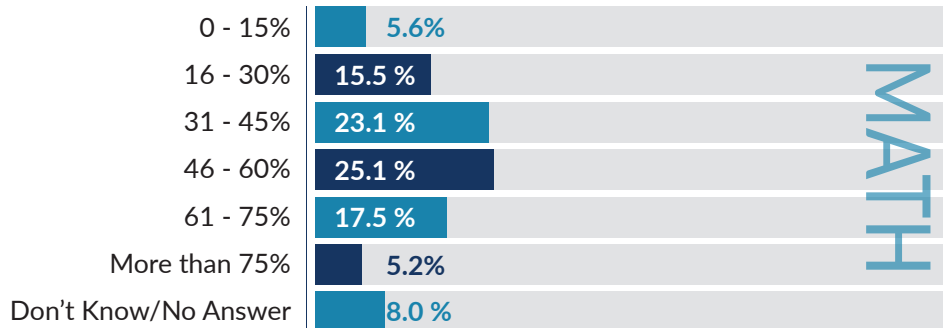
In contrast, roughly half of those surveyed overestimated students' ability to read and do math at grade level. In the 2021-22 school year, 37 percent of students were proficient in English Language Arts on the state's Forward Exam. On the same exam, 39 percent of students were proficient in Math.

When asked about proficiency, 54 percent of Wisconsinites thought students were performing better than actual in reading, while 48 percent had an inflated view of students' academic achievement in math.

### What percentage of Wisconsin public school students do you believe are proficient in reading?



### What percentage of Wisconsin public school students do you believe are proficient in math?



## SCHOOL FUNDING

Though Wisconsin public schools receive approximately \$15,000 per student on average from Wisconsin taxpayers, funding for choice and charter schools is far less. In fact, choice and charter schools receive about 40 percent less than their public school counterparts in per-pupil funding.

One policy being considered on this topic is to narrow the gap to ensure more equitable funding for all students, no matter what school they attend. That plan has widespread support amongst Wisconsinites. According to the WMC Foundation poll, 59 percent of likely voters would be in favor of making the gap smaller.

In Wisconsin, the school choice program pays about \$10,000 per student per year, while the average public school receives over \$15,000 per student per year. One proposal before the state Legislature is to narrow the gap between the school choice funding per student and the public-school funding per student.

**Do you support or oppose this bill?**



A similar number of respondents believe that not only should the funding gap be narrowed, but it should in fact be equal for public, choice and charter schools alike. Fifty-six percent of Wisconsinites said the per-student investment in both choice and charter schools should be equal to funding for public schools.

Wisconsin currently invests over \$15,000 per public school student each year. Knowing this, do you think Wisconsin should make the school choice voucher equal to the investment the state makes in children who attend public schools?



Don't Know/No Answer = 4.5%

Do you think that Wisconsin should provide the same level of funding to students who attend independent charter schools as we do to students who attend public schools?



Don't Know/No Answer = 3.9%

## EDUCATION FREEDOM

The WMC Foundation poll found strong support for parents directing their children's education. Asked if they agreed that parents, and not the state, are responsible for determining the type of education their children need, 74 percent of respondents said they agreed.

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: *Parents, not the state, are responsible for determining the type of education that their children need.*



This sentiment drove similarly strong support for giving parents the freedom to choose the best education for their children. Seventy percent of Wisconsinites said they generally support school choice. When broken down by political party, there was bipartisan majority support for education freedom. Eighty-nine percent of Republicans, 67 percent of Independents and 53 percent of Democrats all support school choice.

Do you generally support or oppose school choice?



REPUBLICANS



INDEPENDENTS

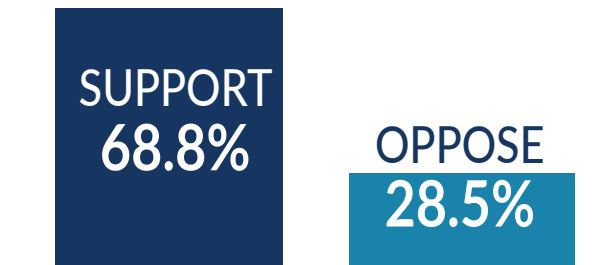


DEMOCRATS



When given more information about school choice, support remained. After being told that “school choice gives parents the right to use the tax dollars designated for their child’s education to send their child to the public or private school which best serves their needs,” 69 percent of Wisconsinites said they were supportive. This includes 44 percent who said they strongly support school choice.

School choice gives parents the right to use the tax dollars designated for their child’s education to send their child to the public or private school which best serves their needs. Knowing this, do you generally support or oppose school choice?



Don't Know/No Answer = 2.7%

Wisconsinites also overwhelmingly agree that the state's school choice program should be expanded because it gives parents more control over choosing the best school for their family's specific situation. In total, 63 percent of those polled believe the program should be expanded. This included strong majorities for both men (66 percent) and women (60 percent). Importantly, support for expanding school choice was above 60 percent for every single age group in Wisconsin.

Notably, Wisconsinites are opposed to judicial action that would alter the state's education options. Seventy-four percent oppose the Wisconsin Supreme Court striking down the state's parental school choice program – including 57 percent who are strongly opposed.

If challenged in the courts, there would be bipartisan opposition according to the poll. A majority of people across party affiliations oppose such action. Ninety percent of Republicans, 77 percent of Independents and 59 percent of Democrats oppose the state Supreme Court making school choice illegal.

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: *Wisconsin should expand its school choice program because it gives parents control in choosing a school and curriculum that meets their standards for their child.*



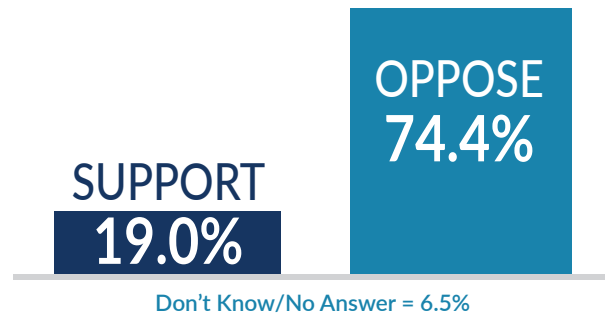
**MALE**



**FEMALE**



Would you support or oppose the Wisconsin Supreme Court striking down Wisconsin's parental school choice program and making school choice illegal in Wisconsin?



**REPUBLICANS**



**INDEPENDENTS**



**DEMOCRATS**

