

EDUCATING OUR FUTURE



**REFORMS & BEST PRACTICES
TO MOVE WISCONSIN FORWARD**

DECEMBER 2023

WISC  **NSIN** **2035**

A VISION FOR WISCONSIN'S ECONOMIC FUTURE





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INTRODUCTION

WMC Foundation spent the better part of 2021 conducting research, meeting with stakeholders in both the private and public sectors, and visiting all corners of the state to understand the biggest economic challenges facing Wisconsin. The culmination of those efforts in December of that year was the release of **Wisconsin 2035**, which cast a vision for the state's economic future.

According to the interviews and research, the biggest challenge facing the economy was and remains to be focused on finding a talented workforce. The report detailed a number of concerns but also outlined potential solutions to grow the number of working-age people in Wisconsin and ensure they had the proper skills.

A follow-up report that was released in June 2023 – **Wisconsin's Demographic Dilemma** – delved deeper into the simple math problem the state has: the population is not growing at the rate needed to fuel expanded economic growth. While population growth continues to be a key part of solving Wisconsin's persistent workforce shortage, another task before policymakers is ensuring the education system is producing graduates who are both career and college ready.

Wisconsin businesses and other stakeholders have continued to put an emphasis on education in recent years – understanding the next generation of workers will come from the state's K-12 schools. Whether graduates head to a four-year university, a technical college or straight into the workforce, they will fill open positions today and the positions of the future.

Unfortunately, Wisconsin is not making the grade when it comes to preparing young people. According to the Summer 2023 edition of the Wisconsin Employer Survey – which is conducted twice per year by Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC) – nearly three-quarters of the state's businesses believe students graduating from the public K-12 system are not prepared for the workforce.¹

This should not come as a surprise to anyone who knows that more than half of students in Wisconsin schools cannot read or do math at grade level.

In an effort to improve Wisconsin's educational and economic outcomes, this report will highlight pain points in the current system. In addition, it will provide best practices from around Wisconsin that can be replicated and offer ideas on how to increase the number of graduates who are workforce and college ready.



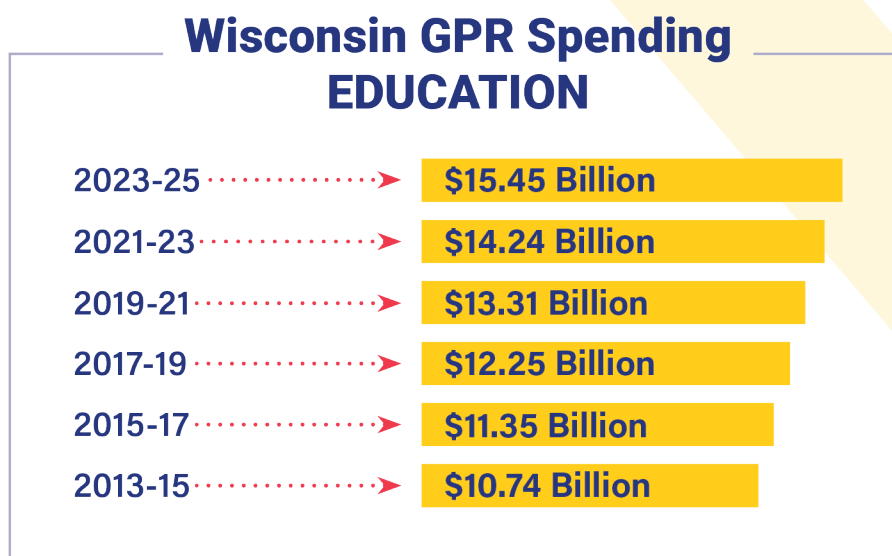
It will not be an easy hill to climb given the current situation, but **Wisconsin 2035** launched to take on the biggest issues that cannot be solved in just one legislative session or election cycle. The reports already published – and those not yet written – will continue to push business leaders, lawmakers and the public to have tough, but needed, conversations.

If Wisconsin can replicate things that work in education, eliminate the things that don't and pursue policies that put students first, there is no limit to what the next generation can accomplish or how much they can contribute to the state's long-term economic success.

THE STATE OF EDUCATION

Earlier in 2023, legislators and the governor agreed to a rare compromise that would significantly increase state funding to public school districts while also increasing funding for choice and charter schools. This resulted in over \$1 billion in additional funding going to public education over the two-year budget term.

Following the agreement, the final budget will spend \$15.45 billion in general purpose revenue (GPR) on education.² To put that into perspective, the 2013-15 state budget approved a decade ago spent \$10.74 billion.³ That is an increase of 44 percent over the last six budget cycles. Inflation over that same time period was 31 percent.⁴

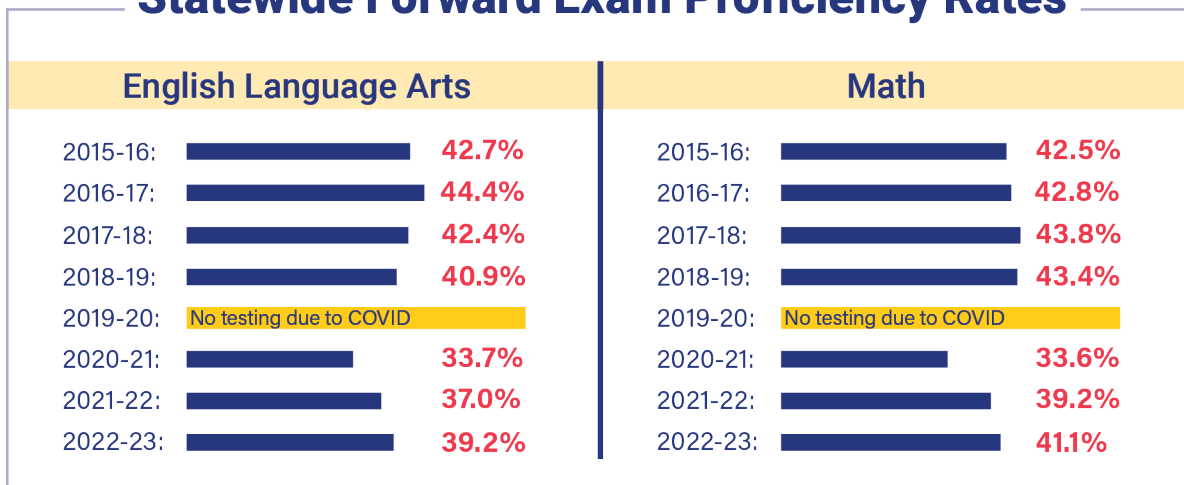


Source: Legislative Fiscal Bureau

Given the increased spending on education over the years, one would conclude that educational outcomes have improved. Unfortunately, as was pointed out in the initial **Wisconsin 2035** report, that has not happened.

According to the latest Forward Exam results – the standardized test for students in grades 3-8 – less than half of students can read and do math at grade level. In the 2022-23 school year, 39.2 percent of students scored proficient or better in English Language Arts (ELA), and 41.1 percent did the same in math. Both of those are drops from what students were scoring prior to the pandemic. In the 2018-19 school year, 40.9 percent were proficient or better in ELA, and it was 43.4 percent in math.⁵

Statewide Forward Exam Proficiency Rates



Source: Department of Public Instruction

These numbers are a concern to say the least, but they only scratch the surface of some of the challenges faced by school districts across the state. Some of the public school districts in Wisconsin's major cities are falling short of the already-low bar set by the statewide averages.

Only 9.1 percent and 11.5 percent of students in the School District of Beloit and Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) respectively are proficient or better in math. So, roughly nine in 10 students in these districts are unable to do arithmetic at grade level. Both score only slightly better when it comes to ELA: 14.0 percent in Beloit and 15.8 percent in Milwaukee.

This is not rock bottom, however. MPS has some schools – including Auer Avenue Elementary, Hi-Mount Elementary and Keefe Avenue Elementary – that literally have zero students who can read at grade level. Of the 165 students that are enrolled in these three schools, none of them tested proficient or better on the ELA portion of the Forward Exam.

2022-23 Forward Exam Proficiency Rates

SELECTED SCHOOL DISTRICTS

	English Language Arts	Math
Beloit	14.0%	9.1%
Eau Claire	43.6%	44.7%
Green Bay	23.0%	28.6%
La Crosse	34.4%	31.4%
Madison	37.5%	35.8%
Milwaukee	15.8%	11.5%
Racine	18.0%	14.5%
Superior	32.4%	30.2%
Wausau	41.2%	44.6%

Source: Department of Public Instruction



Wisconsin's Achievement Gap

Wisconsin ranks as the most racially segregated state in the country according to WalletHub.⁶ A big portion of that ranking is based on educational attainment. Only Washington, D.C. ranks worse than Wisconsin when it comes to the achievement gap – measured as the difference in academic proficiency between white students and students of color. In Wisconsin, the gap is remarkably acute between white and black students.

Across the state, white students are roughly five times more likely to be proficient in reading and math as their black classmates. About half of white students are proficient or better in ELA and math, while about one in 10 black students can say the same. Just over 20 percent of Hispanic students are proficient in both subjects, and approximately 40 percent of Asian students are.

2022-23 Forward Exam Proficiency Rates **BY RACE/ETHNICITY**

	English Language Arts	Math
White	47.2%	50.3%
Black	10.5%	8.3%
Hispanic	22.8%	21.5%
Asian	37.5%	42.4%

Source: Department of Public Instruction

At MPS in Milwaukee, white students are six times as likely to be able to read at grade level with only 7.7 percent of black students testing as proficient in ELA. When it comes to math, 35.7 percent of white students are proficient or better in Milwaukee, but only 5.1 percent of black students are.

***“Only Washington, D.C. ranks worse than Wisconsin
when it comes to the achievement gap...”***

However, perhaps the largest gap belongs to the most progressive city in the state: Madison. White students in the Madison Metropolitan School District are eight times more likely to be proficient in ELA and a whopping 11 times more likely to be proficient in math. A large majority (60.7%) of white students in Madison test at grade level in math, but only 5.6 percent of black students do.

Looking to Racine, the gap is narrowed significantly because student attainment is lower for almost everyone. Just 3.6 percent of black students are proficient in math, but only 25.3 percent of white students are. Almost 43 percent of Asian students tested this well on the Forward Exam, however.

EDUCATION REFORMS & BEST PRACTICES

Wisconsin cannot continue to accept that well over half of students cannot read or do math at grade level. The economy relies on a well-prepared and educated workforce, which means school districts, policymakers and business leaders need to work together to replicate what is succeeding and reform what isn't.

Achievement Gap in Major School Districts

2022-23 MILWAUKEE Forward Exam Proficiency Rate

	English Language Arts	Math
White	47.5%	35.7%
Black	7.7%	5.1%
Hispanic	15.6%	10.6%
Asian	23.5%	20.8%

2022-23 MADISON Forward Exam Proficiency Rate

	English Language Arts	Math
White	64.3%	60.7%
Black	8.0%	5.7%
Hispanic	16.2%	14.8%
Asian	36.0%	44.2%

2022-23 RACINE Forward Exam Proficiency Rate

	English Language Arts	Math
White	29.3%	25.3%
Black	5.9%	3.6%
Hispanic	14.1%	10.4%
Asian	45.6%	42.6%

Source: Department of Public Instruction

While much of the beginning of this report focuses on the negatives, it should be noted that there are many positives to highlight in Wisconsin's K-12 landscape.

Many schools are vastly outperforming the state average when it comes to proficiency. Countless educators are making a difference in students' lives every day. And the business community continues to invest more time and resources into their local communities to help improve educational opportunities for all students – while ensuring the curriculum matches the needs of the economy.

Luckily, many policies and ideas that work to improve educational attainment already exist in pockets of Wisconsin. All the stakeholders can help expand these programs by learning more about the ones that work well and finding ways to replicate them in their own communities.

To further this effort, this report suggests: expanding educational options across the state so that a student's zip code does not determine his or her potential; increasing training and exposure at school districts for potential careers in Wisconsin; and providing a quicker path to the workforce for young people.



Private School Choice

Wisconsin is home to the nation's oldest private school choice program in the country. Prior to the choice program, private school was only available to those who could afford tuition. It is now available to thousands of families who want to take their kids out of failing schools.

What started as an experiment to help Milwaukee families that desperately wanted another option for their children, has become an all-out success for students in every corner of Wisconsin.

The proof is in the enrollment. In the 2000-01 academic year, roughly 10,000 students participated in private school choice. The number has increased five-fold in the last two decades. In the most recent school year (2022-23), more than 54,000 students participated in one of the state's school choice programs.⁷

In an effort to open this option to even more families – and cover the increasing costs for schools – a part of the bipartisan education compromise in the 2023-25 State Budget was an increase in funding for both choice and charter schools. In the current school year, funding for choice students increased to \$9,893 for K-8 students and \$12,387 for high school students. It should be noted that this is still far less than the average per-pupil spending that public schools receive, which is equal to \$16,859.⁸

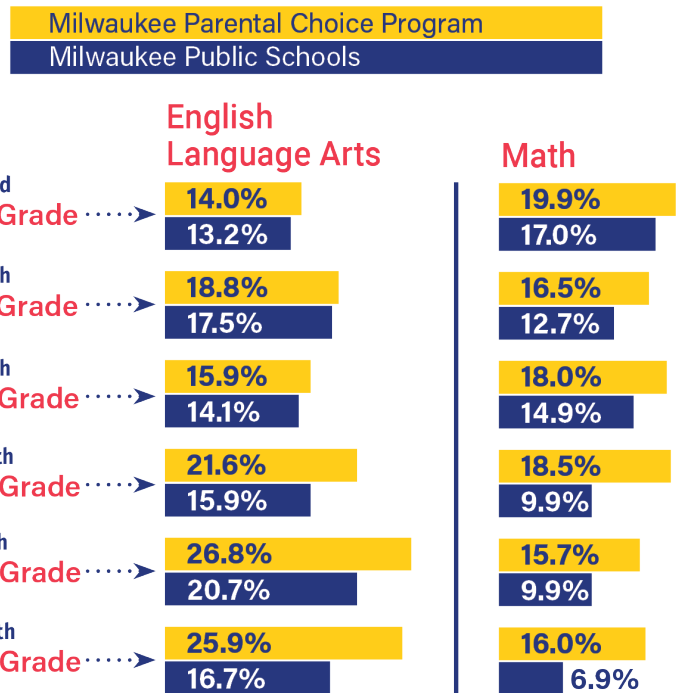
Even though choice schools receive less funding per student, their educational outcomes are routinely better than their public school counterparts. Students in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program outperformed students at MPS by as many as nine percentage points on the Forward Exam in 2022-23.⁹ Notably, more students are proficient in ELA and math at every grade level in the Milwaukee choice program than students at MPS.

The same can be said for students in the Racine Parental Choice Program and the Wisconsin Parental Choice Program. Students in each of the choice programs also outperform their peers on the ACT that is used heavily in college admissions.

This is especially important when considering that nearly 80 percent of students in the Milwaukee and Racine choice programs and 60 percent of the students in the statewide choice program are black or Hispanic.¹⁰ In a state that struggles profusely with the achievement gap, the school choice program has proven to give students of color a leg up.

MILWAUKEE

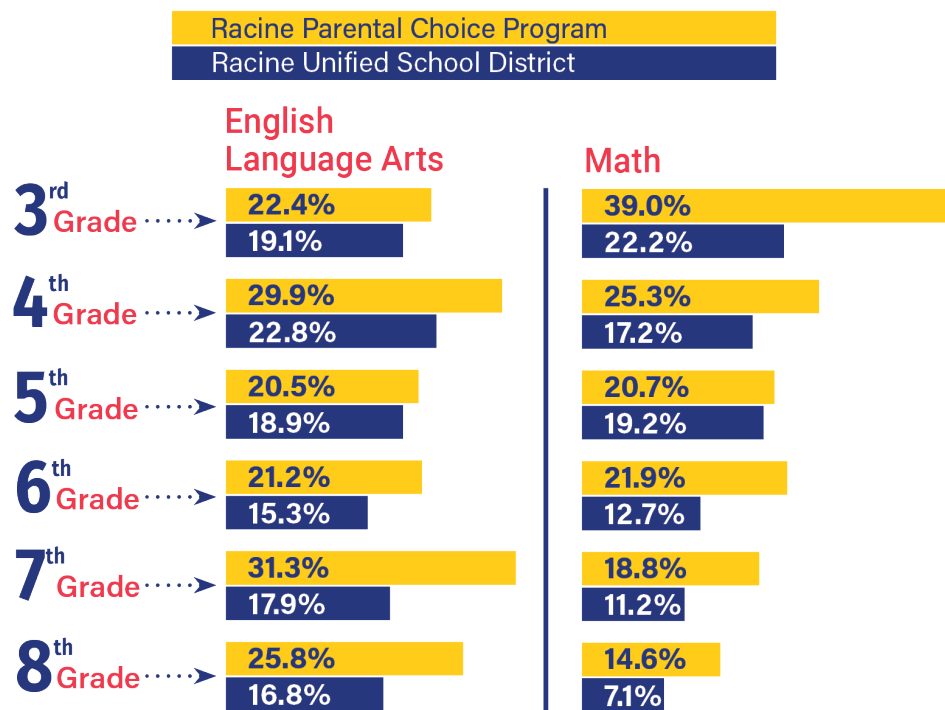
Choice Schools vs. Public Schools 2022-23 FORWARD EXAM PROFICIENCY RATE



Source: School Choice Wisconsin

RACINE

Choice Schools vs. Public Schools 2022-23 FORWARD EXAM PROFICIENCY RATE



Source: School Choice Wisconsin

Statistics such as these show why private school choice is so popular in Wisconsin. In an ever-polarizing political climate, school choice earns bipartisan support. According to a WMC Foundation poll taken in May 2023, 70 percent of likely voters support school choice – including 89 percent of republicans, 67 percent of independents and 53 percent of democrats.

Something this successful and popular should be expanded and replicated in response to Wisconsin's poor educational outcomes.



Choice Schools vs. Public Schools ACT RESULTS

MILWAUKEE		RACINE		STATEWIDE	
Choice Schools	16.94	Choice Schools	16.80	Choice Schools	20.69
Public Schools	15.84	Public Schools	16.02	Public Schools	19.28

Source: School Choice Wisconsin



Best Practices: Cristo Rey Jesuit High School Milwaukee

Not many schools can proclaim that all their students are college or career ready upon graduation, but Cristo Rey Jesuit High School in Milwaukee is different. Their class of 2023 was the fifth consecutive group of graduates to have every member accepted into college.¹¹ Even more impressive, most of them are the first generation in their families to attend college.

Located in the heart of the city on National Avenue – between the Summerfest grounds and American Family Field – Cristo Rey focuses its academic curriculum on preparing students to succeed in college and a career. This includes skills such as effective communication, complex reasoning, precision and accuracy, persistence, teamwork and collaboration, initiative and self-direction, and productivity and accountability.

The academic support for students goes beyond preparing for higher education, it engages students with the business community to ensure they see a pathway to a successful career.

The Cristo Rey academic curriculum incorporates the Corporate Work Study Program so students experience work in a professional setting while also attending high school. Partnering with companies from Associated Bank and Johnson Controls to JP Cullen and Michael Best, Cristo Rey students work in four-person teams to fill one full-time position at a company.¹²

Students are paired with local companies based on interests and skill sets. Each student works five full days per month within normal business hours, and academic schedules are structured so students are able to work without missing any classes.

This program creates a positive relationship with the business community, provides invaluable on-the-job training and exposes students to a variety of career opportunities in accounting, human resources, finance, information technology and more.

“With flexibilities on curriculum and the absence of union mandates, teachers and administrators can focus more on project-based learning and individualized lesson plans...”

Independent Charter Schools

Another option for students who want to leave their traditional public school is enrolling in a public charter school. While many charter schools are engrained in their local school district, independent charter schools can be approved by a separate authority like a technical college board, University of Wisconsin campus or others.

Most charter schools have flexibility to adjust their curriculum, including making changes to what subject matter is taught at what grade level. Additionally, they are not required to follow the same academic calendar, meaning they can start before September 1 of the given year. But, one place where independent charter schools differentiate themselves from those run by school districts, is their teachers are not required to be a member of the teachers’ union.

Just over 11 percent of the 200-plus charter schools operating in Wisconsin are authorized by organizations other than a local school board – meaning they are independent charter schools.¹³ With flexibilities on curriculum and the absence of union mandates, teachers and administrators can focus more on project-based learning and individualized lesson plans for students.

This allows for greater innovation in how students learn and ensures a one-size-fits-all curriculum is not forced on students who may learn better in a different environment.

Best Practices: The Lincoln Academy - Beloit

The Lincoln Academy (TLA) – an independent charter school based in Beloit – is currently in its third year of operation. The school offers 4K through fourth grade and sixth to 11th grades, and it will build out to a full K-12 school in 2024-25. In the 2023-24 academic year, over 600 students attend the school and there are over 150 on a waitlist.

Instead of a traditional classroom setting, TLA uses a project-based and experiential learning model that focuses on academic skills, but also ensures students have a fundamental understanding of the role education plays in a career and the economy. This model focuses on offering career exploration – including real-life opportunities – that match a student’s interests and unique skill sets.

While career preparation is key, the school’s leaders understand that core academic standards are the foundation. That is why they use a unique instructional model to help students that are behind with extended literacy and math instruction each day. Additionally, all students participate in an integrated curriculum that ensures students read for up to 220 minutes during the school day alone.

The results are clear. Compared to the School District of Beloit, The Lincoln Academy scores far higher on the state’s standardized testing.

In the 2022-23 school year, black students were more than two-and-a-half times as likely to be proficient in reading at TLA versus students in the Beloit public school system. Proficiency rates in math were double the School District of Beloit. White and Hispanic students also outperformed their traditional public school counterparts by leaps and bounds.¹⁴

This performance is in spite of the fact that roughly two-thirds of students are from economically disadvantaged families and well-over half of students are non-white.¹⁵ The Lincoln Academy has shown it is a model for the state and should be replicated where possible.

BELOIT

Charter Schools vs. Public Schools		
2022-23 Forward Exam Proficiency Rate		
	THE LINCOLN ACADEMY	BELOIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS
	English Language Arts	
White	40.0%	21.0%
Black	26.7%	9.6%
Hispanic	17.6%	11.9%
Asian	----	22.2%
	Math	
White	33.3%	13.7%
Black	10.0%	4.6%
Hispanic	20.3%	7.8%
Asian	----	22.2%

Source: Department of Public Instruction



Worker Readiness

Nearly three-quarters – 73 percent – of Wisconsin employers think that students graduating from Wisconsin’s public K-12 system are not prepared for the workforce. On one hand, it is because the academic attainment statewide is well below where it should be. More than half of students cannot read, write or do math at grade level, and it is spilling into the workforce.

According to the Summer 2023 *Wisconsin Employer Survey*, 56 percent of businesses have employees who struggle to read or do math, and two in five companies have to provide tutoring or additional training to get employees up to speed.¹⁶

On the other hand, students are also unprepared for the workforce because they are not taught the soft skills necessary to succeed in a professional setting and have not been exposed to the careers that will be available upon graduation.

To tackle both concerns, K-12 students must be exposed to career opportunities early and often. Showing a pathway to a successful career – and the steps necessary to get there – will help get students more engaged in the classroom and pave the way for a more prepared workforce in the future.

**Do you have any employees who
struggle with the ability to read or do math?**

YES
56%

NO
44%

Source: WMC Wisconsin Employer Survey - Summer 2023

Youth Apprenticeship

One way to engage students in careers early is through the Wisconsin Youth Apprenticeship (YA) program. Started in the early 1990s, the program had a record of more than 8,000 students participate in the 2022-23 school year.¹⁷ This program allows high school juniors and seniors to explore specific career paths, get a jumpstart on the job market and gain valuable experience in the workforce.

Employers agree to provide Youth Apprentices with at least 450 hours of work per year under the supervision of a workplace mentor. Additionally, the business trains the apprentices in a variety of skills that have been predetermined and developed by industry leaders. Currently, the YA program is active in industries including manufacturing, construction, health sciences, marketing and finance, among others.

Students in the program are paid for their participation from day one and receive an industry-approved certificate upon completion. Not only does this program better prepare young people for a variety of careers, but it helps create a talent pipeline for companies who continue to face a workforce shortage.

Wisconsin should continue to expand the variety of industries offered through the YA program, while finding ways to further promote it with school districts throughout the state and better integrate it into Registered Apprenticeship offerings.

2022-23 Youth Apprenticeship Enrollment SELECTED DISTRICTS

	Youth Apprentices	Eligible Students (11 th & 12 th Grade)	Percent Enrolled
Appleton:	102	2,504	4.07%
Madison:	25	4,029	0.62%
Milwaukee:	83	8,013	1.04%
Racine:	213	2,628	8.11%
Valders:	62	140	44.29%
Statewide:	8,022	129,453	6.20%

Source: Department of Public Instruction

Best Practices: Bassett Mechanical

Bassett Mechanical in Kaukauna is one of the many employers in Wisconsin engaged in the Youth Apprenticeship program. As a leader in the manufacturing and installation of industrial refrigeration, HVAC and plumbing control products, Bassett continues to need high-quality talent. One way to improve that pipeline is through engaging high school students from their local districts.

In August, one of Bassett's Youth Apprentices, Carter, was featured in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. The 16-year-old splits his time between work at Bassett's Kaukauna facility and his regularly scheduled classes at Appleton East High School – he earns school credit for both.

As part of the YA program, Carter shadows professional pipefitters, sheet metal workers and HVAC technicians. Upon graduating from high school, Youth Apprentices like him can go on to a full-time Registered Apprenticeship, which can take up to six years to complete. Unlike traditional college where student loans would likely be necessary, Registered Apprentices are paid for their training.

Patty Van Ryzin, Chief HR Officer at Bassett, told the *Journal Sentinel* that the program is a great way for students to be exposed early to careers, helping them to decide if that job is right for them. If they decide it is the right fit, the likelihood is that they can find a more permanent home at Bassett. The company hires about 90 percent of its youth apprentices.¹⁸

While Bassett Mechanical has found success engaging with the YA program at its local high schools, some schools are not as active. According to the Department of Workforce Development, less than 90 students at Milwaukee Public Schools participated in YA in the 2022-23 school year – even though more than 8,000 juniors and seniors were enrolled. The Madison Metropolitan School District only had 25 Youth Apprentices.

In contrast, the Appleton Area School District had just 2,500 juniors and seniors but 102 Youth Apprentices. One of the best performers is the Valders Area School District – just west of Manitowoc – which had 62 of their 140 (44%) eligible students enroll in Youth Apprenticeship.¹⁹

“The company hires about 90 percent of its youth apprentices.”



Dual Enrollment

Wisconsin offers a terrific option to high school students looking to kickstart their career: dual enrollment. This program allows students to enroll in college courses while still in high school. In some cases, students can earn a technical certificate or other accreditation at the same time they receive their high school diploma.

Employers have advocated the continued expansion of this program because it speeds up the pathway to a career for high school students. Meanwhile, students benefit greatly, too, because they can more quickly enter the workforce and save substantial sums of money by avoiding tuition costs while still in high school.

Over the past decade, dual enrollment has more than doubled to 69,471 high school students participating in the 2021-22 academic year. That is about one-quarter of the state's high school students.²⁰ In the face of a persistent workforce shortage, expanding this program further is another way to provide a high-quality pipeline of talent to Wisconsin employers.

“Over the past decade, dual enrollment has more than doubled to 69,471 high school students participating in the 2021-22 academic year.”

Best Practices: Lakeshore Technical College

One of Wisconsin's 16 technical colleges – Lakeshore Technical College, which is located in between Sheboygan and Manitowoc – offers a multi-tiered dual enrollment program specifically targeting the IT industry. As many reports have shown, IT is another industry facing a severe worker shortage, and Lakeshore has come up with an innovative solution. Their “College Here & Now” program offers students the opportunity to gain a college technical diploma while still in high school – without having to pay tuition.

Lakeshore Tech has partnered with the school districts in Kiel, Manitowoc, Oostburg, Sheboygan, Two Rivers and others to create a dedicated “Here & Now” classroom inside each high school. Students can earn an IT-Web Development Specialist technical diploma by the time they graduate from high school and go right into the workforce.

If they would like to continue their education, students can complete an associate degree in just one year following graduation because the credits transfer. The most recent graduate survey shows individuals with the one-year associate degree earn a median salary of nearly \$90,000.²¹ Lakeshore Technical College also works directly with Lakeland University to offer students the opportunity to earn a bachelor's degree in computer science, as well.

This targeted program could be expanded to other industries and certifications to further enhance the business community's ability to find and train local talent.

Enhanced Technical Education

The need for technical education is growing in Wisconsin. In the face of slow population growth and a workforce shortage, companies are desperately searching for people who have the necessary skills to fill the jobs they have open today – and the ones that will be created in the future.

According to the latest *Wisconsin Employer Survey*, four in 10 companies said they have removed the requirement for a bachelor's degree for some jobs that had previously required it. And 81 percent of companies responding said that more than half of the jobs at their company require less than a four-year college degree.

**Have you removed the requirement
of having a bachelor's degree for any
jobs that you had previously required it?**

YES

40%

NO

60%

Source: WMC Wisconsin Employer Survey - Summer 2023

This is not to say that a bachelor's degree is not a great option for young Wisconsinites. These same companies need high-quality engineers, accountants and other positions that require a four-year degree or greater. But, schools need to provide students with all the career paths available so they can choose the best one for their skillset and interests.

In many cases, pursuing a technical degree or enrolling in Wisconsin's Registered Apprenticeship program can lead to a high-paying job with little to no student debt. Highlighting these options with students at a younger age can help to increase their interest in the skilled trades, while helping them gain the skills necessary to have a successful career.

That is why more high schools – and even middle schools – should look for ways to grow their technical education departments, and policymakers should target education funding specifically toward programs that help to alleviate the state's workforce shortage.



Best Practices: Cardinal Manufacturing

The Eleva-Strum High School in northwestern Wisconsin has taken their technical education program to the next level. Instead of just exposing students to the skilled trades through courses like metals and woodshop – which they also do – the school fully engrains students in the manufacturing industry by running a legitimate business: Cardinal Manufacturing.

Cardinal Manufacturing operates as a contract manufacturer and supplies several private businesses in the area. Students who have completed both Metal Working I and II at the school can apply for a role with the business. They must submit a resume, project portfolio and letter of recommendation. Students who are selected to participate – aka offered a job – can take on roles in manufacturing, accounting, quality control, customer service, marketing and more.

What percentage of jobs at your company require less than a four-year college degree?

LESS THAN 25 PERCENT	11%
26-50 PERCENT	8%
51-75 PERCENT	31%
OVER 75 PERCENT	50%

Source: WMC Wisconsin Employer Survey - Summer 2023

At the end of each school year, students receive a profit-sharing check based on how well the business did financially. The other funds go back into the program to purchase materials, make facility upgrades and further invest for future classes.

Following graduation, some students who participate in the program go directly into the workforce, in many cases, with companies that are active supporters of the program. Other students pursue technical or four-year degrees based on what areas of the business interested them the most. By having the opportunity to try out different roles, students have an edge over other classmates who may graduate from high school without the knowledge necessary to decide on a career path.

This hugely successful program is something that schools around the state should look at replicating. Not only does it expose students to careers available in Wisconsin and better prepare them for those careers, it also helps students learn the soft skills necessary to be successful no matter what career path they choose.

CONCLUSION

Wisconsin's educational attainment failures have led a significant majority of employers to say students graduating from the public K-12 system are not prepared for the workforce. Whether they struggle to read, write and do math, or fail to have the soft skills needed to work in a professional environment, students in many cases are not being set up for success in a career or life.

Do you believe that students graduating from Wisconsin's public K-12 system are prepared for the workforce?

YES
27%

NO
73%

Source: WMC Wisconsin Employer Survey - Summer 2023

In good news, Wisconsin is already implementing programs that work to improve academic achievement while also better preparing young people for their next step after high school graduation. This report aims to shed light on the challenges facing today's educators, policymakers and business community, while also encouraging them to foster ideas that are already working in certain parts of the state.

Whether it is expanding choice and charter schools, making students more aware of dual enrollment programs or investing further in workforce development programs like apprenticeships, the state can take initial steps to combat its poor educational outcomes.

In addition to the ideas outlined here, schools should look to each other to replicate programs that result in academic excellence; businesses should get more involved in their local school districts to help improve curricula and enhance career-focused learning; and policymakers should find ways to target funding at programs that truly improve outcomes and tackle the workforce shortage head on.

Without buy-in from all stakeholders, Wisconsin's education system will continue to be siloed and ineffective. By working together to replicate the ideas that work, students today will become the professionals tomorrow that drive the economy forward.



SOURCE MATERIAL

- ¹ Wisconsin Employer Survey: https://media.wmc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/17104044/CEO-Survey-Report_Summer-2023_EDUCATION.pdf
- ² Legislative Fiscal Bureau: https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/misc/lfb/budget/2023_25_biennial_budget/202_comparative_summary_of_provisions_2023_act_19_august_2023_entire_document
- ³ Legislative Fiscal Bureau: https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/misc/lfb/budget/2013_15_biennial_budget/101_comparative_summary_of_budget_provisions_act_20_august_2013
- ⁴ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics: https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm
- ⁵ Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction: <https://wisedash.dpi.wi.gov/Dashboard/dashboard/22275>
- ⁶ WalletHub: <https://wallethub.com/edu/states-with-the-most-and-least-racial-progress/18428>
- ⁷ School Choice Wisconsin: <https://schoolchoicewi.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/SCW-PressKit-10.13.23.pdf>
- ⁸ School Choice Wisconsin: <https://schoolchoicewi.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/SCW-PressKit-10.13.23.pdf>
- ⁹ School Choice Wisconsin: <https://schoolchoicewi.org/new-dpi-data-shows-choice-students-outscore-public-school-peers-on-standardized-tests/>
- ¹⁰ School Choice Wisconsin: <https://schoolchoicewi.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/SCW-PressKit-10.13.23.pdf>
- ¹¹ TMJ4 Milwaukee: <https://www.tmj4.com/news/positively-milwaukee/every-student-graduating-from-cristo-rey-accepted-into-college>
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- ¹³ Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction: https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/parental-education-options/Charter-Schools/pdf/2020-21_Charter_Legislative_Report.pdf
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