



of Wisconsin Disability Organizations

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## EDUCATION

### STATEMENT

Wisconsin students with disabilities, perhaps more than their peers without disabilities, depend on a high quality education to lead them to a successful job, career and life. Unfortunately, while people with disabilities represent 9% of Wisconsin's workforce their employment rate is less than a third the rate of others. Overall, 27% of Wisconsin's citizens with disabilities live in poverty. Wisconsin's education investment must lead to something better. Schools must ensure that students have access to high quality teachers and instruction with accountability to postsecondary results that ultimately lead to competitive employment in the community and access to postsecondary education. Wisconsin must continue to invest in and promote quality education practices in environments that preserve parents' rights to question quality and in systems that are held accountable at the highest levels.

### BACKGROUND

According to the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) 2012-2013 Data:

- Only 13% of 6th graders and 14% of 10th graders with disabilities were proficient in reading.
- Less than one-third of 3rd graders with disabilities were proficient in math. For 10th graders, math proficiency is at only 14%.
- More than a third of students with disabilities do not spend at least 80% of their day in the general education classroom where core content is being taught with peers without disabilities.
- Of students who left high school one year ago, 58% reported never attending any further education or training and 27% reported never being employed within a year of leaving their secondary placement.

The state's share of special education funding has eroded significantly during the past 20 years from 44% to the current 26% of actual costs. Local districts struggle to fill the gap to ensure students with disabilities are educated appropriately.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Adequate Funding

- Increase state special education categorical aid funding to keep pace with local costs. Fund to at least 44% of costs - to restore two decades of eroded funding.

- Increase the high cost fund (students above \$30,000 annually) to meet 100% of a district's costs.

#### Quality Education Options

- Oppose expansion of voucher programs of any type that do not protect essential Individuals with Disabilities Education Act rights of students with disabilities and their families.
- Eliminate discriminatory open enrollment provisions to provide options to families of children with disabilities.
- Invest in and make families aware of the Wisconsin Special Education Mediation System (WSEMS) to resolve conflict with districts to address special education quality issues.
- Ensure a uniform definition of disability across all school settings in the school accountability system. Use federal IDEA definition of disability; disaggregate all performance measure data by disability category.
- Ensure inclusion of all students with disabilities and schools (including students who attend state-funded County Children with Disabilities Education Boards) in the statewide accountability system.

#### Continuous Improvement

- Strengthen Wisconsin's seclusion and restraint law and ensure effective implementation statewide.
- Fully implement recommendations from the 2014 DPI Discipline Task Force and develop alternatives to classroom removal and out of school suspensions and expulsions. Specifically address elimination of Zero Tolerance policies, attention to other push-out/exclusionary practices, improvement of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS).
- Develop a fund to target resources and technical assistance to districts that are not keeping pace with Annual Measurable Outcome (AMO) targets for students with disabilities to address their significant achievement gaps.
- Ensure that schools have the training and support to identify student mental health needs early and coordinate with community resources to address needs.

#### Accountability to College and Career Outcomes

- Pay for Performance to schools and require specific accountability to improve post-secondary outcomes for students with disabilities by offering per-student payments to schools whose students achieve postsecondary education or competitive employment one year post school.
- Provide targeted funding for specialized job developers to establish business relationships between schools and the private sector to meet local workforce needs.
- Ensure quality implementation of Academic Career Plans statewide to address the unique needs of students with disabilities.

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#### Contact Survival Coalition Co-Chairs for additional information

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