

For Immediate Release

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In Wake of Spending Cuts, Wisconsin Schools are Having Difficulty Hiring Teachers, New Report Shows

(Madison, WI) — Earlier this week, Governor Walker discussed the importance of investing in Wisconsin’s education system. However, [a new report from the Wisconsin Budget Project](#) shows that Wisconsin is investing fewer resources in education than it did a decade ago, and school districts are struggling to hire enough well-qualified teachers to educate Wisconsin students.

Between 2005 and 2014, spending by Wisconsin school districts declined by 5.4% per student after taking inflation into account, according to the report. In contrast, the national average for school spending per student *increased* by 4.2% over this period.

“Wisconsin residents have long recognized that an excellent public school system is the key to having a well-educated workforce,” said Tamarine Cornelius of the Wisconsin Budget Project. “But by redirecting resources away from our school system, we are putting at risk the future of Wisconsin children who depend on public schools to provide them with a high-quality education.”

In the wake of spending cuts, many Wisconsin school districts are having a difficult time hiring teachers, with the scarcity particularly pronounced in northern Wisconsin. School districts in that part of the state faced extreme shortages in filling 56% of teacher vacancies in the 2015-16 school year, compared to 46% in the rest of the state.

Across the state, school districts faced acute difficulties finding teachers for STEM-related courses. Fifty-four percent of school districts hiring math teachers faced extreme teacher shortages, as did 50% of districts hiring science teachers.

School districts indicated that the most commonly-used strategy to hire a teacher in the face of shortages in a variety of subjects was for the hiring district to lower its standards. In hiring for about one of out of five vacancies, districts indicated they hired a teacher below the desired standard of experience or quality.

In addition to the teacher shortage, Wisconsin school districts face a shortfall of teachers of color, contributing to the significant opportunity gap students of color in the state face. In Wisconsin, 29% of students are students of color, compared to just five percent of teachers. A

racially diverse teacher workforce is associated with higher academic achievement for students of color and is beneficial to all students.

Investing in K-12 education is critical for communities to thrive and the state economy to offer broad opportunity. According to the Wisconsin Public Education Network, Wisconsin's public schools are succeeding on many levels but to ensure they are fully thriving, investments must be made at the state level.

“The good news is that we have incredible educators in this state – parents know this and communities know this,” said Heather DuBois Bourenane, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Public Education Network. “We have many of the ingredients necessary for a future where Wisconsin could lead the nation and the world and attract families to the state through education. We have an incredible opportunity to move Wisconsin forward if we work together to get it done”

The report urges state lawmakers to adhere to Wisconsin's long tradition of investing in public schools and restore funding. Lawmakers should focus on giving public schools the resources needed to offer all students a high-quality education instead of focusing on tax cuts that only benefit the wealthiest people in the state.

The full report, [Budget Cuts and Teacher Shortages: With Fewer Resources, Schools Struggle to Find Educators](#), can be downloaded here.

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The Wisconsin Budget Project, an initiative of the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, is an independent Madison-based research group that focuses on tax and budget policy.