

For immediate release.

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**Education advocates to hold virtual rally, urge JFC members to close the gaps for public schools:  
"Stop playing politics, support students with disabilities."**

Public education supporters expressed grave concerns about proposals to cut proposed and desperately needed investments in public education while radically expanding public funding for private schools.

"Education experts, advocates and educators have been calling for a budget that closes the gaps for Wisconsin kids. Lawmakers heard them loud and clear, then signalled an intention to make them wider," said Heather DuBois Bourenane of Wisconsin Public Education Network. "The latest budget [papers](#), coupled with Senate President Chris Kapenga's reckless [suggestion](#) that 'we're good for right now,' suggest a willingness to make worse a status quo that is already shameful. We're not good with that. We're not good with being among the worst in the nation for racial disparities, funding special education, and supporting English language learners. None of this is good. We must do better, now. We must pass a budget that closes these gaps."

"Lawmakers need to understand that federal funds ear-marked for pandemic use are no substitute for meeting the state's most basic obligation to its public schools - a need we know we are not now meeting. It's time to stop playing politics and support students with disabilities," said Dr. Julie Underwood, chair of Wisconsin Alliance for Excellent Schools and former dean of the UW-Madison School of Education. "We call on members of the Joint Committee on Finance to restore Wisconsin's commitment to its children by making sure our students are on a path to go back to school this fall with the resources and stability they need to thrive. This starts with spendable new aid, raising revenue limits, and increasing the special education reimbursement to at least 50%."

"Special Education students deserve a budget that truly understands the needs of our students and educators. School districts across Wisconsin use more than \$1 billion outside of Spec Ed funding to adequately support IEP needs. When funding inequity forces schools to strain their budget limits to support ALL students, we can only attest that we are doing it wrong. It's time to get it right," added Martha Siravo of Madtown Mommas & Disability Advocates.

"Once again our lawmakers are willing to put forth a budget that does nothing to close the gaps for our public school students. Why are they willing to put forth a budget with no increase in special education reimbursement for public school students while providing a 90% reimbursement for private school voucher students? Stop playing politics and support the 830,000+ students who choose our public schools!" said Sandy Whisler of Citizen Advocates for Public Education, Lake Mills.

Wisconsin Public Education Network will host a **Virtual Rally for Wisconsin's Public Schools** on Wed. May 26 from 7:00-7:30 pm to address these concerns and take action. Register here to get the Zoom link: <https://secure.everyaction.com/zxk-6TU490CE4Ho3CQTA5Q2>. Learn more about public education budget priorities at <https://www.wisconsinnetwork.org/budget>.

Wisconsin Public Education Network is a nonpartisan grassroots coalition supporting strong public schools that provide equal opportunity for all students to thrive. The Network is a project of the Wisconsin Alliance for Excellent Schools (WAES), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Contributions may be made [online](#) or sent to: 5329 Fayette Drive, Madison, WI 53713. [WisconsinNetwork.org](http://WisconsinNetwork.org).

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