

Send the Kids Back to School

By Senate President-elect Chris Kapenga

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Even Dr. Fauci agrees. Our kids need to be back in school, and they need to come back now. We've heard the same important message from other groups such as the American Academy of Pediatrics and National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine. The consensus is that in-person classes are far and away best for our kids. Unfortunately, too many parents and students in Wisconsin are not even being allowed to decide what is best for their educational needs.

The damage is starting to mount with thousands of our kids missing more and more of the school year. The numbers show it, but you don't need to hear about the data. As parents, as grandparents, as members of our community, you can see what is happening right away. Grades are starting to slip. Progress just doesn't seem to be happening. Math, reading, and other core skills are taking a step back. Disadvantaged students are hurt even more by these shutdowns literally taking away valuable opportunities for advancement. Our achievement gap is one of the worst in the nation, and this can only make things worse.

All the while, research continues to indicate that schools are not meaningfully furthering community spread of the virus.

It begs the question why the self-proclaimed "education governor" hasn't been more vocal about the issues facing our students. He has been radio silent on encouraging schools to be open. In fact, the governor recently proposed not administering any student assessment tests. This includes reading tests, ACT assessment, and the Forward Exam. Gov. Evers also wants to prevent teacher evaluations and school district accountability reports.

The question needs to be asked why the governor is trying to avoid accountability for education results. Maybe he is trying to hide how much better in person schools are performing. Maybe there are other forces at play here. One of them may be that unions across the country and here in Wisconsin have been vocal opponents of in person instruction.

School districts need encouragement to do what is right for our kids. That's why I am calling on our schools to make the right decision for kids and return to in person classes.

Senator Kapenga represents the 33rd Senate District, which covers most of central Waukesha County and Lake Country.