

State of Education Address Excerpts

September 20, 2018 – State Capitol

By State Superintendent Tony Evers

This is my 10th time addressing you as your elected State Superintendent. It's my great honor to serve our kids and families, our educators, our public schools and libraries.

Education remains - as it has always been - the great equalizer. The pathway to prosperity. The key to a skilled workforce and a robust economy. ... Our deep history and commitment to public education is a source of *immense* pride to me, as I'm sure it is to all of you.

Governing is about priorities. ... And right now, Wisconsin's priorities are *out of whack*. Today in Wisconsin we're spending less on our public schools than we did eight years ago - putting us below the national average. We serve over 50,000 English learners - and that number is growing. We serve over 120,000 special needs students. Four in every 10 kids are economically disadvantaged.

Our educators are on the front lines of these challenges. ... So when they speak up about bad education policy, deteriorating schools, or the massive teacher exodus we're facing, they're doing right by our kids. And we should listen. They're reminding us that education - like democracy - doesn't come for free. It must be nurtured, sustained, and invested in over time.

A decade of *disinvestment* hasn't magically solved problems, increased student performance, or improved our competitive edge. Divisive solutions from Washington and Madison haven't made things better. These policies are failing us. But the people of Wisconsin know there's a better way.

Over the past few years, groups of moms and dads across Wisconsin began meeting and giving up their free time to learn about school funding. And because of their advocacy, we have seen over 1.1 million residents from Shullsburg to Manitowoc rally behind public education and vote to raise their own taxes to support their schools.

Now is the time to adopt a transformational education budget that responds to this call. A budget that provides educators what they deserve: the resources they need to meet the needs of our kids. A budget that increases opportunities, closes gaps, and allows for competitive compensation.

We must continue raising our voices until they can no longer be ignored. *Together*, we can restore respect for Wisconsin schools and educators. *Together*, we can reinvest in our schools so that every kid can thrive. *Together*, we can bring civility and collaboration back to public education and to public life.

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Tony Evers is Wisconsin's elected state superintendent of public instruction. The full State of Education address can be found online at <http://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/news-release/dpinr2018-86.pdf>.