

Public Education Advocates Statewide Unite to Send Message to Madison

Written by Heather DuBois Bourenane, Wis Public Education Network
Tuesday, 30 June 2015 11:42 -



Parents, community members, and educational leaders from all over Wisconsin tell legislators “It’s not too late to do what’s right” in State budget in Madison today. Public school advocates bring to the Capitol the support of their communities and a long list of concerns about the ways this budget will negatively impact Wisconsin public schools.

MADISON - “It’s not too late to do what’s right.” This is the central message parents, community members, and educational leaders from all over Wisconsin tell legislators today.

Citizens from Green Bay to Kenosha, Lake Mills to Oconto Falls, Colfax to Manitowoc, will unite at the State Capitol today at 11:00 am in the Senate Parlor to again ask lawmakers to heed the voice of those who have been calling for full and fair funding of Wisconsin’s public schools.

“What we’re seeing around the state is that people want to be heard,” said Wisconsin Public Education Network coordinator Heather DuBois Bourenane. “Parents and schools districts have been sending the very simple, very clear message to legislators to fully and fairly fund our public schools. The budget put forth by the Joint Finance Committee flatly ignores that message. Our schools need annual funding increases at least to the level of inflation, and the current budget doesn’t come close to meeting that standard set by Gov. Tommy Thompson. Instead, lawmakers have opened the floodgates for private and religious school vouchers and unaccountable charter schools that will take hundreds of millions of dollars away from our public schools.” Green Bay Public Schools parent Kathryn Carley added, “Why are lawmakers not listening to parents? And who is it they are listening to?”

Public school advocates will bring to the Capitol the support of their communities and a long list of concerns about the ways this budget will negatively impact Wisconsin public schools. Topping the list are many dangerous and unvetted policy items, including special education vouchers, teacher licensure, a school rating system, testing requirements and a system for the private takeover of public schools.

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Those attending will applaud legislators who have introduced two pro-education bills: LRB-2356 (Invest in Our Children Act) and LRB-2357 (Special Education Restoration Act). These common sense bills directly respond to long-standing concerns raised by districts across the state. As Joanne Juhnke of Wisconsin Family Ties notes, “Wisconsin is in the shameful last place among states that fund special education via reimbursement. Absolute bottom of the barrel, reimbursing at 26%, while Wyoming reimburses at a full 100%! We’ve simply got to turn this around and LRB-2357 takes us in the right direction.”

DuBois Bourenane said, “Wisconsinites have told our legislators that they know it is possible to fully and fairly fund our public schools.” Carley agreed, adding “The parents of Wisconsin have made their choice. We choose for our public tax dollars to pay for our public schools. Public schools that retain and recruit the best and the brightest teachers out there. We choose for Wisconsin to continue providing a quality public education so that our children can attain quality jobs after graduation. We choose to invest in our children, the future workforce and caretakers of our great state.”

The people have spoken, and lawmakers have two very simple questions to answer: Did you listen? And will you do the right thing?

Event details:

What: A media event to call on all legislators to vote in favor of a budget that provides fair funding for public schools, and to reject unvetted and dangerous policy items.

Who: Speakers will represent some of the most vocal supporters of the public schools that are the hearts of our communities: grassroots education advocates, superintendents, legislators leading the charge to support public schools, school board members, the disability rights community, and parents. Additional attendees will include partners of the Wisconsin Public Education Network. A complete list of speakers and attendees will be made available to the press at the event.

Where: Senate Parlor, Wisconsin State Capitol

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When: Tuesday, June 30, 2015; 11:00 am

Note: Speakers, and attendees representing groups and organizations partnering under the umbrella of the Wisconsin Public Education Network, will be available for one-on-one interviews following formal remarks.

Speakers:

- Sandy Whisler, Citizen Advocates for Public Education (Lake Mills)
- David Polashek, Superintendent, Oconto Falls School District
- Rep. Mandela Barnes, co-author, LRB-2356 (Invest in Our Children Act) and LRB-2357 (Special Education Restoration Act)
- Jill Gaskell, School Board Member, Pecatonica Area School District
- Joanne Juhnke, Wisconsin Family Ties
- Kathryn Carley, parent, Green Bay Public Schools

In addition to the speakers above, the following attendees are also available for one-on-one interviews following the presentation of formal remarks:

- Jon Peacock, Wisconsin Budget Project

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- Heather DuBois Bourenane, Wisconsin Public Education Network and Sun Prairie Action Resource Coalition (SPARC)
- Jeri McGinley, School Funding Reform for Wisconsin (Stevens Point)
- Michele Bjella, School Funding Reform for Wisconsin (Stevens Point)
- Jerry Fiene, Executive Director, Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance
- Chris Thiel, Legislative Policy Manager, Milwaukee Public Schools
- Terri Phillips, Executive Director of the Southeastern Wisconsin Schools Alliance (SWSA)
- Ellen Lindgren, Middleton Action Team and board member, Middleton Cross Plains Area School District
- Pam Kobielski, Founder, The No Vouchers Coalition
- Anna Moffit, Madison Metropolitan School District School Board member; Stop Special Needs Vouchers
- Marcia Engen, Fox Cities Advocates for Public Education
- Ann Muenster, Fox Cities Advocates for Public Education

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- Patti Clark-Stojke, Fox Cities Advocates For Public Education
- William Smeltzer, wasmeltzer.weebly.com (Madison)
- Scott Foval, Regional Political Coordinator, People For the American Way
- Rebecca Alwin, grandmother, Middleton Action Team, Dane County NAACP, Wisc. Grassroots Network
- Charles Uphoff, Oregon School Board member
- Julie Mead, professor, Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis, UW-Madison
- Maura Berry, Parents & Supporters of MPSD (Manitowoc Public School District)
- Jenni Hofschulte, Schools and Communities United, Milwaukee
- Andy Martin, educator, Milwaukee Public Schools/MTEA
- Todd Alan Price, PhD. Curriculum and Instruction, UW-Madison. Director of Policy Studies, National Louis University, Wheeling, Illinois; Kenosha, Wisconsin Parent and member of WPEN [Note: Expertise on public subsidy for private schools (vouchers); was one of the original researchers on the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program working for Dr. John Witte, UW Madison]

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- Linda Wilkens, WREA - Wisconsin Retired Educators' Association; also member of Green Lake Area Retired Educators' Association and Fond du Lac Area Retired Educators' Association
- Jubie (Julia) Simonson, Public Education Advocate of Iowa County
- Marie Martini, Raging Grannies (Madison)
- Tim White, Southwest Wisconsin Area Progressives
- Susan Fox, Monona Grove School Board
- Chris Ahmuty, Executive Director, ACLU of Wisconsin
- Lori S. Halpin, Teacher, Colfax Public Schools
- Christina Brey, Communications Director, WEAC
- Jed Hopkins and Donna Vukelich-Selva, Edgewood College School of Education
- Mary Ann E. Steger, WPEN, City of Milwaukee resident
- Doug Perry, School Board Member-School District of South Milwaukee
- Margo French, Concerned Citizen

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- Ross Braatz, Concerned Citizen
- Cathy Pagel, SPARC grassroots organization (Sun Prairie Action Resource Coalition)
- Gina Pagel, SPARC (Sun Prairie Action Resource Coalition), Waunakee Teachers' Association, WEAC Region 6
- Liz Menzer, Stoughton School Board
- Brad Schneider, educator, Government Relations Chair for the Wisconsin Music Educators Association
- Leyla Sanyer, educator, Immediate Past President of the Wisconsin Music Educators Association; President-Elect of the North Central Division - National Association for Music Education.
- Thomas Spellman, Delavan

About the Wisconsin Public Education Network

The Wisconsin Public Education Network is a statewide coalition of parents, grassroots citizen groups, school board members, education professionals and administrators advocating for high-quality public education. With members from Eau Claire to Milwaukee, Kenosha to Turtle Lake, network partners meet regularly and hold joint actions across Wisconsin to support state

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residents, voters, taxpayers and parents in preserving the incredible legacy of quality K-12 public education that has distinguished Wisconsin for decades. After eight straight years of budget cuts, Wisconsin per-pupil spending dropped below the national average for the first time in spring 2015. Reversing this trend is a shared goal of WPEN member organizations and individual members across our great state. All who believe that public education is the cornerstone of democracy and the heart of our communities are invited to join our large and growing Network. WisconsinNetwork.org