



Southeastern Wisconsin
Schools Alliance

schoolsalliance.com



There are
multiple paths for
CNA Certification
while at Oconomowoc
High School.

4,431 students
in SWSA districts
are part of
youth apprenticeships.

MPS offers
**eight tuition-free
Montessori**
schools, which is the
largest cluster of public
Montessori schools
in the U.S.

4th–8th graders
are part of a
NASA project
at Glendale-
River Hills



Public Schools
are for
100%
of Wisconsin
Families



Given a choice
**83% of
families
choose public
schools.**



We want to

**MAINTAIN
AND IMPROVE**

these **high-quality**
options that parents
seek for their
children.



NATIONAL RANKING

Wisconsin Ranks 25th

IN PER PUPIL
PUBLIC EDUCATION
FUNDING IN 2022

This is 7.2% below the national average, continuing a downward trend. **Wisconsin ranked 11th in the nation in 2002.**

Wisconsin Ranks 3rd

IN THE NATION ON SHARE OF
STATE EDUCATION DOLLARS ON
PRIVATE K-12 OPTIONS
IN 2023



What was the 2023- 2024 change to funding over prior year?

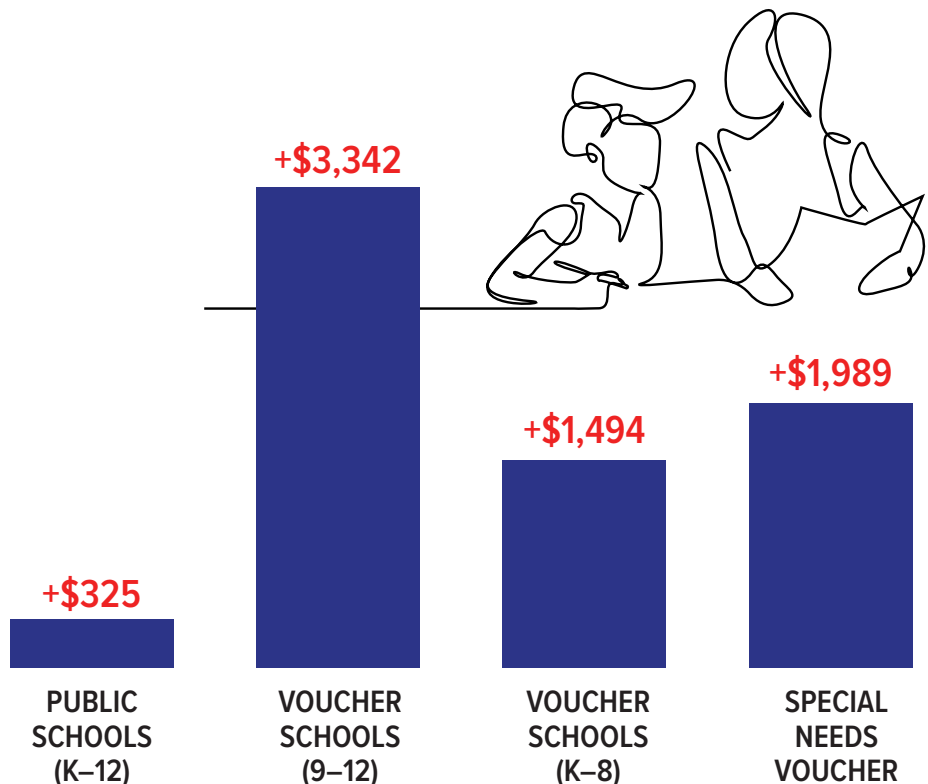
Here is the breakdown of funding increases by school program:

- ▶ Public schools received \$325 per pupil. However, general school district revenues per pupil **lag inflation by more than \$3,300 since 2009.**
- ▶ **Two years of \$0 increase in 2021–2023** affected school districts ability to build on their base revenue, created budget gaps, and affected academic recovery investments.
- ▶ When the state funds the School Levy Tax Credit, it creates local property tax relief, but it **does not provide public schools with spendable dollars.**
- ▶ Due to a mechanism in state law, future funding for choice schools will increase along with increases in revenue limits, categorical aid, and special education aid for public school districts.



83%
of families in
Wisconsin choose
public schools.

PER PUPIL FUNDING INCREASE 2023–24



Q. Why is there a historic number of districts going to referendum in 2024?

Simply put, districts are forced to go to referendum **out of necessity**.



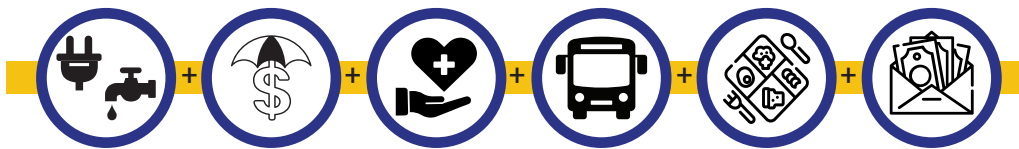
PUBLIC SCHOOLS ARE NOT IMMUNE TO INFLATION

Educating students simply costs more now with increased expectations that have been implemented over the last three decades including:

- + increased unfunded mandates;
- + heightened accountability;
- + increased legal complexities;
- + more complex human resources management;
- + increased costs for curriculum, student academic and support needs.

+

... rising costs for utilities, insurance, healthcare, transportation, food service, and wages.



**UNDERFUNDED STATE SUPPORT
FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION
= OPERATING REFERENDUMS**

Operating referendums are driving up property taxes and creating huge inequities across the state, while costs and state mandates continue to increase. The historic pattern of school finance decisions over the last 30 years is working against the intended goal of revenue limits, which was to reduce property taxes and provide predictable funding to communities and their public schools.



A referendum is like a temporary patch on a leaky roof. It might stop the rain for

a while, but it doesn't fix the underlying structural issues causing the leaks. The funding formula is the foundation of the roof. Without repair, it will always need more patches or rebuilding. Over time, these patches become less effective, and the problems get worse. When referendums fail, districts need more patches, often cutting staff and programs, which exacerbates the "haves" and "have nots" in public schools. A strong, well-designed roof (funding formula) would make those patches unnecessary in the first place.



Schools don't have the flexibility to raise prices.

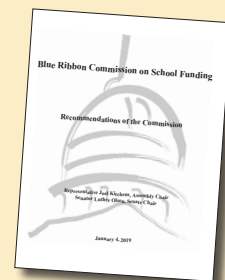


Instead, we have to *reduce our costs*, meaning a reduced investment in students.



A Bipartisan Solution Exists: The Blue Ribbon Commission Recommendations

In 2018, the bipartisan Blue Ribbon Commission on School Funding held hearings across the state and deliberated the future of public school funding, recognizing the state was at a crossroads. The Commission released a report of which culminated in a list of more than 20 recommendations for the Legislature to consider. **How can we work together to implement these bipartisan recommendations?**





How can we work together to implement these bipartisan recommendations?

Explore the Opportunity Before Us!

We have approximately \$6.5 billion dollars between the general fund balance and the rainy day fund. Now is the time for Wisconsin to lead in Public K–12.



Increased funding for our schools is like nourishing athletes.

Just as athletes need proper nutrition to compete and perform, our schools need adequate resources to operate at their best. More funding nourishes our programs, enhances instructional tools, and provides additional support services, enabling us to accelerate student achievement. Without sufficient nourishment, even the most talented athletes will falter; similarly, without proper funding, even the strongest programming can struggle to move forward.

This vital funding helps our schools cultivate the full potential of every student, nurturing Wisconsin's future leaders, innovators, and citizens.

Increased funding will support ...

- ▶ Investment in career preparation and exploration in high demand fields



- ▶ Increased costs of doing business
 - Double digit increases for property insurance, cybersecurity insurance
 - Double digit increases for healthcare and health insurance cost
 - Energy cost increases range from 6–8%
 - Wage increases range from 3.2% to 5% for select groups, some to keep pace with 8% and 4.12% CPI rates over the last two years.
- ▶ Less of a general fund transfer for special education, aidable statewide costs have increased by 5%, though this varies by district.
- ▶ K4–2 literacy. Act 20 is an unfunded mandate.
- ▶ 4K students, who currently count as 0.5 or 0.6 in state aids.

The Reality from SWSA Leaders

"Over the past five years, our school district, like many businesses, has faced rising costs. Since 2018–2019, property insurance premiums have surged by 279%, utilities have increased by 29.5%, and medical premiums are up 28%, despite doubling deductibles. On top of these inflationary pressures, we are also managing increasing wage demands to maintain our workforce."

Heather Heaviland, Director of Business Services, Shorewood School District

"Our public schools have a responsibility to serve all kids. Our district's projected special education cost for the 2024–25 school year is \$8,251,688. Of that, only \$3,290,039 is covered by state reimbursement and other sources. Our district will need to transfer \$4,961,649 from our general fund to cover the difference. A significant increase in special education reimbursement would require the District to transfer fewer critical financial resources from our general fund on a yearly basis."

Lisa Elliott, Superintendent, Greenfield School District

"Kenosha Unified is facing a projected \$19MM deficit for the 2025–26 school year. Without adequate funding from the state that keeps pace with the rate of inflation, mandates such as the transportation costs for students attending private schools is another burden on public school districts."

Dr. Jeffrey Weiss, Superintendent, Kenosha Unified School District

"We are grateful to the community of South Milwaukee that supported our referendum ask in April of 2024. These additional dollars allowed us to focus on staff compensation to help with retention and other district priorities. We used some of these additional dollars to support a salary adjustment within special education staff and paraprofessionals as these have become hard to fill positions. Additional reimbursement from the state for the services that our students who receive services through an IEP need and deserve, would allow our district to have additional dollars to support our priorities without needing to ask our community to support a future referendum."

Deidre Roemer, Superintendent, School District of South Milwaukee

