



Milwaukee Public Schools – An Agenda for Transformation

The success of the publicly-funded schools in Milwaukee is critical not only to the learning of this present generation of students but also to the growth and vitality of Wisconsin. There are many students in great schools who are taught by committed educators and supported by involved parents who work hard every day to improve student learning. These herculean and successful efforts are accomplished in the face of enormous child poverty that increasingly is part of Milwaukee's social fabric. We must engage the whole Milwaukee community and our state in efforts to reach all students and parents.

Eliminating the disparity of student outcomes has to be our top priority. Preparing young Milwaukeeans to leave the world a better place than they found it is the practical lesson that we need to embrace. To put in place an agenda for transformation, I will:

- Aggressively use the main lever the State Superintendent holds to create improved results – the Corrective Action Plan that I helped to create and administer as part of No Child Left Behind. In particular, I will hold Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) accountable to increase consistency of instructional practice across all schools, thus helping to mitigate the problem of widespread student mobility.
- Ensure that high quality educators and leaders are recruited to, and remain in MPS schools. For example, I have directly worked with all sides to create opportunities for some of our nation's best and brightest to teach in Milwaukee, ensuring that all candidates meet Wisconsin's high standards of quality. Furthermore, since it is clear that high quality teachers and principals are the cornerstones of success, I will hold MPS accountable to fulfill their statutory obligations to mentor their new teachers and build leaders.
- Seek expansion of state support for bringing nationally-certified teachers to Milwaukee's neediest schools via state stipends and leverage federal funds to provide high quality professional development for underperforming schools.
- Seek legislation to transform the present high poverty aid block grant program to one that only pays for high leverage strategies (e.g. 1:1 tutoring). Furthermore, I would seek authority to withhold this funding if appropriate achievement goals are not reached.

- Seek legislation to allow all schools of high poverty to count summer school membership at 100% with the caveat that this revenue enhancement would continue only if the district provides verifiable high leverage strategies that are shown to reduce the achievement gap.
- Show kids that we care by supporting positive, healthy and safe learning environments. This includes efforts to maintain small class sizes, investing in counselors and other pupil service personnel, and establishing a revenue cap exemption to address safety issues.
- Work with our congressional delegation to ensure that the likely increase in federal IDEA funding through the stimulus and recovery program remains permanent.
- Lead a multiyear effort to leverage all available federal and state money to fund community-based, academically-oriented after school programs such as those currently run by the Boys and Girls Clubs of Milwaukee.
- View solutions to funding issues within the context of all the state's schools. Real proposals that transform the school funding system start with Milwaukee, but must include the entire state.
- Increase the transparency among all publicly-funded schools (public, charter, and choice). Only when parents and taxpayers can view all schools through the same accountability lens will there be confidence in all systems.
- Solve MPS problems regionally because they are regional problems. While competition in the educational sector can spur innovation, collaboration holds greater promise. Economic development collaboration among the seven southeast Wisconsin counties through the groundbreaking efforts of the Milwaukee 7 (M7) is a great example of a transformational way to solve our common problems. It is just as important to collaborate to increase student achievement. Thus, I propose creating an Educational 7 (E7) initiative that will include all PK-16 educational entities including public schools, colleges, and universities – private schools and universities, charter schools, voucher schools, technical colleges, as well as social service agencies that serve students and their families. The students must be our focus, not the institutions. Breaking down barriers to student success across the region is a transformation to a seamless system that we cannot ignore. I would not only engage these entities in a planning process, but, like the M7, seek a commitment from each governing board to sign on to a code of collaboration that will be based on the common good of the region's students.
- Use the regional collaboration impetus from the E7 to create Early College High Schools (ECHS) throughout southeast Wisconsin. ECHS provide historically underserved students with the opportunity to earn a high school diploma in a college environment. Across the country, these innovative schools allow students to earn an associate degree and a high school diploma within five years of starting high school.