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State superintendent calls for additional investment in education workforce as new report reveals urgent need

Data shows nearly half of new teachers leave Wisconsin or profession after seventh year

MADISON – A new report released today by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction highlights ongoing challenges in the state’s ability to retain and fairly compensate teachers, underscoring the urgent need for targeted investments in the upcoming 2025-27 biennial budget.

[The 2023 Educator Preparation Program and Workforce Analysis Report](#) reveals troubling trends. In tracking a cohort of first-time teachers, only 55.6 percent remained in Wisconsin or in the profession after seven years, and a mere 26.1 percent stayed at the same school during that time. The situation is even more concerning in special education, with just 46 percent of first-time special education teachers remaining in the state and just 18.6 percent remaining in the same school.

“This report is a stark reminder of the critical need to invest in strategies that recruit and retain Wisconsin teachers,” State Superintendent Dr. Jill Underly said. “The strength of our schools depends on the dedication and expertise of our educators. We cannot afford to lose our best and brightest. To address the root causes driving teacher turnover, our state legislature must pass the governor’s proposed biennial budget. Investing in our teachers is an investment in our students, in our local communities, and in the future of our state.”

The EPP and Workforce Analysis Report, based on data through the 2022-23 school year, provides a comprehensive analysis of Wisconsin’s K-12 workforce, including salary trends. When adjusted to 2023 dollars, the average total compensation for teachers in 2023 is down more than \$22,000 since 2010.

“Teachers are shouldering more responsibility than ever, yet they are significantly underpaid,” Dr. Underly said. “They are entrusted with the monumental task of shaping our future leaders, yet their pay does not reflect this incredible responsibility. By making necessary revenue limit adjustments and boosting the special education reimbursement rate, school districts will gain more flexibility to improve

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compensation. The governor's proposed budget will help keep our teachers in classrooms, doing what they love: educating the leaders of tomorrow."

The report also shows a significant gap in workforce diversity. While Wisconsin's student population continues to grow more diverse, only 6 percent of teachers are educators of color – [despite research showing](#) that students of color benefit greatly from having teachers who share their racial background.

"It's essential that we make teaching more attractive to a diverse range of candidates and address the disparity in our educator workforce," Dr. Underly said. "When students see themselves reflected in their teachers, they thrive. Every Wisconsin student deserves a diverse, experienced, and well-supported teaching staff to prepare them for success in their future."

In November, [Dr. Underly proposed new investments](#) aimed at strengthening Wisconsin's educator workforce, many which were included in the governor's proposed budget. These proposals focus on supporting teachers at every stage of their career – from expanding [the Peer Review and Mentoring Grant Program](#) to offering stipends for future educators and their mentors. The budget also reimburses districts for costs associated with "grow your own" educator programs that help staff obtain further licensure and encourages students to consider teaching as a career, as well as supporting [the Teacher Apprenticeship Program](#) through the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development.

Last fall, [the DPI was awarded a grant](#) by the U.S. Department of Education to enhance support for special education teachers. The funding helps expand [the DPI's Special Educator Induction Program](#), which offers new special education teachers and leaders specialized training and coaching to ensure they succeed in the classroom.

More information on the DPI's education workforce initiatives [can be found on the DPI's website](#).

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