

WISCONSIN

EMPLOYER SURVEY

SUMMER 2023

EDUCATION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Wisconsin Employers Give K-12 Schools a Failing Grade ***73% of Businesses Say Students Graduating from the Public K-12 System are Unprepared for the Workforce***

A new survey of Wisconsin businesses paints an unflattering picture of the education system in the state. According to the *Wisconsin Employer Survey*, nearly three-quarters of businesses think students graduating from the public K-12 system are not prepared for the workforce. Making matters worse, 56 percent of respondents said they have employees who struggle with the ability to read or do math.

The unsettling new information sadly reflects the fact that more than 60 percent of students cannot read or do math at grade level in Wisconsin.

"Not only is this new data disappointing, but it should also make all of us outraged," said WMC Senior Director of Workforce, Education & Employment Policy Rachel Ver Velde. "Wisconsin's public school system is failing our children, and it is having an outsized impact on our workforce and economy."

With young people set up for failure, employers are now having to step in to provide remedial education for workers on top of the technical training they already offer. Forty-one percent of businesses said they have provided employees with additional education or tutoring because their K-12 education did not prepare them with the basic skills needed for a career.

The educational failures are also impacting Wisconsin's already challenging workforce shortage. According to the survey, nearly two-thirds of employers said they have reduced hiring requirements in an effort to get more job applicants.

"Wisconsin taxpayers should be asking themselves what our return is on the billions of dollars we spend each year on public education," added Ver Velde. "We cannot measure success by how much money is spent. Instead, we need to start focusing on what students are learning and if they are being setup to succeed upon graduation."

The *Wisconsin Employer Survey* also asked about the changing needs for higher education. Four in 10 companies said they have removed the requirement for a bachelor's degree for some jobs that had previously required it. And 81 percent of companies responding said that more than half of the jobs at their company require less than a four-year college degree.

WMC continues to work with lawmakers to reform the education system in the state. This includes helping to shepherd through increased funding for choice and charter schools in the most recent State Budget to expand educational opportunities and improve outcomes for all students.

Additionally, WMC's legislative agenda includes:

- Expanding school choice and charter options further to provide more students with educational opportunities they cannot currently access
- Tying new K-12 funding to increased proficiency scores, shrinking the achievement gap and other accountability measures to ensure improved outcomes for students
- Creating additional K-3 reading screening assessments to identify at-risk students and providing a plan to get them back on track
- Increasing access to dual enrollment and work-based learning programs to expose students to careers and employers at a young age
- Expanding registered and youth apprenticeship programs to improve pathways to more in-demand careers

About the Wisconsin Employer Survey

The *Wisconsin Employer Survey* is conducted twice a year by WMC. The assessment provides a snapshot of where Wisconsin's employers stand on a number of important issues and outlines their economic outlook for both Wisconsin and the United States. For the Summer 2023 edition, WMC surveyed 170 employers that make up a representative sample of its membership. Businesses of all sizes, industries and geographic locations in Wisconsin participated.

Do you believe that **students graduating** from Wisconsin's public K-12 system are **prepared for the workforce**?



Do you have any **employees who struggle** with the **ability to read or do math**?



** Totals may not add up to 100% due to rounding.*

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Do you ever have to **provide employees with additional education or tutoring** because their K-12 education did not prepare them with the basic skills needed for a career?

YES

41%

NO

59%

Have you **reduced your hiring requirements** (ex: amount of experience needed, level of educational attainment, etc.) **in an effort to get more job applicants?**

YES

63%

NO

37%

Have you **removed the requirement** of having a **bachelor's degree** for any jobs that you had previously required it?

YES

40%

NO

60%

What **percentage of jobs** at your company require **less than a four-year college degree**?

LESS THAN 25 PERCENT	11%
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26-50 PERCENT	8%
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51-75 PERCENT	31%
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OVER 75 PERCENT	50%
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Do you support or oppose **investing additional money in school choice and charter schools** to allow more children to participate in those education opportunities?

89%
SUPPORT

SUPPORT STRONGLY 62%
SUPPORT SOMEWHAT 27%

11%
OPPOSE

OPPOSE STRONGLY 4%
OPPOSE SOMEWHAT 7%

Do you support or oppose **additional funding** for
apprenticeships, dual enrollment credits and
work-based learning opportunities for high school students?

99%
SUPPORT

SUPPORT STRONGLY 78%
SUPPORT SOMEWHAT 21%

2%
OPPOSE

OPPOSE STRONGLY 1%
OPPOSE SOMEWHAT 1%

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