Wisconsin’s 2011 Act 10:
Analysis of Impacts to K-12 Public Education

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Abstract

Our research investigates the differential impacts of Wisconsin’s 2011 Act 10 and Act 32 on K-12 public school districts throughout the state. The 2011 biennial state budget (Act 32), the reallocation of state aid and decrease in revenue limits, coupled with the reforms of Act 10 impacted public education in a profound way. Our research concentrated on sifting through the various impacts, both positives and negatives, in order to determine how, or whether, the policies within Act 10 and Act 32 address the prevailing issues in Wisconsin’s public education system.

In order to assess and evaluate the ramifications of Act 10 and Act 32, we used a mixed methodology, combining both qualitative and qualitative data analysis. We distributed surveys to superintendents and WEAC representatives to gain insight on their opinions and perceptions, while also conducting interviews with legislators in order to get the perspective of policy experts. Through our research we were able to determine the adverse effects that teachers felt in the wake of these acts and the rationale of political actors involved in the passing of this legislation. Republican lawmakers believed that tax breaks for residents would provide incentive enough to eliminate the influence of teachers, while Democrats saw Act 10 as an assault against public education.

Through our data analysis we found that Act 10 and Act 32 disproportionately, and adversely, target rural schools and students of color. While Act 10’s reforms balanced the budget and provided superintendents’ with greater flexibility in managing their budgets, the costs of the legislation outweigh the benefits. The reallocation of state aid and decrease in revenue limits particularly harms districts with high levels of poverty and declining enrollment, while rewarding affluent, successful districts. The funding model enacted through Act 32 perpetuates inequality between school districts and between students of differing demographic backgrounds, further exacerbating the achievement gap and codifying “winners and losers” amongst schools.

Our recommendations to address these prevailing issues are for the state to adopt an equitable school funding model, incentivize the pursuit of a career in education, address the needs of high cost districts, and to further integrate social and educational services.
Introduction

In the Fall election of 2010, congruent with the wave of Republican electoral victories that would sweep the United States, Wisconsin’s state government experienced a drastic shift from Democratic to Republican control. With exit polls showing the economic downturn after the 2008 global recession as a key issue in the Fall of 2010, Wisconsin voters turned to the Republican Party. Wisconsin’s Senate, Assembly, and Governorship were captured by the Republican party, and US Senator of 18 years, Russ Feingold, lost to political neophyte and Oshkosh businessman Ron Johnson (Bosman 2010). The political conditions created by this shift in partisan power granted the opportunity for former Milwaukee County Executive and newly inaugurated Governor Scott Walker to introduce legislation that would spark protests of tens of thousands across the state, induce Democratic State Senators to flee the state, and trigger a historic gubernatorial recall.

Wisconsin’s 2011 Act 10 and the associated 2011 biennial budget aimed to bring about broad reform in labor relations in the public sector, slash government expenditures, reshape the state of Wisconsin’s operational capacities, and balance a budget projected to be in a multi-billion-dollar deficit (Beck 2016). In reference to his proposed legislation, Governor Walker stated, “we are planning on shrinking government through attrition and reform.” Walker’s bill faced scrutiny as it proposed eliminating collective bargaining rights for public employees like K-12 teachers, as well as a $900 reduction in state aid to K-12 public school districts (Beck 2016). Regarding the impact of his legislation on teachers, Walker stated, “what I’m doing is long term, it’s making a structural change so that more of them can stay in our classrooms” (Beck 2016). Further, Walker lamented, “let me be clear, Collective bargaining isn't a right, it is an expensive entitlement”
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Dispute over the impact of Act 10 and Act 32 largely falls along partisan lines, with most Democrats criticizing the legislation as an attack on public education and public school teachers. State Superintendent Tony Evers, the statewide elected official that acts as head of the Department of Public Instruction, and now a democratic candidate for governor, has alleged that the legislation has had numerous adverse impacts on K-12 public education, from teacher shortages to adversely impacting the state’s ability to address the achievement gap (Beck 2016). Furthermore, some mixed results have been reported; from increased flexibility for school boards during wage negotiations, to districts having to terminate teachers and programs.

Our research attempts to investigate the direct and indirect impacts of Walker’s 2011 Budget Repair Bill and biennial budget on public schools throughout the state of Wisconsin. Moreover, in our policy analysis, we aim to identify the disparate impacts surrounding the reallocation of state aid to public schools based on race, socioeconomics status, and location, as well as various other discrepancies. Finally, to conclude our analysis, we offer policy recommendations as to how the state may best address the state’s prevailing issues in K-12 education.

Summary of Wisconsin’s 2011 Act 10 & Act 32

On February 15, 2011 a bill that would later become commonly known as Wisconsin’s 2011 Act 10, or the Wisconsin Budget Repair Bill, was introduced to the assembly. Proposed by Wisconsin’s recently elected Republican Governor Scott Walker, the bill aimed to address the projected $3.6 billion budget deficit through the restructuring of public sector collective bargaining, compensation, retirement benefits, health insurance, and various other benefits for public sector
employees. Large segments of the bill, stripped of its fiscal elements in order to bypass legislative procedure requiring that 20 members of the state senate to be present to vote, passed through the newly formed Joint Committee of Conference on March 10 by a vote of 53 to 42. Governor Walker signed the bill into law a day later on March 11.

With non-fiscal provisions of Act 10 already prescribed into law, the bifurcated process of adoption for these legislative and fiscal reforms was concluded on June 29 of 2011 with the passage of the 2011-12 biennial budget. After 3 years of litigation regarding the legality of numerous aspects related to both the process by which the bill was considered and passed as well as the actual legislative reforms themselves ended with a Wisconsin Supreme Court ruling (5-2) in 2014 that affirmed the constitutionality of large portions of Act 10.

In terms of objective fiscal impacts, Wisconsin’s 2011 biennial budget included precipitous reductions in state expenditures, including, but not limited to: decrease in state aid to K-12 public education by approximately $900 million, decrease in state funding for the University of Wisconsin System by nearly $250 million, elimination of approximately $500 million from Medicaid programs (2011 Wisconsin Act 32). Furthermore, Governor Walker’s budget included provisions that restricted local school districts’ ability to counteract reductions in state aid with local property taxes through a 5% decrease in revenue cap limits (Reschovsky. 2011).

Legislative reforms contained in both Act 10 and the 2011 budget aimed to curtail state and local expenditures through a restructuring of various social programs as well as laws pertaining to public sector employee benefits, compensation, and bargaining rights, including but not limited to: the elimination of collective bargaining rights of public sector employees (except law enforcement and fire), the establishment of a cap on enrollment for the Family Care program, the elimination of
benefits under the Earned Income Tax Credit, a freezing of benefits under the Homestead Tax Credit Program, and the restructuring and increase of employee contribution to the Wisconsin Retirement System and local, county, and state health insurance plans (2011 Wisconsin Act 32; 2011 Wisconsin Act 10).

While the totality of the policies contained within Act 10 and Act 32 impact expansive and differing areas in public policy, we intend to focus on the direct and indirect ramifications of these two pieces of legislation in relation to K-12 public education.

**Key Terms & Concepts**

➢ **Wisconsin's 2011 Act 10**: Commonly referred to as Act 10 and the Scott Walker Budget Repair Bill.

➢ **Wisconsin's 2011 Act 32**: Also referred to as the 2011 Biennial State Budget.

➢ **Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL)**: A student from a household with an income at or below 130 percent of the poverty income threshold is eligible for free lunch. A student from a household with an income between 130 percent and up to 185 percent of the poverty threshold is eligible for reduced price lunch. (National Center for Education Statistics)

➢ **FTE**: Full Time Employee. Measure used to calculate number of staffing positions.

➢ **Revenue Cap**: Wisconsin Act 16 implemented revenue limits beginning with the 1993-94 school year. A district's revenue limit is the maximum amount of revenue that may be raised through state general aid and property tax for the General, Non-Referendum Debt (authorized after August 12, 1993) and Capital Expansion Funds, also referred to as Funds 10, 38 and 41 respectively. Note that prior to 2001-02, the Community Service Fund levy was included in the revenue limit. The maximum limit is based upon enrollment changes, an inflationary increment and each district's prior year controlled revenue. (WI DPI)
State Funding Formula: Public schools in Wisconsin are funded with a combination of revenues including various state and federal education aids. State aids represent approximately 45 percent of school funding and federal aids represent approximately eight percent of school funding in Wisconsin. State aids are defined as General Aids or Categorical Aids. General aids are provided primarily through a formula that distributes aid on the basis of the relative fiscal capacity of each school district as measured by the district's per pupil value of taxable property. Categorical aids represent specific program costs and are paid on a formula basis or awarded as grants. (WI DPI)

Equalization Aid: Wisconsin State Equalization Aid is general financial assistance to public school districts for use in funding a broad range of school district operational expenditures. (WI DPI)

Per Pupil Aid: Per-Pupil Aid is a categorical aid provided by the state of Wisconsin. This aid program provides additional funding to school districts in Wisconsin based on the three-year average membership from the district's revenue limit worksheet. (WI DPI)

Sparsity Aid: The school district's membership in the previous school year was no more than 745. The school district's membership in the previous school year divided by the school district's area in square miles is less than 10. (Wis. Stat. sec. 115.436: Sparsity aid) Any district that qualified for aid in one year but did not qualify the following year due to the 745 membership limit would receive 50 percent of its prior year award in the year in which it became ineligible for aid. These payments are also subject to proration if the appropriation is insufficient to make the full amount of the payments. (WI DPI)

Special Adjustment Aid: provides additional aid to school districts that generate less than 85 percent of the state aid generated in the previous year. (Wis. Stat. sec. 121.105)

Declining Enrollment: Districts can generate less aid for a variety of reasons but perhaps the most common is declining enrollment. As district enrollment declines and property values increase, the district's property value per member (property value divided by membership) increases. In the Equalization Aid formula, as
per-member property value increases, aid eligibility generally decreases. For districts experiencing severe declines in enrollment, Equalization Aid eligibility can also severely decline. (WI DPI)

○ **Adjustment Aid Example:** Special Adjustment aid, otherwise known as "parachute" aid, is meant to mitigate severe declines in aid by limiting the aid loss to 15 percent a year (ensuring the district gets at least 85% of the previous year's eligibility.) For example, let's say a district received $1,000,000 of Equalization Aid in year 1. In year 2, due to severely-declining enrollment, this district's Equalization Aid eligibility was only $700,000. Because $700,000 is less than 85 percent of $1,000,000 ($850,000), this district would also generate $150,000 in Special Adjustment aid ($1,000,000 x .85) - $700,000 to bring them back to the 85 percent loss level. The additional Special Adjustment aid will allow this district time and opportunity to make expenditure adjustments in reaction to the severe decline in enrollment. (DPI)

➤ **Aid to High Poverty Districts:** A school district is eligible for aid if at least 50 percent (after rounding to the nearest whole percentage point) of the district's student enrollment on the third Friday in September in the immediately preceding even-numbered year satisfied the income eligibility criteria to be eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (i.e., economically disadvantaged). School districts automatically receive this aid. No claim is necessary.

➤ **Collective Bargaining:** negotiation of wages and other conditions of employment by an organized body of employees. (Legal Dictionary)

➤ **2014 Wisconsin Supreme Court Ruling:** "No matter the limitations or 'burdens' a legislative enactment places on the collective-bargaining process, collective bargaining remains a creation of legislative grace and not constitutional obligation." - Justice Michael Gableman, Author of the 5-2 ruling in MTI v. Walker.

➤ **School Report Cards (WI DPI):** As part of the state accountability system, the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) produces report cards for every district and school in Wisconsin.
These Accountability Report Cards include data on multiple indicators for multiple years across four Priority Areas:

- **Student Achievement** – performance on the state reading and mathematics tests
- **Student Growth** – improvement over time on the state reading and mathematics tests
- **Closing Gaps** – progress of student subgroups in closing gaps in reading and mathematics performance and/or graduation rates
- **On-track and Postsecondary Readiness** – performance on key indicators of readiness for graduation and post-secondary pursuits, whether college or career

  - In addition, given the impact on student success, performance on two Student Engagement Indicators is also included.
  - Absenteeism Rate, with a goal of 13 percent or less.
  - Dropout Rate, with a goal of six percent or less.

- A district's or school's Overall Accountability Score places the district or school into one of five Overall Accountability Ratings:

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<th>Rating</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Stars</th>
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<tr>
<td>Significantly Exceeds Expect</td>
<td>83-100</td>
<td>*****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceeds Expectations</td>
<td>73-82.9</td>
<td>****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meets Expectations</td>
<td>63-72.9</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meets Few Expectations</td>
<td>53-62.9</td>
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<td>Fails to Meet Expectation</td>
<td>0-52.9</td>
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Figure 1, Source: WI DPI
Literature Review

In order to gain a better understanding of the impacts that Act 10 has had we researched literature on Act 10, teacher compensation, teacher shortages, student success and education funding. What we found has helped us better understand and analyze the data we collected through our surveys, interviews, and DPI data collection. Below is the relevant literature we found and will be referencing while analyzing our data.

Previous Research and Analysis of Act 10

It is important to our research that we have a strong understanding of the research that has already been done on Act 10 and what the findings have been. The literature below helps us to better understand impacts Act has had and how to approach and structure our research.

In the piece, *In the Aftermath of Act 10: The Changed State of Teaching in a Changed State*, the authors focus on how Act 10 resulted in teachers feeling “uncertain and vulnerable” as well as experiencing a loss of “meaningful teaching” (Swalwell et al. 2017). The research group interviewed 26 social studies teachers from a stratified random sample of 13 districts. This form of analysis generated answers that teachers are expressing doubt about whether to continue teacher and serious concern for the future of the profession. Furthermore, the authors cross-referenced population data with the 2010 gubernatorial election results of each district in order to find a “blue” (liberal), a “red” (conservative), and a “purple” (politically mixed) locale for each size category. Once all districts were sorted into this matrix, the researchers randomly chose three from each of the nine categories so that there could ensure representation from rural, suburban, and urban districts with different
political leanings. Then, they randomly selected a middle and high school from each of the three districts and recruited all social studies teachers from each school for interviews. Additionally, they contacted social studies teachers from randomly selected middle and high schools in Madison and Milwaukee since these are the two largest and most politically influential districts in the state (Swalwell et al. 2017).

The fact that the authors focused on one discipline of teaching mitigated inconsistencies in the data, and enables us to discover direct, qualitative impacts of Act 10. It is difficult to generate tangible, qualitative impacts, but the research design of this project provided such information that is valuable in our own analysis. Moreover, the study was performed by professors from: The University of Wisconsin, Iowa State University, and University of Maryland. The use of prestigious, peer-reviewed work provides validity in our own analysis.

In addition to the qualitative data, assessing the teachers’ feelings on Act 10, quantitative data is also very important to our research. In the series by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, *Act 10 at Fire*, data on Act 10 and Wisconsin school districts, data is compiled in their article “Changes in Public School District in Wisconsin since the Passage of Act 10”. This data by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel in collaboration with Marquette University, shows how, five years into Act 10, public education in the state has been fundamentally altered. Information on teachers moving school districts, high rates of vacancies and turnover, and advantages of higher-paying districts is displayed in this work. It is an integral part of our research to analyze tangible, quantitative data. This resource allows us to search education data by district, and compare information related to funding, educational attainment, and quality of teachers before and after the Budget Repair Bill of 2011. As
such, we are able to make an analysis of educational data without the possibility of biases from the author.

In the article Untold Stories of Act 10: How Superintendents Have Used Act 10 to Reform Public Schools, the authors offer more research on Act 10’s impacts. CJ Szafir, Will Flanders, and Alexandra Hudson present an analysis of how superintendents have used Act 10 to reform public schools in this paper. This paper highlights how increased control at the district level has impacted education throughout the state. The authors use examples of how increased district control has helped individual districts address the problems their district was seeing. For example the authors use Oconomowoc School District to show how increase control allowed them to address their budget problems. They were facing a shortfall of $500,000 and because of Act 10 they were able to cut their staff and offer stipends to the remaining teachers to teach more classes (Szafir et al. 2016). This paper comes from a conservative public interest law firm and the authors do caution the readers to not make generalizations based on their report. So while their research provides us with some interesting case studies that show how Act 10 has had some positive impacts we will have to assess the findings on a case by case basis.

**Teacher Compensation: Salary and Benefits**

One of the biggest changes to public education directly impacted teachers. With the elimination of collective bargaining each district gained more control over teacher compensation and benefits. As a result teachers say changes in salaries and health care plans.

In the Cornell School of Industrial and Labor Relations Review article, The New Great Debate about Unionism and Collective Bargaining in U.S. State and Local Governments, the paper examines the
relationship between public sector employees, public unions, collective bargaining rights, and recent state and local level action throughout the United States pertaining to the reduction or elimination of public sector unions and bargaining rights. The study notes that the common belief, or motive, behind the reductions in compensation for public employees and stripping of bargaining rights stems from the notion that public employees are overcompensated, and as a result, has led to state-level fiscal challenges (Lewin et al. 2012). The article begins by providing historical context dating back to the mid-20th century, and continues with comparative observations related to public and private employee compensation, bargaining rights, etc.

The authors of the article explore the effects of unions on public sector employment and labor dispute settlement in terms of its relative effectiveness compared to private sector unions, as well as various other impacts. The article asserts to have found evidence illustrating that public employees are undercompensated in comparison to private sector counterparts, unions have a marginal effect on leveraging additional pay or benefits, and the dispute settlement mechanisms are moderately functional (Lewin et al. 2012). So, in conclusion, this article states that it finds that public employees “on the whole are undercompensated” – a finding that contrasts the claims made by elected officials as support for reducing wages, benefits, and bargaining rights for public employees (Lewin et al. 2012).

In terms of this papers usability, or relevance to the impacts of public policy on K-12 education in Wisconsin – while this paper does not directly deal in the effects of these legislative efforts on public school districts, the results transposed in relation to teacher compensation, teacher supply, and the impending results: reduction in teacher licensure requirements, teacher shortages,
change in moral or general contentedness with career, etc. There is a connection to be drawn between treatment of teachers and student achievement and school success.

In Dan Umhoefer’s article, *From Teacher ‘Free Agency’ to Merit Pay, the Uproar over Act 10*, he analyzes the aftereffects of Act 10, five years after the implementation and illustrates how Wisconsin’s bruising battle over union power is fundamentally altering public education in the state. Specifically, the article demonstrates how superintendents are now firmly in control of the teacher workforce, now that union influence has faded (Umhoefer 2016). Umhoefer suggests that school leaders are split over the repercussions from the changes that resulted from Act 10; the financially well off districts were given an increased advantage over poorer public school districts (Umhoefer 2016). Throughout its analysis, the Journal Sentinel reviewed spending and teacher data on all 424 districts in the state. The researchers compared old collective bargaining agreements with the current employee handbooks in 100 districts. Moreover, the team interviewed educators in 25 districts across the state, and conducted the “first detailed survey of school superintendents regarding Act 10.” The interviews with district administrators in combination with data collected by Marquette University generated invaluable information.

The text in this project presents tangible evidence that teachers’ unions lost significant strength. Not only did Act 10 limit the power of unions, but following the Budget Repair Bill of 2011, there was a severe loss in membership within the teacher’s union (Umhoefer 2016). The article dives deep into the quantitative and qualitative effects that Act 10 has had on the quality and availability of teachers; it offers us data on how many teachers left districts or the profession after Budget Repair Bill of 2011, as well as superintendents’ answers to the effect on quality of education following the policy.
Overall, the author provides an unbiased analysis of the effects of the Act 10. Dan Umhoefer offers both sides of the argument for the Budget Repair Bill in his analysis; when pertained specifically to education, the data shows significant loss of: funding, teachers, and quality of education (Umhoefer 2016). The work completed by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and Marquette University is invaluable for our own analysis.

Once Act 10 was enacted teachers pay and benefits were some of the first effects of Act 10 seen. The lack of collective bargaining rights meant that compensation and benefits for district employees could now be determined by individual school districts. In the Teacher Compensation: Standard Practices and Changes in Wisconsin paper the authors, discuss the two most popular teacher compensation models pre-Act 10-- the performance pay design and the knowledge and skills-based designs. But following Act 10 the new pay models no longer easily fit into these two categories. Districts were changing their pay models to reflect their individual district. Individual districts were changing their models to reflect the goals of their district and the contributions teachers make to their district and to create more competition for talented teachers with other districts (Kimball et al. 2016).

The Wisconsin Center for Education Research also released a paper analyzing the Act 10 impacts on Wisconsin teachers. The policy paper, District Changes in Teacher Compensation Practices When Collective Bargaining Disappears, explores the nature of teacher compensation in the state of Wisconsin through the exploration and analysis of longitudinal data, as well as individual school district case studies. This paper provides an overview of two predominant styles, or practices, in teachers’ compensation throughout the United States, with the objective of comparing Wisconsin standard practice. This paper utilizes qualitative primary data such as interviews with local school
district leaders in Wisconsin, as well as the qualitative analysis of individual and collated district compensation data. One intention behind this comparative approach is to illustrate how the compensation models and standards for Wisconsin teachers have changed over time.

The study finds that the impetus for change in terms of teacher compensation can be traced, at least in part, to legislative reforms such as the Wisconsin Educator Effectiveness System, Act 10 – the 2011 budget repair bill, as well as increased competition between districts for teachers (Kimball et al. 2017). Findings also indicate that district changes related to compensation models and standards reflected the personalized needs of each district (Kimball et al. 2017). In general, districts were observed to be making changes based on their own needs rather than establishing or following comparative common practices between districts (Kimball et al. 2017). For example, small and mid-sized districts have modified or replaced previous models that reflected single salary schedules since the passage of Act 10 in 2011 while on the other hand, mid-to-large districts were seen to be more reluctant to change from the single salary schedule (Kimball et al. 2017). Furthermore, the study found that many districts did not opt for significant compensation reform or experimentation, determining that more investigation is needed in order to determine the reasons why this is occurring (Kimball et al. 2017). This study was helpful as we aimed to examine the impacts of public policy (specifically Act 10 and the subsequent funding cuts to public education) on our K-12 public school districts in Wisconsin.

In addition to changes in salary schedules, teachers’ health benefits were also impacted greatly by Act 10. Robert Costrell and Jeffrey Dean explore this in their article, *The Rising Cost of Teacher’s Health Care*. Costrell and Dean explain that the lack of collective bargaining rights for teachers unions gave districts the authority to find cheaper health insurance plans for their districts.
These plans were less expenses for districts because teachers had to contribute more to the plan. On average districts saved more than $2,000 per family coverage plan because of Act 10 (Costrell and Jeffrey 2013). While teachers were paying more and districts were saving, the plans post-Act 10 were very comparable to pre-Act 10 coverage plans (Costrell and Jeffrey 2013). Teachers weren't losing out on coverage-- they were just expected to contribute more to their coverage costs. The savings helped the narrative that Act was a success. Overall the savings from health insurance plans exceeded Gov. Scott Walker's $68 million savings plan (Costrell and Jeffrey 2013).

**Teacher Shortages and Teacher Turnover**

One common belief about, as seen in survey results, is that Act 10 has had a significant impact on teacher retention and has led to a shortage in Wisconsin teachers. This literature addresses this commonly held belief.

Many teachers left the education system following the enactment of Act 10, and because of this Jonathan Roth explores the relationship between the spike in teachers leaving the profession after the implementation of the Act 10 in his article, *Union Reform and Teacher Turnover: Evidence from Wisconsin's Act 10*. Teachers were concerned that their retirement plans that had been established largely due to the teachers unions collective bargaining would be in jeopardy if they stayed after Act 10 was enacted (Roth 2017). Roth studied the impacts that the increasing of teacher turnover had on the students. Roth found that although teacher turnover spiked in the year following the enactment of Act 10 the impacts on Wisconsin students was not as detrimental as what previous literature predicted. In fact, math and reading scores slightly increased (Roth 2017). The replacements for the leaving teachers were able to integrate into the schools and successfully provide
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an education for the students with similar results to their predecessors. While Roth didn't find that Act 10 detrimentally affected students test scores he suggests that there may be long term effects to Act 10 that cannot yet be seen (Roth 2017).

In addition to teacher turnover, teacher shortage has commonly been linked to Act 10. Alan Borsuk’s piece on “How Act 10 contributes to teacher shortages, “ informs that “emergency rules” have been implemented by the state’s Department of Public Instruction to deal with teacher shortages across Wisconsin. In other words, the state is loosening rules that qualify potential teachers. Borsuk explains that this is a result of Governor Scott Walker proposing that the majority of public employee unions be “stripped of almost all power and that contract provisions that shaped many aspects of work be wiped out” (Borsuk 2017). Such action directly transitioned the power of unions to superintendents, making such deregulations possible. This is pertinent, as lowering the quality of teachers may have an effect on the quality of education that is being produced in the state, which by itself is an intangible claim; however, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel was able to garner quantifiable information to validate this claim.

The Journal Sentinel, in collaboration with the Marquette University College of Communication, completed a project in 2016 to quantify the impacts of Act 10. The work done by researchers at Marquette illustrated limited: pay increases, changes in work environment, and career paths, which contributed to a high dissatisfaction rating in the teacher workforce (Borsuk 2017). Though it is impossible to claim that veteran teachers are quitting or retiring as a direct result of Act 10, the project showed a strong correlation between an increase in “teacher dissatisfaction” and teachers retiring or leaving for other professions after Act 10 (Borsuk 2017).
In this particular case, the analysis of Act 10 was authored by a senior fellow in law and public policy at the Marquette University Law School, an acclaimed academic institution, which aids in validating the claims that the article is making. The piece concludes in insisting that the availability and quality of teachers directly affects the quality of education in Wisconsin, by hindering this, Act 10 necessarily had a negative impact on public education in the state (Borsuk 2017).

**Student Success and Achievement**

In order to properly address our research question we must look at student achievement and success-- more specifically what impacts these things. The literature mentioned below are provide some insight into the complex web of factors that can impact student achievement and success.

In an Early Childhood Quarterly article, *Multiple risks and educational well being: A population-based investigation of threats to early school success*, the authors Heather L Rouse and John W. Fantuzzo, seek to investigate the impacts of multiple risks, as implied in the title, relating to educational outcomes for a population of students from low-income families in an urban public school district. The authors indicate the use of a “developmental - epidemiological approach” to examining these risks (Rouse and Fantuzzo 2009). The article utilized logistic regression analysis related to identified risk factors such as poverty, homelessness, child maltreatment, etc. Many portions of the collected and collated data utilized in this study, such as academic achievement outcomes, poverty and socioeconomic statuses within student populations, and behavioral outcomes were retrieved from specific school districts. Other data required collaboration with the Office of Emergency Shelter Services and Department of Human Services.
Rouse and Fantuzzo’s study aims to emphasize the differential impacts of each type of risk, as well as the level of risk, on the behavioral and educational outcomes of students. Moreover, the study aims to examine the persisting causes behind the achievement gaps throughout the United States that exhibit lower relative academic achievement and outcomes in economically disadvantaged and minority populations (Rouse and Fantuzzo 2009). The article states that its findings suggest large-scale collaborative efforts between public educational institutions and other public services are needed in order to reduce the examined risks, and accordingly, the racial and socioeconomic achievement gap (Rouse and Fantuzzo 2009). The study suggests that institutions responsible for early childhood education must work more closely with other public social services such as child welfare & homelessness services to address the needs of vulnerable student populations (Rouse and Fantuzzo 2009).

While this study is also not directly connected to the specific legislative efforts surrounding Act 10 and K-12 education funding cuts, the scientific and empirical evidence pertaining to early childhood achievement, as well as the finding suggesting more overt and robust intergovernmental collaboration between public entities provides our research with some quality insight and information as we seek to not only identify the impacts of previous public policy, but present a policy recommendation to address differential outcomes and inequality in Wisconsin education.

In addition to poverty, homelessness and child maltreatments as mentioned above, other policy level factors can impact student achievement. When Act 10 was enacted it largely impacted the power that teachers unions had. Randall Eberts and Joe Stone examine the effects that teachers unions have on public education outcomes in their article, *Teacher Unions and the Productivity of Public Schools*. This analysis of teachers’ unions is important when considering Act 10. Eberts and Stone
find that districts with teachers unions have students who, on average, score three percent higher than students in districts without teachers unions (Eberts and Stone 1987). But they also find that not all students equally benefit from unions. While average students tend to score seven percent higher on standardized tests, students that are below average and students that are above average tend to score higher in non-unionized districts (Eberts and Stone 1987). The authors conclude that these disparities are due to the fact that unionized districts tend to rely more heavily on standardized classroom techniques-- techniques that tend to work well for the average student (Eberts and Stone 1987). When examining the impacts of Act 10 it is important to consider these findings.

**Education Funding**

Understanding the systems for education funding throughout the US and Wisconsin, both current and past approaches, is important to our research. Through the literature mentioned below we are able to assess approaches towards Wisconsin education funding.

The authors of the American Economic Review article, *Education-Finance Reform and the Distribution of Education Resources*, explore and examine the impact of reforms related to public school finance throughout the United States in terms of its impact on the distribution of school resources (Murray 1998). This article follows legal challenges to the constitutionality of local public school funding between 1971 and 1996 as a part of their research. The findings of this study attempt to illustrate the impact of these court-ordered reforms in terms of inequality and aggregate spending.

The authors conclude that their evidence suggests that when litigation was successful, court-ordered reforms in school finance resulted in 19 to 34 percent reductions in inequality within the state (Murray 1998). It is delineated that the reforms in finance, and reductions in funding
inequality, were generated through an increase in spending on property poor, low-spending districts while maintaining spending levels at property-rich, high spending districts – in aggregate, there was an increased level of public school funding through the raising of state taxes (Murray 1998).

The articles main source of data derives from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the Department of Commerce, more specifically from the “Census of Governments: School System Finance.” The data includes district revenue, expenditures, fall enrollment, per pupil spending, etc. – the data being collected from “more than 16,000” school districts throughout the United States (Murray 1998). In terms of measuring inequality, four separate measurements were used (Theil Index, the Gini Coefficient, natural logarithm ratio of spending, and the coefficient of variation).

This article provides great context to our research project. As we aim to analyze and interpret the impact of Act 10 and K-12 funding cuts on public education in Wisconsin, this article provides concrete research relating to inequality in school funding and funding distributions. As we are interested in the viability of potential successful public policy remedies to the adverse impact of previous cuts to funding, this paper provides context as to how inequality was reduced through empirical data and analysis, as well as insight on the nature and impacts of the successful reform.

In addition to literature on US education funding, an analysis of Wisconsin's approach to education funding in al important. In the 2011 La Follette School of Public Affairs working paper, *An Analysis of the Proposal to Reduce Revenue Limits for Wisconsin School Districts*, the author, Andrew Reschovsky, provides an analysis of the proposed legislation by Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker pertaining to reductions in funding for K-12 school districts. The article provides context to the establishment of the revenue limits imposed by the legislature in 1993, as well as the subsequent
increases in revenue limits, which are to, in large part, represent the annual increase in the cost of education (Reschovsky 2011).

The article further notes that the legislation proposed by the governor, which would effectively reduce state aid by nearly $900 million, would also require a reduction in the revenue cap by nearly $500 per pupil (Reschovsky 2011). So, as a result, school districts would be stripped of state aid and, as a result of the lowered revenue limit, would not be able to respond to the reductions in state aid with an increased property tax levy. In summary, the lowering of the revenue limit would reduce allowable spending on K-12 education by nearly $600 million. This report suggests around a 7 percent reduction in school funding would occur on average throughout the state (though other DPI documents display that the percentage in funding cuts for specific districts ranged up to nearly 15%) (Reschovsky 2011). Additionally, the paper suggests that school districts will be forced to eliminate educational programs and increase class sizes.

This paper, both the analysis of the funding cuts in general and the specific data pertaining to school district reductions in funding levels, serves our project well as we interpret the impact of Act 10 and the corresponding reductions in public K-12 education spending. In our effort to explore the impacts, this paper provides qualitative and quantitative analysis pertaining to the direct impact of these legislative measures.

**Research Question**

Through quantitative and qualitative analysis we will investigate the impact of Wisconsin’s 2011 Act 10 & Act 32 on K-12 public school districts throughout the state. We will explore and compare the discrepancies in school funding with differential educational outcomes, as well as disparities related
to location, race, and socioeconomic status. We will analyze and evaluate the effects and consequences of the legislation and propose a policy recommendation to address the prevailing issues in Wisconsin’s K-12 public education system, such as the equitable allocation of public school funding, school success, and student achievement.

**Methodology**

The purpose of our research is to assess the impacts that 2011’s Act 10 had on public K-12 education throughout Wisconsin. We assess the impacts with both qualitative and quantitative data. After analysing the data we have developed some policy recommendations in order to address the shortcomings of Act 10 and Act 32.

In order to evaluate the successes and failures of Act 10 we uses data from Wisconsin’s Department of Public Instruction. Based on the map shown below from the DPI website we further investigate numerous districts from around the state. Wisconsin has 424 public school districts and because this population is too large to survey we decided to take a sample of school districts to by dividing them up into subgroups. According to *Key Methods in Geography*, because our data is used to assess differences between geographical areas, using a stratified sample will be the best way to analyze our data (Clifford et al 2010; 85). We took a sample of districts from all around the state. The subgroups are northern districts, central Wisconsin districts, Milwaukee area districts, Madison area districts, Viroqua area districts, Green Bay area districts, and Hudson area school districts. We examined data from all of the green districts and many of the districts in orange and red to see if any patterns emerged that can indicate any patterns within the green, orange and red groups. We compared the impacts on the districts and determined if districts have been differentially impacted due to racial makeup, socioeconomic status or location.
Our primary data will come from interviews and surveys. We interviewed Wisconsin state legislators. These interviews show how, at a policy level, Act 10 is viewed and how it is perceived by policymakers and experts. We also surveyed school administrators and teachers from districts from around Wisconsin. The data collected from the surveys was used to determine how perceptions varied between district superintendents and union representatives.
Surveys

As a segment of our qualitative analysis of the educational impacts of Act 10 and the 2011 state biennial budget, we utilized surveys to collect nominal and ordinal data from both superintendents as well as teachers’ union officials at Wisconsin Education Association Council (WEAC representatives). We chose these two groups because they come from two different ends of the spectrum in terms of how Act 10 and Act 32 impacted them. Superintendents gained an increase in control in their districts, following Act 10 while unions were stripped of their collective bargaining rights. Our intention was to analyze and apply this data as a supplement to the various data collected through our other various methods in quantitative and qualitative analysis. We aimed to compare the results from superintendents with the results of WEAC representative to gain a better understanding of their stances on Act 10 and Act 32. Our objective was to ensure that our survey population is diverse and reflective of the entire state of Wisconsin, as well as the different attitudes and conditions throughout the state at the individual school district level. By complementing our survey results with longitudinal secondary data, such as school finance and student achievement data, we will be able to more comprehensively investigate and analyze the discrepancies in educational outcomes and school success based on various factors and public policy impacts.

Our survey questions specifically touch on elements surrounding education that are relevant to our analysis of differential educational outcomes throughout the state of Wisconsin. This, combined with questions that request the participant identify the most significant challenges facing their district, allow us to explore the contours and contextualization of the quantitative data we have collected and analyzed.
Our survey, while requesting information such as name, position, and school district, allowed for the participant to select an option that provides a certain level of anonymity or obfuscation in order to ensure our sample size is not biased were individuals leery of some form of public or professional retribution related to the political nature of some of these questions. Our survey was optional, and as such, we recognize that this survey is subject to non-response bias. However, we have distributed this survey in a broad enough manner so that despite non-responsiveness, our sample population is fairly reflective of the state and its disparate communities, whether suburban, urban, rural, or a combination of the three.

The following statement served as the preface to our survey questions:

“We want to assure you that your responses are completely anonymous. Responses to anonymous surveys cannot be traced back to the respondent. We are not collecting any personally identifiable information, unless you voluntarily offer personal or contact information in the identification comment field within the survey. Responses will be aggregated by region and the original surveys destroyed after the tabulation.”
The following survey questions were distributed through Qualtrics:

The surveys sent to district administrators had this as the first question:

- Q1: School District:

While surveys sent to WEAC representatives had this as their first question:

- Q1: Region:

Q2: Please select the top 3 challenges facing your district:

- Funding Constraints
- Staffing Availability
- Poverty
- Racial Inequality
- Enrollment Growth
- Enrollment Decline
- Student Achievement
- Special Education
- Transportation
- Behavioral and Emotional Supports
- Other
Q3: How would you gauge the impact of the following legislative actions on your district?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Very Negative</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Somewhat Negative</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Positive</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Very Positive</th>
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<td>Elimination of collective bargaining rights</td>
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<td>Reduction in Revenue Cap Limit</td>
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Q4: How did 2011 Act 10 impact student achievement at your school district?

Q5: How did 2011 Act 32 (Biennial Budget) impact student achievement at your school district?

Q6: How did 2011 Act 10 impact your district's ability to recruit and retain qualified staff?
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>Q7</td>
<td>How did 2011 Act 32 impact your district’s ability to recruit and retain qualified staff?</td>
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<td>Q8</td>
<td>How did 2011 Act 10 impact the overall success of your district?</td>
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<td>Q9</td>
<td>How did 2011 Act 32 impact the overall success of your district?</td>
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<td>Q10</td>
<td>What were the most significant adjustments made by your district following the passage of Wisconsin’s 2011 Act 10 Budget Repair Bill?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q11</td>
<td>What were the most significant adjustments made by your district following the passage of Wisconsin’s 2011 Act 32, the 2011 state biennial budget?</td>
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While the survey results are not necessarily able to generalize Wisconsin school districts as a whole, we have analyzed these responses in order to recognize themes and trends, as well as discrepancies and commonalities between superintendents and WEAC representatives. Furthermore, this data is not representative of our complete analysis of the impacts of Act 10 and the 2011 biennial budget, but it is a segment of our qualitative data analysis.
Interviews

In order to fully understand the ramifications of the Act 10 Budget Repair Bill of 2011, it is integral to understand why this policy was passed in the first place. As such, the legislative research included both interviews of Wisconsin State Legislators and media archives in order to fully comprehend the point of view of the lawmakers. A total of six Senators and Assembly Members per political party were reached out to for an interview; however, two Democratic Representatives were the only ones who agreed to answer questions pertaining to the 2011 Wisconsin Act 10. The questionnaire utilized to conduct the interviews is seen in figure 3. The primary data gathered as a result of questioning the legislators is invaluable information to include in the project in order to present the perspective of policy-makers (Booth et al 1995). Specifically, the qualitative answers received will be integral data on that helps create a general census on the issue amongst politicians. If there was unlimited time and resources available, the analysis would have included responses from more politicians, especially Republicans, who were the party that passed Act 10 and Act 32; however, all six Republican representatives that were reached out to declined to be interviewed or to provide a comment on the legislation affecting public education. Consequently, the perspective of Republican proponents of Act 10 was gathered using press releases and archived news clippings. In general, both sides agreed that Act 10 virtually eliminated collective bargaining rights for most public sector workers; however, the opposing political parties have completely distinct views on how this impacted public education.
Data Collection

In order to fully address our research question we will be collecting and analyzing secondary data from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. DPI provides data regarding school performance, funding and demographics of districts throughout the state. We will be collecting data from the school district report cards that are published every year. These report cards give districts a grade from 0 to 100 based on factors such as student achievement, student growth in math and reading, the change in achievement gap and graduation rates. The DPI also provides data on district funding. By analyzing both the district report cards and the district funding profiles we will gain a better understanding of the relationship between school funding and student achievement in Wisconsin public education.
Results and Analysis

Survey Results and Analysis

The responses to the survey questions had some interesting answers. The responses from WEAC representatives tended to be similar. Of the four district responses, three districts also tended to have similar responses. New Berlin’s responses were quite different from the rest. New Berlin is the only district mentioned by name because we promised a certain amount of anonymity, so although we did receive data regarding which district these responses came from unless they chose to include their name in question 15, we did not include their district information. It would be very simple to find out who the superintendent is for the school districts and we did not want to breach the promise of anonymity.

Superintendent Responses: 4 Respondents

Q2 - Please select the top 3 challenges facing your district: 4 responses

- 3 votes for Behavior and Emotional Supports
- 2 votes for Student Achievement
- 2 votes for Special Education

Q3 - How would you gauge the impact of the following legislative actions on your district?:

4 Responses

- Elimination of Collective Bargaining Rights: 1 Very Positive; 2 Positive; 1 Somewhat Negative
Reallocation of State Aid: 2 Neutral; 2 Somewhat Negative
Reduction of Revenue Cap Limit: 1 Very Negative; 1 Negative; 2 Neutral

Q4 - How did 2011 Act 10 impact student achievement at your school district?: 4 Responses

- The responses to this question vary. Of the four responses two of them focused on the impact Act 10 had on teachers’ morale, claiming that efforts to improve teaching were responded to with resistance and anger from teachers. On the other hand, another response emphasized that their teachers were nothing but professional in the wake of Act 10, claiming they would not put the education of their students in jeopardy because of what was happening with Act 10 and education policy.

- Only one response claimed that educational achievement stalled following Act 10, while two other responses claimed that they achievement may have been impacted but it would be too hard to measure and know for sure how Act has impacted student achievement.

- The one response that said student achievement was impacted positively by Act 10 came from the School District of New Berlin. The respondent included links to articles about Act 10's impact on their school district. These articles highlighted statements from the superintendent Joe Garza, who believes that without the bureaucratic red tape that unions impose, districts like his have the ability to replace ineffective teachers and recruit better teachers (Gunn 2014). He also says that unions had made it hard to get professional development days for their staff, so now without the restraints from unions, they can get more training days for their teachers-- making them more effective in the classroom (Gunn 2014).
Q5 - How did 2011 Act 32 (Biennial Budget) impact student achievement at your school district? 4 Responses

- In response to this question two respondents expressed that the budget did not affect their districts. Another district responded by saying the budget led to reductions in programs, resources and staff.

- The one positive response again came from the New Berlin District. The response references that their district was able to “take advantage of the tools provided by the Governor as it related to ESCO projects to update our schools.” The ESCO projects is in reference to the Energy Service Company’s energy efficiency exemption projects. ESCO allowed New Berlin to implement new energy systems in some of districts school, making them more energy efficient and reducing energy costs.

Q6 - How did 2011 Act 10 impact your district’s ability to recruit and retain qualified staff?: 4 Responses

- Three of the four response to this question explain that it is harder to fill positions and that there is a teacher shortage. One of these response did explain that the entire state of Wisconsin, in most job fields, is facing a worker shortage. New Berlin’s responses response said that because of the worker shortage they had increased their recruitment efforts in order to get the best teachers at their district.

- The forth response was simply “neutral.”

Q7 - How did 2011 Act 32 impact your district's ability to recruit and retain qualified staff?: 3 Responses
Wisconsin’s 2011 Act 10: Analysis of Impacts to K-12 Public Education

- Two of the three responses said Act 32 had no impact on their districts ability to recruit and retain teachers. The third response, New Berlin, had the same response to this question as they did to question 6, referencing the statewide worker shortage.

Q8 - How did 2011 Act 10 impact the overall success of your district?: 4 Responses

- Two of the responses from this question focus on how teachers were impacted by Act 10, saying it created strife and that teachers did not feel supported by their communities.
- Another response was that Act 10 had positive impacts on the district’s ability to control staffing costs.
- New Berlin’s response to this question was the same as their response to question 4, saying that Act 10 has positively impacted their district.

Q9 - How did 2011 Act 32 impact the overall success of your district?: 3 Responses

- Two of the three responses claim the impact was minimal or that there was no impact on district success.
- New Berlin’s response was the same as their response to question 4.

Q10 - What were the most significant adjustments made by your district following the passage of Wisconsin’s 2011 Act 10 Budget Repair Bill?: 4 Responses

- Three of the four responses mentioned changes to salary and benefits. These responses focus on cuts to health care benefits and the requirement that teachers contribute more to their plans. Additionally salary schedules have changed. These efforts were made to decrease district spending, but one response pointed out that these efforts initially helped reduce spending but now there is nowhere to turn to cut spending.
New Berlin emphasized that without collective bargaining the district was finally able to focus on student learning rather than “unwarranted grievances” that come with collective bargaining.

Q11 - What were the most significant adjustments made by your district following the passage of Wisconsin’s 2011 Act 32, the 2011 state biennial budget?: 3 Responses

- Two of the three responses said that they had no or minimal adjustments in their district in response to Act 32.
- New Berlin had the same response to this question as question 10.

Q12 - Overall, how has state-level public policy impacted K-12 education in Wisconsin since 2010?: 4 Responses

- The responses to this question varied significantly. One response said that there was a negative impact on the perception of teachers and public education.
- Another response said that it reduced local control while decreasing costs.
- New Berlin said that education has been positively impacted, if districts take advantage of the resources available to them.
- The last response focused on the impact to the teaching field. This response claims that fewer people are going into teaching, or that teachers are finding jobs in other states where teachers are appreciated more. They say it is harder to keep morale up since the enactment of Act 10 and 32.

Q13 - What, in your opinion, could the state do to improve K-12 public education in Wisconsin?
• One response to this question was that the voucher program should be discontinued and that education should be funded as a priority and that teachers should be publicly recognized for the contributions they make to the state.

• Another response said that unfounded mandates should be eliminated and that local control should be reinstated.

• New Berlin suggested that the state superintendent should be appointed by the Governor, for alignment purposes, instead of elected, as they are currently chosen.

• The last response to this question was that over the past seven years nothing has been done to show teachers that they are appreciated. This response says that teachers have only been seeing little increase in salaries over the past seven years.

**WEAC Rep Responses: 4 Respondents**

**Q2 - Please select the top 3 challenges facing your district:**

• 4 votes for Funding Constraints

• 3 votes for Behavioral and Emotional Constraints

• 2 votes for Poverty

**Q3 - How would you gauge the impact of the following legislative actions on your district?**

• Elimination of Collective Bargaining Rights: 4 Very Negative

• Reallocation of State Aid: 1 Very Negative, 2 Negative, 1 Somewhat Negative

• Reduction of Revenue Cap Limit: 2 Very Negative, 2 Negative

**Q4 - How did 2011 Act 10 impact student achievement at your school district? - 3 responses**
Two responses focused on teachers. They mention that experienced teachers retired or relocated following Act 10, meaning these experienced teachers were being replaced with newer teachers. They believe that quality teaching staff is crucial for student success.

Another respondent focused more on the cuts that were seen at their district, emphasizing the cuts to district staff especially their interventionists and specialists.

**Q5 - How did 2011 Act 32 (Biennial Budget) impact student achievement at your school district?: 3 Responses**

- One response focused on how students get less help in the classroom because of less classroom supports (aids/paraprofessionals). They also focused on how with fewer resources, it is now more difficult to purchase new curriculum. They emphasized that these things have impacts on student achievement.
- Another response focused its attention on how the cuts to funding affected teacher benefits. There were increases in teacher pension and health benefits costs, which they attributed to higher teacher turnover and a teacher shortage.
- The last response included elements of both the previous responses, highlighting teacher turnover, low teacher morale, and cuts to programs and the negative impacts this has on student achievement.

**Q6 - How did 2011 Act 10 impact your district's ability to recruit and retain qualified staff?: 4 Responses**

- All of the responses to this question yielded similar answers. The responses say that retaining teachers has been made more difficult since Act 10 and that teachers are more mobile today than they were pre-Act 10. Teachers don't know when or if they will receive a
raise because of the elimination of traditional salary schedules so they are more willing to move from district to district in order to get increases in salary.

Q7 - How did 2011 Act 32 impact your district's ability to recruit and retain qualified staff?: 4 Responses

- The responses to this question said that their answers to question 6 also applied to this question.
- One response stated that less funding led to an increase in the teacher:student ratio.
- Another response was regarding the changes made to teacher salary schedules. Districts were offering higher initial salaries but promised little growth, so the only way for teachers to get a pay raise was from moving to a different district.

Q8 - How did 2011 Act 10 impact the overall success of your district?: 3 Responses

- The responses to this question varied some.
- One response focused on the impacts to rural schools, saying that poorer schools are not being offered the advantages that richer schools are and that this is hurting their students.
- Another response simply was that it “quite negatively” impacted the district’s success.
- Another said that Act 10 actually did not negatively impact their district’s success. Instead they say that it has become harder to maintain pre-Act 10 success, now that districts are seeing less funding. This respondent also says that teachers have been affected—morale has gone down, anxiety and depression has gone up and people are leaving the profession at a higher rate than before.

Q9 - How did 2011 Act 32 impact the overall success of your district?: 3 Responses
One response said that their teachers were dedicated to teaching and that the community stands behind them, so in spite of what has been occurring with Wisconsin education policy, teachers have been able to continue to provide a quality education to their students.

Another response said that Act 32 has “quite negatively” impacted the success of their district.

The last response is a repeat of the response from the previous question, saying that Act 32 actually did not negatively impact their district’s success. Instead they say that it has become harder to maintain pre-Act 10 success, now that districts are seeing less funding. This respondent also says that teachers have been affected though-- morale has gone down, anxiety and depression has gone up and people are leaving the profession at a higher rate than before.

**Q10 - What were the most significant adjustments made by your district following the passage of Wisconsin’s 2011 Act 10 Budget Repair Bill?: 3 Responses**

- One response said that they have worked to make curriculum readily available for people to come in and look at. They also have moved towards using data in order to show their district strengths and weaknesses.

- Another response mentions a new policy worked out to reinstate a pre-Act 10-like collective bargaining program. This approach works to “replace the loss of collective bargaining with a robust, collaboratively employee relations model that continued the union's role as an employee voice in workplace issues.” This is in an attempt to mitigate the damages Act 10 caused to collective bargaining rights.
• The last response focused on the pay cut that teacher took following Act 10. Teachers were expected to pay more for their retirement, increased insurance premiums and a lack of salary raises.

Q11 - What were the most significant adjustments made by your district following the passage of Wisconsin’s 2011 Act 32, the 2011 state biennial budget?: 3 Responses

• Two of the responses focused on teacher compensation being cut, through increases in health care costs and retirement plans.

• Another response focused on a local referendum that was passed in order to mitigate the impacts of Act 32. This referendum was used to compensate for the decrease state aid received by their district.

Q12 - Overall, how has state-level public policy impacted K-12 education in Wisconsin since 2010?: 4 Responses

• One response to this focused on the cuts that teachers received in compensation and the adjustments that have been made by teachers’ unions. This respondent even went so far as to say that they are happy they are close to retirement because of the long battle over the past few years regarding education policy. They say that they would hate to be a new teacher at this time because they are having to fight for the same things that were being fought for 40 years ago.

• Another response was that these policies have weakened the Wisconsin education system, a system that has a reputation for being a strong public education system over the past few decades.
Another response said that there has been a decline in the teaching experience and teacher morale and that fewer people now want to pursue the profession. Now there is a shortage of qualified teachers.

Another respondent said that state level public policy has taken away from public education and that it has even been funneling funds into private schools through the voucher system. They also say that new policies such as staff evaluation, and school accountability policies has added a greater burden to districts who are working with less funding but are still expected to do more.

Q13 - What, in your opinion, could the state do to improve K-12 public education in Wisconsin?: 3 Responses

- Two responses suggest that stopping the flow of public funding into private and religious schools must be stopped. They suggest that that money is meant for public education and that public education cannot grow if it is not being properly supported.
- Other suggestions are that teachers must be better supported. This can be through higher, more competitive wages and better benefits. Creating fair funding formulas is also suggested, in order to address issues of poverty, special education and transportation.

Survey Analysis

We did not see a high response rate for the surveys we sent out. We sent out surveys to 29 superintendents throughout the state and received 4 responses. We also sent out 32 surveys to WEAC representatives throughout the state and received 4 responses. While there is no way to know why exactly we received such a limited number of responses, it may have to do with the
political nature of the topic. Considering the controversy and turmoil that ensued following Act 10 and the way the public responded to Act 10 and Act 32, these policies have proven to be divisive topics. Another possibility that could have led to a limited response, is turnover at the district level. Many current superintendents were not superintendents pre-Act 10 or worked for a different district when Act 10 and Act 32 were enacted, which may have limited their ability to answer some of the questions. Additionally this was a survey that was distributed online, to people we have no relationship with, making it easy to disregard. We did send out numerous reminder emails after the initial distribution of the survey in order to increase the number of responses.

After looking at the responses from both superintendents and WEAC representatives, it seems that the responses from unions are more uniform than the responses from superintendents. With the superintendents responses, there was a clear outlier with New Berlin. Through New Berlin’s responses it appears that their district was able to utilize other methods to improve their district, such as ESCO projects and that overall the superintendent had a positive view on the changes that Act 10 and Act 32 brought to their district. But there were not enough responses to the survey questions to make any reliable generalizations about how superintendents view Act 10. For the WEAC representative responses, there were no clear outliers. Although questions did not always elicit the same response, their general beliefs and opinions on Act 10 and Act 32 remained consistent. Many of their responses focused on the negative impacts that resulted from Act 10 and Act 32 and what these acts had taken away from Wisconsin education, not what it had been able to offer Wisconsin. The responses tended to be more negative from WEAC representatives.

One of the biggest differences in the responses between superintendents and WEAC representatives was the opinions they held on the elimination of collective bargaining rights. After
researching literature on Act 10, these differences were not surprising. Superintendents tended to have more positive opinions on the elimination of collective bargaining rights. From the literature we read and the responses we received this can likely be attributed to the increased control that districts gained with the elimination of collective bargaining rights. Districts were able to use this increased control to balance their budgets and reduce district spending. Literature and survey responses show that in order to increase district savings, districts changed salary schedules, decreased teacher benefits or increased the amount staff had to pay in to benefit programs, and cut staff and programs. While these efforts were made in an effort to save districts money both superintendents and WEAC representative acknowledge the adverse effects this has had on teaching staff.

When looking at the responses from superintendents in comparison to responses from WEAC representatives, it is clear that despite some differing opinions, the focus of their answers were often similar. Act 10 and Act 32 greatly impacted teachers in Wisconsin and both superintendents and WEAC representatives acknowledge this. Both groups mention the cuts to teacher compensation and benefits. While superintendents have a more positive view on the elimination of collective bargaining rights, which made changes to salary schedules and benefits possible, they still address the challenges teachers are facing with less promising salary schedules and worse benefit packages. Both WEAC and superintendents responses emphasize the changes to the workforce of teachers. They expressed concern over fewer people entering the field of education and the ability to fill open positions in their districts. Both groups of respondents also emphasized the affect Act 10 and Act 32 has had on teacher morale. Responses expresses that teachers were left feeling unappreciated and attacked following Act 10. Teachers felt the narrative around teachers in
2011 villainized them. While these two groups of respondents were quite differently impacted by Act 10 and Act 32, both saw that the impacts were numerous for Wisconsin education.

**Interview Results: Political Analysis**

**Republican Rhetoric**

Republican proponents of Act 10 insisted that reducing collective bargaining rights for teachers would improve education by eliminating job protections such as tenure. As Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker claimed, “we no longer have seniority or tenure. That means we can hire and fire based on merit, we can pay based on performance. That means we can put the best and the brightest in our classrooms and we can pay them to be there” (Madland et. al 2017, 3). However, the facts suggest that Act 10 has not had its promised, positive impact on the quality of education produced in the state. The elimination of bargaining rights did shift power from the teachers to superintendents; however in the analysis of data collected by the Wisconsin Department of Instruction (DPI), it is found that teachers have received far less compensation since the passage of Act 10: median compensation for Wisconsin teachers has decreased by 12.6%, median benefits were cut by 18.6%, and median salary fell by 2.6% (Madland et. al 2017, 5). The significant loss of remuneration for teachers in combination with with 10.5% of teachers leaving the profession did not provide encouragement for the best and brightest students to become teachers and remain in the profession throughout their working careers; the data actually shows that the law has had the opposite effect by devaluing teachers and driving out talent from public schools. Moreover, though Governor Walker claimed that, “we are investing more money into education than ever before in the
history of Wisconsin,” the Budget Reconstruction Bill of 2011 was actually the largest funding cut to public education in the history of the state. PolitiFact analyzed Governor Walker’s statements pertaining to Act 10, and found that on of his only true claims was “Act 10 reforms have saved taxpayers some $3 billion dollars” (Kertscher 2015). This is not enough for the scholars at the Center for American Progress, a prominent think tank established in Washington, DC, to think that Act was was a productive piece of legislation. The institution warned that, “Wisconsin Act 10 should serve as a cautionary tale, as such a law can harm both public servants and the public that they serve.”

Democratic Interviews

Wisconsin Democratic representatives are outspokenly opposed to the 2011 Act 10, and see the ramifications of the legislation as destruction to public education in the state. The interviews conducted during the research process exposed the specific qualms that the democrats had with the bill. The first interview administered was with Representative Chris Taylor.

Representative Taylor serves Wisconsin’s 76th assembly district, which covers the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the Isthmus, and surrounding residential neighborhoods. Chris Taylor was not only an appropriate interviewee as the congresswoman for a major metropolitan area in the state, yet during the interview she acknowledged that she originally ran for public office because she was inspired by the public servants that were protesting Act 10 in 2011. She was concerned that, “[her] kids would be failed by these legislators who have no regard for public education.” Representative Taylor both has Madison public schools in her constituency, and she has two children enrolled in the school district. She explained that though Madison Metro Schools had a 10% funding cut as a direct result of Act 10 and the Budget Reconstruction Bill of 2011, Madison
had some excess funds that saved them. However, there were many schools within the state that did not have such savings available, as such, depended more heavily on state aid. The Representative claimed that the loss of funding in combination with the elimination of collective bargaining has been particularly devastating for schools in Milwaukee, and insisted that, “Act 10 was an attack on public education.” Her evidence to back this claim was that: there are fewer teachers going into education, there has been a 10% drop in compensation for teachers, increases in healthcare costs, and Act 10 has created a hostile attitude towards public school teachers. Though these are impacts that were felt across the state, Chris Taylor argued that lower socioeconomic districts were disproportionately affected by this legislation. She explained that high-income school districts were able to absorb the education cuts with higher property taxes, but low-income areas were unable to make up for the money that has been siphoned off.

Particularly, Representative Chris Taylor declared that “there is a racial bias against Milwaukee,” and the Milwaukee Public schools are being penalized for “disproportionately serving students in poverty, and struggling with other issues associated with low-socioeconomic status.” Without state aid, Milwaukee schools do not have the resources to provide necessary services to the children in their school district. In order to solve such educational challenges, Congresswoman Taylor suggests the state needs: legislation requiring smaller class sizes, tax free income on the first 40,000 of public school teachers’ income, and to make schools the heart of the community. She insists that these actions would not only show children and prospective teachers that the state is investing in their futures, but it would also allow Wisconsin to thrive economically. Although Chris Taylor does not think it is plausible to pass progressive education policy in this climate while
republicans control congress, however, she provided reassurance that “[she] is going to be proactive” in the fight for quality public education in Wisconsin.

The supplementary congressional interview that was conducted was with Senator Lena Taylor, who serves Wisconsin’s fourth district. The fourth district includes Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS), which as Representative Chris Taylor alluded to and DPI data analysis showed, serves an economically disadvantaged population. More than 50% of students attending MPS receive free and reduced lunch, there is a negative correlation between students in poverty and school success, the district received a failing report card by the state, and yet, as a result of Act 10 and Act 32, MPS had a funding decrease of 10%. Senator Lena Taylor does not think that Act 10 was a productive piece of legislation and offered alternative solutions to better public education.

In the interview Senator Taylor claimed that across Wisconsin, teachers are obtaining “lower salaries, less experience, and higher exit rates” after Act 10 compared to the period prior. This assertion is backed by DPI data that shows teachers in Milwaukee are leaving the profession at a higher rate than the rest of the state, and lost 700 teachers immediately following Act 10. The Senator is concerned that Act 10 has made Wisconsin a less competitive place to work, especially in the public sector, as a result of Act 10. A method Lena Taylors as a way to catalyze stronger educational outcomes is her own LOVE and FAITH initiative. The goal of this project is to establish schools as community hubs that provide services to improve educational outcomes by addressing barriers to educational attainment such as poverty and lack of access to nutritious foods. The Senator is making a statement that the public schools are a focal part of the community and an area that should be invested in.
Quantitative Data Analysis

Overview

Our quantitative analysis largely focused on the interpretation of secondary data collected and aggregated by the Department of Public Instruction. These data range from demography, school finance, student achievement, and school success, to staffing. Our efforts gather and sift through these data aimed at uncovering the numerical results of Act 10 and Act 32 in terms of statewide impact, to investigate potential correlation and causation between different variables, and identify trends within the relevant information pertaining to K-12 public education. Through this analysis, we are able to better understand the educational landscape statewide, as well as the different challenges faced by different communities and school districts, and how these challenges may inform legislative and executive decision-makers in terms of addressing the prevailing issues in public primary and secondary education. Furthermore, we explored how statewide trends intersected, or differed, from the experiences and conditions of various school districts. Through this analysis, we were able to uncover discrepancies in educational equity based on location - not only from school district to school district, but between geographical, spatial, and cultural identification as well. Additionally, our scope included an examination of discrepancies between racial and socioeconomic demographics, with a particular focus on the disproportionate impacts and policy implications of Wisconsin’s 2011 Act 10 and Act 32. The bulk of our data was collected from the Department of Public Instruction’s public information database, which is housed within its state accountability report card assessment data collections and reports.
Shifting Demographics

The state of Wisconsin has seen dramatic changes to its student populations in the past 15 years. From intrastate migration to increased homelessness, demographic shifts have reshaped the educational landscape in Wisconsin and have driven the emergence of more strenuous challenges. As we aim to analyze the educational ramifications of Act 10 and Act 32, these rising challenges provide insight into how these changes intersect with the effects of this legislation and its policy impacts. The magnitude of the consequences of Act 10 and Act 32, whether positive or negative, are largely determined by locational and demographic differences play a major role in shaping educational outcomes. As such, our research has identified a series of emerging challenges that should be identified and considered in the development and implementation of education policy.

RISING STUDENT POVERTY

The Department of Public Instruction has reported that the ratio of economically disadvantaged students has doubled between 2001 and 2012, from 21% of the student population to 43%. In the 2005-2006 school year, we see that most district student populations range between two categories: 20 percent or below free and reduced meal eligible, and 20-40 percent free and reduced meal eligible (Free and Reduced Lunch or FRL). These designations seem to be gathered
based on location. In Eastern and Southeastern Wisconsin, we see a large number of districts with 20% or less of their student population qualifying for free and reduced lunch, with the exception of larger cities such as Milwaukee, Racine, Kenosha, Madison, and Green Bay. Included within this region are many suburban-majority districts located on the fringes of these larger cities. Particularly in terms of Milwaukee, this is emblematic of racial and socioeconomic segregation and white flight from urban centers. In the Northwestern, Central, and Northeastern portions of the state, which are measurably more rural than that of Eastern and Southeastern Wisconsin, display higher levels of student poverty, with most student populations ranging between 20% - 40% economically disadvantaged. A larger number of districts display 41% - 50% or 51% - 70% of student populations as economically disadvantaged, though the gross number of students is likely less than that of the metropolitan areas in Wisconsin’s east and southeast.

Five years later, the 2010 - 2011 school year saw an increased number of districts displaying higher levels of student poverty. Significant numbers of rural districts in the northern half of the state that once were displayed a moderate 20% - 40% of economically disadvantaged students now show poverty levels within the 41% - 50% or 51% - 70% brackets. Larger metropolitan districts resemble growth in overall poverty exhibited throughout the state, with urban districts such as
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Milwaukee at more than 70% economically disadvantaged, with Madison, Green Bay, and Racine serving student populations with 51% - 70% economically disadvantaged. Milwaukee is joined by Menominee Indian, Bayfield, Beloit, Siren, Winter, and Webster as districts with more than 70% of the student population economically disadvantaged. In addition, the swath of school districts in the southeastern and eastern regions has seen a significant decrease in the number of districts with 20% or less economically disadvantaged -- though, select suburban districts surrounding the metropolitan districts do remain at 20% free and reduced lunch (FRL) or less.

Though this maps of clarity makes individual districts hard to distinguish, the map shows that just three years later, in the 2013 - 2014 school year, the new normal throughout the state in terms of student poverty has visibly increased. Less than a decade ago, the majority of districts served student populations with 21% - 40% or 20% or less of the enrollment economically disadvantaged. Eight years later, a vast majority of the state’s student population is attending a school in which their enrollment of economically disadva-

Figure 6, Source: WI DPI
ntaged students is near or over 50%. This displays an alarming increase in student poverty throughout the state and presents a growing challenge to school districts and the state government.

**IMPACT:** Student poverty presents a serious challenge to school districts. Studies have shown that economically disadvantaged students require more resources, more supports through staffing and interventions, in order to maintain levels of student achievement and growth consistent with their non-economically disadvantaged peers (Murray, Evans, Schwab. 1998; Paik, Phillips. 2002). Student achievement data show that economically disadvantaged students consistently underperform compared to their non-economically disadvantaged peers -- this disparity is also found amongst different student populations based on race and ethnicity, and is known as the achievement gap. This achievement gap between Wisconsinites is distinct, and poses as a clear signal that not all students are succeeding under the current educational system, and those successes are largely determined by socioeconomic status.

Poverty has also shown to impact school success as a whole, as well as individual student success, as measured by Wisconsin’s Department of Public Instruction. Schools with greater amounts of poverty tend to be less successful in preparing their students for life after school -- a result that studies again suggest can be combated with equitable funding mechanisms (Murray, Evans, Schwab. 1998). Furthermore, social and emotional wellbeing as well as behavioral outcomes are worse for economically disadvantaged students, and early interventions with at-risk students is required in order to preserve student growth and success for the rest of the students primary and secondary education (Rouse, Fantuzzo. 2009). As a result of the educational impacts associated with poverty, the state’s education experts suggest that funding models and mechanisms should be weighted based on local poverty levels.
DECLINING STUDENT ENROLLMENT & POVERTY

These maps exhibit two different measures in which Wisconsin’s changing demographics intersect to cause particularly challenging issues. The map on the left shows the percent decrease or increase in student enrollment between 2001 and 2012. The darker the pink, the greater the ratio of students that have left the district in the decade prior to 2012. The darker the green, the greater the influx in student enrollment since 2001. The map of the right is another depiction of student poverty (percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch), with a more defined scale than the previous maps on student poverty.

What we can interpret through these two maps, is that the school districts that are experiencing the greatest decrease in student enrollment are those which have the greatest ratio of economically disadvantaged students. Accordingly, school districts with the greatest levels of student
enrollment growth, display lower levels of student poverty. This represents a serious issue for districts with declining enrollment.

Under the current funding formula, school districts with shrinking enrollments are subject to a disproportionate decrease in state aid. Conversely, growing districts are rewarded with additional funding for the growing number of students they serve. The issue is that school districts with declining enrollment often face a diseconomy of scale -- the decrease in student enrollment results in diminishing budget that is not necessarily commensurate with the staffing and programmatic needs of the district. What’s more, is that these districts facing the decreasing enrollments are overwhelmingly rural and urban districts with high levels of poverty. Both of these districts, though geographically and culturally distinct, face a dilemma in which the rate at which their funding wanes, is faster than that of the waning student population needs. Rural schools are faced with higher transportation costs that are unaccounted for, while metropolitan districts are faced with their own unique costs related to operating efficiently, while also serving all of the needs of its students through adequate staffing and programming.

We see an urban district such as Milwaukee Public Schools, the largest school district in the state, joining rural districts around the state with significantly decreasing enrollments. Conversely, suburban districts, which see lower levels of student poverty and higher levels of school success, receive a boost in aid associated with their growth in enrollment. The maps indicate that the school districts with enrollment growth are those with universities or colleges located in or around them. Primary and secondary schools located near post-secondary institutions are also subject to other
benefits due to their close proximity, such as partnerships related to programming, access to student teachers, and other auxiliary educational benefits.

**IMPACT:** School districts with the highest levels of need, in terms of resources, are receiving a disproportionate decrease to their state aid due to their decreasing enrollment. In other words, the school districts with the highest levels of poverty are seeing a disproportionate reduction in their state funding that negatively impacts their ability to serve their students. As aforementioned, studies indicate that districts with high levels of poverty necessitate greater allotments of per pupil funding in order to mitigate student risks, meet student needs, and ensure that economically disadvantaged students achieve student growth and proficiencies commensurate with their non-economically disadvantaged peers. In other words, districts with the highest level of disproportionate need for resources are subject to disproportionate decreases in allocated resources.

This demographic shift presents a significant challenge to state policymakers, in addition to school districts, and likely warrants a scrutinization of the state’s funding mechanism. If schools with the highest needs continue to be penalized for their declining enrollment, the state will see a growing gap between the success of students based on their location. While students located in growing, relatively affluent, suburban school districts will continue to see positive growth and educational outcomes, we will see further disparities in success at Wisconsin’s high poverty, high enrollment loss districts. In order to adequately address the disparities between student and school success, funding mechanisms should ensure that each district is provided with funding that recognizes the different challenges associated with their local student demography.
Another alarming demographic change facing Wisconsin schools across the state is student homelessness and high mobility. Fifty percent (50%) of Wisconsin’s homeless students are located in just ten of Wisconsin’s public K-12 School districts.

Consistent with the advanced needs of students and schools with high levels of poverty, high mobility amongst student populations presents further logistical, resource, and staffing challenges for school districts. Furthermore, similar to socioeconomic status, homelessness and high mobility has proven to have a negative impact on student achievement, forming yet another achievement gap (Paik, Phillips. 2002). Evidently, homeless students require additional resources and supports in order to realize proficient student achievement and year-to-year growth (Rouse, Fantuzzo. 2009; Paik, Phillips. 2002).

**IMPACT:** Student homelessness presents a unique challenge for districts as well in terms or resource allocation. Homeless and highly mobile students are in need of various interventions and social services in order to ensure that they realize positive academic growth and educational
outcome. It is certainly not the fault of the child, nor is it appropriate to place such blame on the student or family -- however, it is the responsibility of every district to provide a quality education to each student and as such it is necessary that appropriate funding mechanisms and coordinated social services are in place to ensure the success of these vulnerable student populations.
As a result of both Act 10 and Act 32, the state legislature approved a funding package for K-12 public school districts that represented a decrease in state aid amounting to approximately $800-900 million in nominal dollars. According to the state Legislative Fiscal Bureau and Wisconsin Budget Project, after an adjustment for inflation, when compared to funding levels from 2011, the decrease in the next 6 years represented a $2.6 billion decrease in state aid to real dollars (Legislative Fiscal Bureau, Jan 14 2016). This determined to be the largest cut in K-12 education funding in Wisconsin state history. This decrease in state funding is represented in the first (top) chart, which displays the difference in state general purpose revenue dedicated to school districts compared 2011 and adjusted for inflation.
The second chart (bottom) chart displays the annual change in revenue limits afforded to school districts. Revenue limits dictate the amount of revenue that school districts can generate from local tax levies in addition to the funding they receive from the state. As depicted, the revenue limit, which was established in the 1993, saw consistent growth by approximately $200 per pupil in its first 18 years of existence, until Act 10 and Act 32 in 2011. In 2011, Act 32, the state’s 2011 - 2013 biennial budget mandated a decrease in revenue limits by over $500 per pupil. This prohibited local school districts from recapturing the school funding they lost as a result of the decrease in state aid, effectively forcing districts to cut expenditures, which was commonly done through decreasing salaries and benefits to staff as well as eliminating staffing positions, increasing class sizes, and reducing educational programming.

This map provided by the Department of Public Instruction illustrates the district to district impact associated with the decrease in general purpose state aid to K-12 public school
districts. As depicted, the vast majority of districts lie in the 0% to 10% decreased range, however, it is important to note that the vast majority of these districts received between a 7%-10% decrease in state aid, with the average decrease hovering around a 8% decrease (Reschovsky. 2011). The school districts that received the greatest decrease in state aid are dispersed throughout the state, from the Madison Metropolitan School District (-13.3% change in funding) to Oconomowoc (-21.5% change in funding), to Wittenberg-Birnamwood (-13% change in funding), to Unity School District (-11.6% change in funding).

The districts with the greatest percentage decrease in state funding seem to not have much in common. However, if we look at school districts that received an increase in state funding, there are some peculiar discrepancies. For instance, multiple suburban school districts with smaller numbers of students in poverty and higher report card scores received an increase in state aid, as opposed to a decrease similar to what the rest of the state’s districts received. School districts that were designated as exceeding expectations by the Department of Public Instruction’s report card accountability system, such as Pewaukee (11.5% increase in funding), Elmbrook (4.9% increase in funding), and Mequon-Thiensville (4.9% increase in funding) received additional funding, while multiple districts that were designated as failing by DPI at least once between 2011 - 2016, all received decreases. Districts such as Milwaukee (-8.9% change in funding), Bayfield (-10% change in funding), Racine (-8.7% change in funding), and Menominee Indian (-10% change in funding) all faced a decrease in state aid, serve student populations with vast majorities designated as economically disadvantaged, are all majority-minority school districts, and have all been designated as a failing school district (WISEDash. 2011-2016).
**IMPACT:** In other words, while successful school districts with low-levels of student poverty were provided with an increase in state aid, struggling school districts serving student populations with higher levels of need for additional resources and supports received a decrease in state aid. This illustrates significant equity issues and is emblematic of systemic exacerbation of inequalities between the educational outcomes of school districts and students around the state of Wisconsin.
**Teachers & Staff**

As a result of the decrease in state funding and the mandated decrease in revenue limits, each school district was responsible for adjusting their budget to accommodate the reduction in revenues and expenditures. While districts utilized the cost-cutting measures afforded through the elimination of collective bargaining rights and newly required levels of contributions to pension and benefits, these measures, more often than not, did not allow for districts to make up for the full loss in funding. Consequently, districts were compelled to eliminate staffing positions. The elimination of staffing positions reaches beyond the face value of simply having less teachers and staff -- class sizes were increased, educational programs were nixed, and at-risk and vulnerable student populations were often without the necessary supports, such as an aid (Reschovsky. 2011).

The chart below displays the number of staffing positions eliminated throughout the state since the Great Recession, as reported by the Department of Public Instruction.

![Significant Staff Reductions](image)

Figure 12, Data from WI DPI
The impact of Act 10 and Act 32 in terms of reduction of staff is quite evident, with over 3,500 positions eliminated statewide in the 2011-2012 school year alone. The Department of Public Instruction also reported that 311 out of 426 school districts throughout the state would see a decrease in staffing (DPI Report. April 2012). This can is depicted in the map displayed to the right. This indicates that the cost cutting measures provided by Act 10 failed to accommodate for the magnitude of the decrease in state aid and revenue limits for approximately ¾ of all school districts in Wisconsin. School districts like Milwaukee and Racine highlight the magnitude of some of these cuts, as they collectively laid off over 600 hundred employees (Herzog. 2011). Districts that did not see a decrease in staffing positions often reduced expenditures through large retirement cohorts, the elimination of educational programming, or steep reductions in teacher and staff pay (WISEstaff. Archived Staff Salary & Benefits; Reschovsky. 2011).

Another result of Act 10 and Act 32, was the reduction of salaries and benefits for teachers and staff that were not laid off. Data collected and analyzed from the Department of Public Instruction reveal that, statewide, the average salary decreased and has largely remained stagnant since 2011, while benefits have been cut by several thousand dollars, and have not returned to
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pre-Act 10 levels. Furthermore, while the trend of less and less young people pursuing a profession in education is nationwide, stemming from around the beginning of the Great Recession, these reforms have not positively addressed this prevailing issue in K-12 public education -- anecdotal evidence suggests that Act 10 has further exacerbated the younger generations’ declining interest in pursuing a career in education (DePillis. 2017).

IMPACT: In summary, Act 10 and Act 32 has led to massive reductions in staffing statewide, an increase in class sizes, and a reduction in educational programming. Broadly accepted studies provide evidence that these factors negatively impact student achievement and other educational outcomes, such as post-secondary readiness and behavioral conduct. Moreover, Act 10 and Act 32 do not address the teacher and staff shortage facing Wisconsin -- and may even exacerbate this emerging issue. Quality educators are directly linked to student success, and with less young people pursuing a career in education coupled with large retirement cohorts following Act 10, we see an increase in inexperienced educators and staff, as well as a decrease in the pool of available substitutes (Darling-Hammond. 2001). This has led to emergency revisions to licensure requirements and an easing of restrictions on who can and cannot qualify as an educator in the state of Wisconsin. Act 10 and Act 32 do not address the prevailing issues related to staffing needs throughout Wisconsin, and likely exacerbates the challenges that districts face.
School Success & Student Achievement

In the state of Wisconsin, school success is measured by the Department of Public Instruction’s district and school report cards. These “report cards” evaluate four significant measures of school success: student achievement, student growth, closing the gaps, and postsecondary readiness. These different measures are gathered through various standardized tests and evaluative assessments that are then calculated through a complex algorithm that weighs different aspects of the report card depending on different measures depending on individual demographics.

Ultimately, this report card is encapsulated by a single score, called the “overall accountability rating (see image to right). This score indicates whether a district is failing to meet expectations, meets few expectations, meets expectations, exceeds expectations, or significantly exceeds expectations. Our data analysis consisted of compiling raw scores and data pertaining to school success, as well as demographic data that may impact an individual districts rating. These data ranged from the overall accountability rating, to student achievement and postsecondary readiness, as well as levels of poverty levels and student enrollment demographic information.

Below are two examples of what the state’s report card would look like for an individual school district:
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Figure 15, Source: WI DPI

Figure 16, Source: WI DPI
The graphs below compare each Wisconsin school district’s overall accountability rating, as designated by the Department of Public Instruction, with the percentage of their student population that is economically disadvantaged. What we find in both the 2012 - 2013 and 2015 - 2016 school year is that school poverty levels are correlated with school success. Barring a few exceptions, schools with lower levels of economically disadvantaged students tend to be more successful than those with higher levels of economically disadvantaged students.
In addition to corroborating other studies that indicate school districts with higher levels of students in poverty perform worse than those with lower levels of poverty, these graphs indicate a growing inequality between school districts. Between 2012 and 2016, the number of schools that are either failing, meeting few expectations, or significantly exceeding expectations has changed dramatically. In general schools that were very successful in 2012, have become more successful, while more struggling districts are failing or meeting few expectations in 2016 than in 2012. This is an intriguing finding, as our analysis of state aid reallocation pointed toward an inequality in funding, with failing schools receiving less and successful schools received more.
Similar to the graphs shown above, this graph below depicts the measured student achievement at each school district throughout the state compared with percentage of students that are economically disadvantaged. The range of student achievement is extremely wide, ranging from the mid-twenties to high nineties. Without examining the relationship between poverty and student achievement, it is clear that there is an extremely broad range of educational outcomes from school district to district.

**Student Achievement & Poverty Strongly Correlated**

![Graph showing the correlation between student achievement and the percentage of economically disadvantaged students.](image)

After collecting and analyzing the data, we discovered that there is an even stronger correlation between student achievement and the percentage of student that are economically disadvantaged. The correlation clearly shows that schools with higher levels of student poverty have lower student achievement scores, while schools with lower levels of student poverty have higher levels of achievement. This further supports the notion that school districts with greater numbers of students that are economically disadvantaged are in need of additional resources through an equitable funding mechanism.
Consistent with the correlations between student achievement, school success, and the student ratio of economically disadvantaged students, we have found that each district’s performance in terms of preparing students for life after school (college or postsecondary readiness) is also strongly correlated with each district’s level of student poverty. School districts with higher levels of poverty were more likely to have less students prepared for college or work after high school. Conversely, the lower the poverty levels at a given school district, the higher the postsecondary readiness scores.

This data, along with the preceding data and graphs, display the significant achievement gap associated with poverty. Students who attend schools with higher levels of poverty, statistically, will be less prepared for life after school and see lower levels of student achievement. Act 10 and Act 32, their funding mechanisms and reforms, do not adequately address this issue, and along with issues pertaining to staffing, it is likely that the current funding mechanisms exacerbate these inequalities.
Additionally, we investigated inequalities between different student ethnic and racial identities. There is a wide array of literature pertaining to the achievement gap as it relates to differential educational outcomes between student populations based on race, so, we decided to explore the intersectionality between school success and different ethnic and racial populations.

We found that students of color made up the vast majority of student populations attending school districts that were designated as failing. These schools that were designated as failing also all served student populations that were majority economically disadvantaged. The data is quite alarming, as white students make up approximately 70% of the student population, while black and hispanic student make up approximately nine and twelve percent of the student population. Despite this, black students make up more than half of the student population attending a failing school, while hispanic students are also disproportionately represented in enrollment in failing schools.
Moreover, our data shows that all minority populations are more likely to attend a school district that fails to meet expectations than white students. Black students are significantly more likely to attend a failing school district, than any other race, and are more likely to attend a failing school than not. Additionally, nearly ¾ of Wisconsin’s Hispanic students attend a school district that is designated as failing or meeting few expectations. White students, on the other hand, were the least likely to attend a school that is failing or meeting few expectations.

What this shows, is that students of color are disproportionately impacted by the reallocation of state aid associated with Act 32, as well as the reforms associated with Act 10. As we know, failing school districts received significant decreases to their state aid in 2011 -- and with students of color making up the majority of the student populations at these districts, this exhibits immense racial inequalities that were exacerbated by the funding changes associated with Act 32.
Summary of Impacts

- Provided Superintendents More Flexibility in Managing District Budget
  - Through the elimination of collective bargaining, district administrators were afforded more flexibility

- Reduced the Deficit and Balanced the Budget
  - The Governor’s Budget did mitigate the deficit and reduce taxes

- Rural Schools Disproportionately Impacted By Act 10 & Act 32
  - Rural schools face declining enrollment and increasing poverty

- Students of Color Disproportionately Impacted By Act 10 & Act 32
  - Students of color are more likely to attend a school that is failing or meets few expectations
    - This number of schools has increased since 2011

- Staffing & Programs Reduced
  - Reduction of Educational Opportunities, Larger Class Sizes, Less Classroom Support
  - Wealthier districts were more likely to retain (and recruit) staff, programming

- Widening Inequality Between School Districts
  - Wealthy schools are becoming more successful
  - Poor schools are becoming less successful

After aggregating and analyzing data pertaining to Act 10 and Act 32 and their impacts on K-12 public education throughout Wisconsin, we attempted to summarize the identifiable implications through a cost-benefit analysis. What we have found, is that, while Act 10 reforms allowed for a reduction of the state deficit, the balancing of the budget, and additional flexibility for district administrators in terms of staffing, these changes came at a substantial cost.

Although some schools were able to accommodate for the reductions in state aid, the vast majority of school districts were forced to adjust. These adjustments usually resulted in direct or indirect consequences for academic programming or educational services, ranging from the elimination of support staff and classroom teachers, increases in class sizes, and the elimination of
educational programs. Moreover, the impacts to various districts are not uniform, with disproportionate negative repercussions to school districts with higher levels of student poverty and declining enrollments. In other words, rural school districts and students of color were incommensurately adversely impacted by Act 10 and Act 32. As seen in our data analysis, this has led to what looks like a widening of inequality between school districts, with successful districts realizing more success, while struggling schools are regressing even further.

**Discussion: Policy Recommendations**

Our determination, through qualitative and quantitative analysis, is that Act 10 and Act 32 do not address the chief prevailing issues in K-12 education in Wisconsin, and in some cases, these pieces of legislation exacerbate these issues. So, as part of our analysis, we gathered input from education professionals, legislators, and Department of Public Instruction documents and data that informed our policy recommendations to improve public education in Wisconsin.

**Equitable Funding Formula (Fair Funding School Finance Proposal)**

First and foremost, it is our recommendation that the state adopt a more equitable, transparent, and predictable funding formula. The current funding formula uses the Department of Public Instruction’s report cards as criteria for performance funding, which, in their 2013 presentation on the Governor’s biennial budget proposal the DPI notes, is not their purpose. Their primary use, the DPI states, is as a tool for school districts to improve, not as criteria for “high stakes funding decisions” (DPI 2013-2015 Budget Proposal Presentation). The formula should not penalize failing districts and disproportionately favor affluent, successful districts, as it currently does. The funding
formula should provide public schools with consistent growth in revenue limits to account for year to year growth in costs, with either an annual increase of 2% or by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) if it is greater than 2%. The formula should also weight for local poverty, offering additional funding in accordance with the student enrollment poverty ratios -- we support the Fair Funding School Finance Proposal’s suggestion of a 30% weighting, or 0.3 FTE per student. Additionally, the state should guarantee a minimum dollar amount in state funding provided per pupil in order to ensure adequate funding for each district regardless of location, and to reduce local property tax burdens. This funding formula would increase support for rural schools, as well as schools with declining enrollment and high levels of poverty. By providing additional resources to higher cost districts, rural districts will no longer have to go to referenda for operating expenses on a yearly basis, and districts with high levels of poverty will have the resources to meet their students’ heightened needs. Moreover, this funding reform proposal is politically viable. The DPI notes that their Fair Funding proposal would increase state aid to 95% of districts, while all others would be held harmless (their reductions would be more sustainably enforced). This policy recommendation aims to correct the discrepancies and disproportionality invoked by the current funding formula, and does so while maintaining a 0% net tax increase.

**Increase Special Education & Sparsity Reimbursement Rates (2013 AB 772)**

Likewise, we recommend that there be an increase in special education and sparsity reimbursements. As the state grapples with the increased challenges associated with demographic shifts, it is important that we address the achievement gap between special education and non-special education students, as well as the increased need for resources to meet the needs of all of our special education students’ needs, regardless of location or demographic background. Furthermore, rural school
districts, which have higher operational costs, should receive an adequate reimbursement. Again, this measure aims to reduce the need for rural districts to go to referendum each year for operational expenses to cover enhanced costs such as transportation. Supplementary to the equitable funding reform, this policy aims to correct inequalities perpetuated by the current distribution of state funding.

**Teacher Loan Forgiveness (Rural Teacher Loan Forgiveness - 2013 AB 817)**

It is necessary for the state to take significant action to address the teacher and staff shortage it currently faces. While the emergency adjustments to educator licensure may allow for districts to address short-term staffing needs, this is not a sustainable resolution. While the decline of young people entering the field of education has been declining since the Great Recession, Act 10 and Act 32 did not adequately address this issue -- and likely exacerbated the decline in interest among young people. The state should incentivize students to pursue a career in education through a loan forgiveness program. This program would forgive the loans, either partially or completely, of students who studied to become an educator and have spent at least five years working at a school district in the state of Wisconsin. Additionally, the magnitude of the loan forgiveness should take into account the district an individual works at during those required years. Additional relief should be provided to educators who spend their five years working at a rural or failing school district. This policy proposal would begin to address the statewide teacher shortage, while also providing relief to districts that have the hardest time recruiting and retaining qualified staff. Quality teaching is, as previously mentioned, correlated with positive educational outcomes -- this policy aims to increase student achievement and would begin to chip away at the achievement gap. This policy proposal is similar to that of 2013 AB 817, however, it extends the loan forgiveness program to all those who
pursue a career in education and fulfil the associated requirements, with a gradient of support that incentivizes young teachers to commit to teaching at school with the highest need for quality staff.

Further Integration of Social and Educational Services

The achievement gap persists in states and school districts all throughout the United States. This issue is closely aligned with the discrepancies between student experiences related to poverty, race, disability, and other identities. Students who are at a socioeconomic disadvantage tend to, with statistically proven consistency, perform worse in terms of student achievement, student growth, and readiness for life after school. There are many ways for each state and each community to address these issues, and the achievement gap cannot be solved by educational programming alone. Initiatives related to early intervention of at-risk, or vulnerable, student populations is essential to reducing the achievement gap and cultivating positive educational, social, and emotional outcomes. These initiatives and programs range from early childhood education such as pre-school or 4-K, to community-centered schools that encourage broad community buy-in, to other social services that address the needs of those in need. Various bills in the Wisconsin state legislature right now, aim to address some of these issues. Our recommendation is that these programs and initiatives are given meaningful consideration with the understanding that these programs are not just a cost -- they produce a benefit that far outweighs the cost in the long-run. Furthermore, an integration of social and educational services may allow for an increase in governmental efficiency and effectiveness, as it allows for greater intergovernmental collaboration and cost-sharing.
Conclusion

Immediately following the passage of Act 10, hundreds of thousands of public school teachers and other protestors flooded the Wisconsin Capitol and ignited a national dialogue on education policy. Teachers viewed this as a sign that their profession was not valued, while Republicans who passed the bill thought that a merit based system would encourage higher quality outcomes from the classroom. Other states were watching on to see if eliminating collective bargaining rights would improve the quality of public education. The state of Iowa implemented a similar piece of legislation, while the Center for American Progress warned that Act 10 “harms teachers and the students they serve” (Madland 2017, 5). The debate continues today, as this paper connects to the issue by not only providing an analysis of the social and tangible impacts of the 2011 Act 10; however, it also searched for alternative ways to improve K-12 public education in Wisconsin across all school districts.

Governor Walker and Wisconsin Republicans insisted that reducing teachers’ compensation and power within public schools would benefit the state and local districts. Analysis of the data collected from the Wisconsin Department of Instruction suggests that this is not the case, and that the decision to pass Act 10 was not only harmful to teachers, but the funding cuts disproportionately impacted students from low-income districts. Following Act 10, teachers have been leaving the profession at an increased rate; yet, it is not too late for lawmakers to improve education by elevating instructors and the public schools they serve. By supporting teachers, state governments can secure the best and brightest instructors and provide educational advantages to students of all communities. The future of public-education in Wisconsin is currently in question,
yet young congresswomen like Representative Chris Taylor, who insists that “schools are the heartbeat of the community,” and Senator Lena Taylor who describes schools as “the hub for change in the community,” are providing hope by staying proactive in the fight.
Acknowledgements

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- The University of Wisconsin - Madison Geography Department
- Our Anonymous Survey Participants & Education Professionals
- State Representative Chris Taylor
- State Senator Lena Taylor
- The Department of Public Instruction
- The Legislative Fiscal Bureau
- The Legislative Reference Bureau
Wisconsin’s 2011 Act 10: Analysis of Impacts to K-12 Public Education

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2011 Wisconsin Act 10

2011 Wisconsin Act 32
Materials Referenced in Introduction:


2011 Wisconsin Act 10.

Introduced: January 2011 Special Session

Date of enactment: March 11, 2011

Assembly Bill 11 Date of publication: March 25, 2011

Republication: June 28, 2011

2011 Wisconsin Act 32: Biennial State Budget

Date of enactment: June 26, 2011

2011 Assembly Bill 40 Date of Publication: June 30, 2011
Appendix 1: Student Poverty (2005 - 2006)

Figure 4
Appendix 2: Student Poverty (2010 - 2011)

Figure 5
Appendix 3: Student Poverty (2013 - 2014)

Figure 6
Appendix 4: Change in Student Enrollment (2001 - 2012)

Figure 7

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Appendix 5: Percent of Student Enrollment Free & Reduced Lunch (2012)

Figure 8

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Appendix 6: Homeless Student Enrollment in Wisconsin

Figure 9

Homeless Student Enrollment

Data from Department of Public Instruction
Appendix 7: Changes in K-12 Education Funding

Figure 10

K-12 State Funding Compared to 2011

Adjusted for inflation, this chart displays the change in state aid allocated for K-12 education compared to pre-Act 10 funding levels.

$2.6 billion decrease in state aid compared to 2011, adjusted for inflation for the following years.

$528 per pupil decrease in revenue limits in 2011 - 2012 restricts the ability of school districts to make up for the decrease in general state aid with local tax levies.

Data from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Figure 11

Annual Change in Revenue Limits

Reducing the revenue limits prohibits school districts from making up lost state aid with local tax levies.

Revenue Limit Change Per Pupil
Appendix 8: Percent Change in State Aid to Each School District between 2010-2011 and 2011-2012

Figure 2
Appendix 9: Statewide Reductions in Staff

Figure 12

Significant Staff Reductions

School districts adjusted to decreases in state aid and revenue limits by cutting staff positions.

- Teachers
- Aides
- Administrators
- Support Staff

2009-2010: -599
Aides: -355
Administrators: -153
Support Staff: 215

2010-2011: -690
Aides: -43
Administrators: -130
Support Staff: -812

2011-2012: -1676
Aides: -175
Administrators: -785
Appendix 10: Change in FTE per District between 2010-11 and 2011-12

Figure 13
Appendix 11: DPI Report Card Examples

Figure 15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority Areas</th>
<th>District Score</th>
<th>Max Score</th>
<th>State Score</th>
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Figure 16

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Appendix 12: School Success vs. Student Poverty

Figure 17
Appendix 13: School Success vs. Poverty (Part II: Inequality)

Figure 18

Overall Accountability Score vs. Percent Economically Disadvantaged
Department of Public Instruction Report Card Data (2012-2013)

Overall Accountability Score

Fails to Meet Expectations  Meets Few Expectations  Meets Expectations  Exceeds Expectations  Significantly Exceeds Expectations

% Economically Disadvantaged

Department of Public Instruction Report Card Data (15-16)

Overall Accountability Score

Fails to Meet Expectations  Meets Few Expectations  Meets Expectations  Exceeds Expectations  Significantly Exceeds Expectations

% Economically Disadvantaged
Appendix 14: Poverty vs. Student Achievement & Postsecondary Readiness

Figure 19

**Student Achievement & Poverty Strongly Correlated**

Student Achievement vs. Percent Economically Disadvantaged

Department of Public Instruction Report Card Data (15-16)

- Wisconsin School District
- Trendline for Percent Economically Disadvantaged $r^2 = 0.625$

$R^2 \approx 0.625$

Figure 20

**College Readiness & Poverty Correlated**

Post-Secondary Readiness vs. Percent Economically Disadvantaged

Department of Public Instruction Report Card Data (15-16)

- Wisconsin School District
- Trendline for Percent Economically Disadvantaged $r^2 = 0.503$

$R^2 \approx 0.5$
Appendix 15: School Success & Race

Figure 21

Minority Students Are Majority of Student Enrollment in Failing Schools

This graph depicts the percentage of student populations that attend schools with varying degrees of success based on DPI's annual report cards.

Figure 22

Students of Color Are More Likely To Attend A Failing School

This graph depicts the percentage of student populations that attend schools with varying degrees of success based on DPI's annual report cards.