



# DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Wisconsin State Agency 101

A SERIES PREPARED BY



INSTITUTE FOR REFORMING GOVERNMENT

SEPTEMBER 2022



## TAXPAYER ALERT!

Since 2017, DPI has seen its biennial budget increase by **over \$2 billion**, from \$14.2 billion to \$16.3 billion. This is despite **servicing 18,500 fewer students** and overseeing disastrous drops in math scores and college enrollment beyond pandemic averages.



## STATE AGENCY FAST FACTS

### AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES

The Department of Public Instruction manages sending state funds to local school districts, spending programs, and federal funds for the state.

The agency is also tasked with overseeing school choice programs.

The Department also is responsible for issuing teacher licenses and publishing accountability data such as state report cards.

The DPI's 2021-23 budget is set at **\$16.3 billion** over the biennium and the agency has a total of **643 employees**.

**\$16.3 BILLION BUDGET**

**643 EMPLOYEES ON STAFF**

### DID YOU KNOW?

While the Federal Government only funds about 10% of K-12 funding in Wisconsin, **it funds about half of the positions at DPI.**

Too much of the regulatory burden borne by the State of Wisconsin (and passed on to local school districts) comes from **federal mandates that have not improved what really matters: whether students are learning.**

## ABOUT IRG



INSTITUTE FOR REFORMING GOVERNMENT

The Institute for Reforming Government (IRG) is a 501 (c) 3 and Wisconsin-based think tank established to help remove the onerous barriers and red tape separating the individual from an efficient and functioning government.

Find out more about IRG and view additional state agency briefing materials by visiting [ReformingGovernment.org](https://ReformingGovernment.org)

# WISCONSIN STATE AGENCY 101

## WISCONSIN DEPT. OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

### CLOSE CALL...

In his last budget, Governor Evers proposed to **eliminate the Office of Educational Opportunity**, the statewide charter authorizer through the University of Wisconsin.

He also tried to **freeze enrollment** in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, Racine Parental Choice Program, and Wisconsin Parental Choice Program. Fortunately those efforts failed.

### KEEP AN EYE ON...

The state and its school districts received a **massive influx of covid-relief funds** from the federal government- nearly **\$2.4 Billion!** While the funds were mostly intended to help schools manage distance learning and then return to in-person learning, much of the funds still have not been spent. DPI's website has this information broken down by school district.

**\$2.4  
BILLION  
IN FED  
COVID**

Expect districts to continue to look for flexibilities on how and when these funds can be spent. In addition, once these one-time funds are exhausted, expect many political actors and the media to describe their absence as a "cut."

### REFORM HISTORY

Governor Tommy Thompson's 1995-97 state budget made sweeping reforms to DPI only to have **them rejected by the State Supreme Court**. Governor Walker was able to pass aggressive reforms on topics such as **collective bargaining (Act 10)** reform and **school choice** (which then-Superintendent Tony Evers strongly opposed) while still working with Evers on topics such as school report cards and reading reform.

While the Department has mostly been unchanged in structure, the Legislature has begun providing more specific guidance to DPI about how to manage various programs. However, **there is still significant work to be done**. The Department has minimal direction and oversight over its plan to spend federal dollars.

In addition, education reforms such as additional school choice, empowering parents, further improvements to reading outcomes, accountability for Milwaukee Public Schools, and revamps of how teachers are prepared for the classroom have been mostly stymied by Governor Evers.

### DPI LEADERSHIP



#### Dr. Jill Underly State Superintendent

Dr. Jill Underly was elected State Superintendent of Public Instruction on April 6th, 2021.

She has worked as a high school and middle school social studies teacher, a University of Wisconsin College of Letters & Science academic advisor, a Title I Consultant and assistant director at the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, an elementary principal and Director of Instruction, and most recently, a rural school district superintendent.

### IRG WANTS TO KNOW...

**WHAT WOULD YOU DO??**

If you were in charge for a day, what reforms would you make to the Department? Email Alex Ignatowski, IRG's Director of State Budget and Government Reform, at [AI@reforminggovernment.org](mailto:AI@reforminggovernment.org).