

What can we do?

Advocate

These students need our help. They don't realize their economic status, let alone how it is affecting their education. When we advocate for students, we are being the voice that they don't have.

When we see a problem, inequity, disservice, or conflict, it's up to us to use our voice for them and their success.

Do the Research

States are only required by law to record educational data concerning race and ethnicity--not income.

This means that data regarding students' income is difficult to find and often doesn't exist. It's difficult to solve a problem when you don't even know that it's there.

Research, such as the study done by The Century Foundation, is vital for student success.

Change the Policy

Many problems that we see in this system have to do with the laws that are supposed to help children. Federal and state funding that helps students is managed by legislative policy. When the policies that hold children back are changed, children are able to grow and learn in the best environment possible.

Be the change you want to see

It's up to us to do the good and make the change for the leaders of tomorrow.



Scan the QR code for another in-depth look into income disparities in special education.



Income Disparities in Special Education

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How does an income disparity work?

Overrepresentation

Statistically, there are disproportionately more low income students in special education.

In a study done by The Century Foundation among students in three different states, low income students made up more of the special education population than their non-low income peers.

Underfunding and Lack of Opportunity

Students in special education are often in a different classroom rather than their peers who are not in special education. In turn, the misidentification feeds the isolation, which in turn, hurts students.

When referring to the importance of the funding, lack thereof can affect programs, technology, curriculum, as well as staffing.



Let's look at the local data

Data is comparing Milwaukee School District and Madison Metropolitan School District.

	# Students	% Impoverished Students	% Speced
MKE	69,115	80%	19.3%
MAD	25,497	44.9%	15.1%

2019-20 School Year

School District: Madison Metropolitan School District
Total Special Education Cost: **\$80,663,596**
State Special Education Reimbursement: **\$19,069,920**
Federal Special Education Funding (IDEA): **\$6,089,156**
Unfunded Special Education Cost*: **\$55,504,520**
Unfunded Special Education Cost Per Pupil: **\$2,068**

Student Demographics

Student Enrollment: **26,842**
Students with Disabilities: **14%**
Low-Income: **46%**
English Learners: **20%**
Asian: **9%**
American Indian: **0%**
Black: **18%**
Hispanic: **22%**
White: **42%**

2019-20 School Year

School District: Milwaukee School District
Total Special Education Cost: **\$224,552,664**
State Special Education Reimbursement: **\$45,540,530**
Federal Special Education Funding (IDEA): **\$24,299,102**
Unfunded Special Education Cost*: **\$154,713,032**
Unfunded Special Education Cost Per Pupil: **\$2,072**

Student Demographics

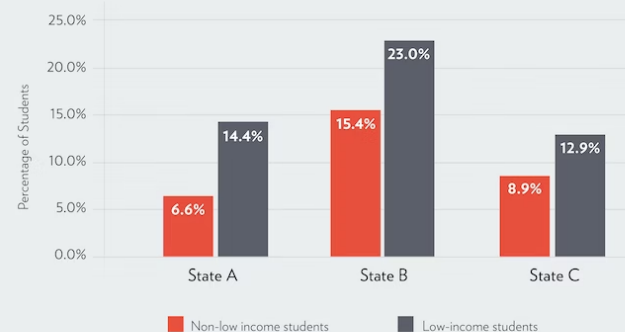
Student Enrollment: **74,683**
Students with Disabilities: **20%**
Low-Income: **84%**
English Learners: **12%**
Asian: **8%**
American Indian: **1%**
Black: **51%**
Hispanic: **27%**
White: **10%**

The special education system has a history of stark underfunding. With this being said, it is clear that these two districts of different sizes, demographics, and income level. Special education programs in districts across the state are underfunded, and in turn, students and their education is effected.

In turn, the data shows the correlation between income and special education. The percentage of economically disadvantaged students in Milwaukee is larger than that in Madison--yet the percentage of students in special education is larger than that in Madison.

Let's look at the data

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS ELIGIBLE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION by Income Status, for State A, State B, and State C (2013-14)



Source: The data presented in this figure are descriptive data obtained from three statewide administrative datasets for the 2013-14 school year.

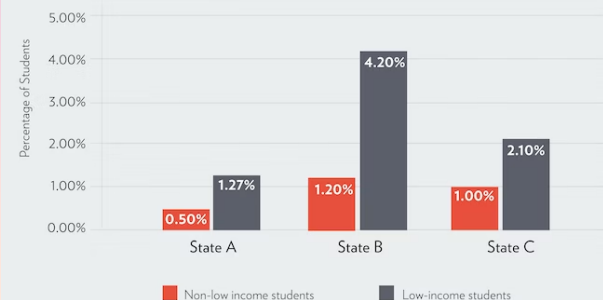
THE CENTURY FOUNDATION

In all three states, low income students made up the majority of the population of special education students.

Even when low income students are not always the majority of the general student body, they are often the majority in special education.

This majority is mostly created on the basis of income.

PLACEMENT IN SUBSTANTIALLY SEPARATE CLASSROOMS FOR ALL STUDENTS by Income Status in State A, State B, and State C (2013-14)



Source: The data presented in this figure are descriptive data obtained from three statewide administrative datasets for the 2013-14 school year.

THE CENTURY FOUNDATION

In all three states low-income students were two times as likely to be placed in a substantially different classroom compared to their non-low income peers.

In State B, low-income students were nearly four times as likely to be placed in a substantially different classroom than their non-low income peers.