

This November, Wisconsin residents will choose between incumbent Governor Scott Walker and challenger Mary Burke for the next governor.

For a number of years, the *Wisconsin School News* has conducted a Q&A with the candidates for governor before each gubernatorial election. We provide written questions and print their responses. In keeping with our past practice, we posed a series of questions to the candidates on a range of education issues. Governor Walker's

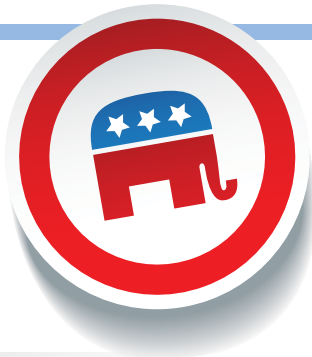
response to the survey request stated "our campaign will not be completing any interest group surveys or interviews." Mary Burke's responses follow.

Why should you be elected governor in November?

Mary Burke: I'm running for governor because I love Wisconsin, and

I know we have everything it takes to be a thriving, top 10 economy in the country. A growing, thriving economy ensures 1) jobs to keep our young people in our communities; 2) strong schools, colleges and universities; 3) safe, vibrant communities and 4) a lower tax burden. But we are lagging the country and other Midwestern states in coming out of





Learn more about Scott Walker by visiting his campaign website: scottwalker.com

Learn more about Mary Burke by visiting her campaign website: burkeforwisconsin.com

the Great Recession. In fact, we're dead last in the Midwest — 10th out of 10 — in private sector job creation over the last three years. I know we can do better than that, but we need leadership that is willing to set aside the politics and focus on common sense solutions.

My top priority is jobs and we won't compete effectively for jobs without strong education. I've spent most of my career in the private sector, and I know what it means to build the Wisconsin success story. At Trek, the division I led grew from \$3 million to \$50 million in sales annually, helping Trek grow to nearly 1,000 Wisconsin jobs. That real-world experience — and being held accountable for the results — informs my approach.

In my jobs plan, "Invest for Success," I lay out five core strategies I'll use to create more jobs and opportunity, based on my experience

in business and education. My approach is to take on the tough challenges and make sure every community, whether rural or urban, in every corner of the state, is thriving.

What is your vision of the future of public education in Wisconsin?

MB: My vision for public education is based on first-hand experience over the last six years of working to improve public education, including serving on my local school board. It is also based on my conversations with superintendents in towns and cities across Wisconsin. Whether it is Rhinelander, Alma or Wausau, I see the opportunities but I also understand the challenges.

Improving the quality of K-12 education means making sure every student graduates from high school job- or college-ready, with a career

plan in place. We will do this through adequate funding for public education, well-supported implementation of more rigorous standards, great teachers in the classroom, and greater accountability.

As governor, I will be a strong partner with local communities and local school boards to not only understand the challenges but work together to overcome them.

As governor, what policies or strategies would you promote to improve overall student achievement and narrow the achievement gap between students of different backgrounds?

MB: I am committed to working every day as governor to strengthen public education and support our students, from K-12 to our technical colleges and university system so





that they are prepared to enter the workforce or enroll in college.

Nearly every school district across Wisconsin is facing challenges to deal with higher levels of poverty with reduced resources. In just six years, the share of low-income Wisconsin students has risen from 32 percent to 42 percent. Poverty in Wisconsin is a statewide issue. And yet nearly half of the school districts saw a decrease in their state aid for the 2014-15 school year.

These are tough challenges but we can overcome them. Six years ago, I created a program called AVID/TOPS, designed to narrow the achievement gap. AVID/TOPS is a partnership between local public high schools and the Boys & Girls Club. Nearly 750 students are enrolled in AVID/TOPS this fall. Over 90 percent of graduating students have gone on to two- or four-year college, the vast majority of whom are the first in their family to attend college.

This is just one example of how we improve student achievement. But overall we need adequate funding for public education, well-supported implementation of more rigorous standards, effective teachers in the classroom and a strong partnership between the state and local school districts.

How would you help K-12 schools to further integrate the use of technology that equips students

and teachers with the 21st century learning tools they need to succeed?

MB: Technology in the classroom continues to play an increasingly important role in ensuring that students are prepared for the jobs of the future. In his first term, Governor Walker turned down a \$23 million grant from the federal government that would have ensured that high-speed Internet would be available in more of our classrooms and local libraries. This was a missed opportunity because students in rural schools can greatly benefit from expanded offerings through technology.

Technology investments must be evaluated carefully. They should enhance, but are not a substitute for, good teaching. As governor, I will work with local school districts to support wise investments in technology to keep Wisconsin schools and students competitive.

Since 2009-10, annual adjustments in state-imposed revenue limits have not allowed school districts to bring in revenue to at least match the rate of inflation. As governor, would you support allowing annual adjustments in revenue limits to increase by at least the rate of inflation?

MB: I support local schools being able to increase per-student spending by the rate of inflation without increasing the average homeowner's property taxes. In order for that to work, we have to add state support and grow our economy. For example, if Wisconsin's economy had grown at just the national average over the past three years, the

state economy would be \$4 billion a year larger. With that additional tax base, the state could more adequately fund our priorities — including schools. We must have a growing economy for our schools and communities to thrive.

What is the proper role of the state in funding schools and what should be the proper mix of state and local revenues to operate schools? Do you support increasing state general equalization aids to restore Wisconsin to two-thirds state funding?

MB: Public schools are the fabric of our communities and the foundation of our economy, and I am committed to working every day as governor to strengthen them. It's clear that our current model of funding is short-changing school districts throughout Wisconsin, particularly in rural communities.

The situation is not getting any better. In the 2014-15 school year, nearly 50 percent of school districts saw their state aid cut. At the same time, there were huge increases in private voucher and charter school funding and \$30 million in tax deductions for private school tuition.

Governor Walker's proposal to increase the statewide voucher program is the biggest threat to adequate state funding for schools. Recent revenue estimates suggest that our state's 2015-2017 budget will face significant challenges, and getting to two-thirds funding will require a large investment. My commitment is that I will make public education a top priority and I will not divert scarce resources to the expansion of private voucher schools.

“Technology investments must be evaluated carefully. They should enhance, but are not a substitute for, good teaching.”

— Mary Burke

“I strongly opposed the statewide expansion of vouchers.”

— Mary Burke

What is your view of local control of public education in Wisconsin? What do you believe is the state's role in governing public education? What do you believe is the local school board's role in governing public education?

MB: I am a strong proponent of local control, and there's no question that school boards play a critical role in providing a high-quality, public education throughout Wisconsin. Local school boards know what is best for their communities, and that critical function should be supported — not interfered with — by the state. While I endorse the statewide initiatives on Smarter Balanced Assessments, Teacher Effectiveness and Common Core State Standards, these must be well-supported and implemented in partnership with local school districts to provide flexibility. What is right for Green Bay may not be what is best for Alma with 300 students. Local school boards are in the best position to make these decisions.

What is your position on the Common Core State Standards in reading, language arts and math Wisconsin has adopted?

MB: As a school board member, I understand that Common Core is an opportunity, if implemented correctly, to make sure our young people are ready for the workplace or college. We absolutely need higher standards in Wisconsin — we are currently 38th in the country — and implementing Common Core correctly will do just that. Schools have the flexibility to exceed these standards and also should have flexibility in implementation because every school is different.

Do you support expanding the use of vouchers for students to attend

private schools using taxpayer dollars? If so, why, and how much of an expansion would you support? If not, why not?

MB: No, I strongly opposed the statewide expansion of vouchers and will seek to roll it back as governor. In Milwaukee and Racine, where the voucher program has been long established, I will insist on greater accountability. Governor Walker's approach of cutting funding for public education while increasing spending on unaccountable voucher schools is the wrong way to strengthen schools. I will also seek to repeal the new entitlement program Governor Walker supported that allows parents to write off private school tuition regardless of income — those dollars (\$30 million per year) should be put to use investing in neighborhood schools.

What specific steps, if any, beyond providing access to a high-quality education, do you intend to take as

governor to combat the increase in child poverty in our state?

MB: Wisconsin has seen a rapid increase in low-income students in our schools (32-42 percent in just six years). This is statewide and I hear the challenges from superintendents in school districts from Rhinelander to Alma to Wausau.

We have limited resources and as governor, I will use them wisely and ensure that they go where they will have the biggest impact. For example, there is absolutely no reason to devote nearly \$30 million annually for an income tax deduction for parents of any income level to send their children to private school. In addition, we know that nearly 80 percent of students receiving vouchers in the new statewide voucher program were already attending private school. When public resources are scarce, we should do a much better job of ensuring that help goes to those who are most in need. ■



Encouraging kids to believe in themselves can lead to amazing things. That's why Junior Achievement and Kohl's Cares partnered to bring you *JA BizTown* and *JA Finance Park*. Housed in the Junior Achievement Kohl's Education Center, these programs empower kids as they experience the challenges of adult life. With the help of JA's 90-year history, rewarding K-12 curriculum, and volunteer network, we'll continue to inspire kids to pursue their biggest dreams.

Learn more at wisconsin.ja.org

 Junior Achievement  Kohl's Cares