

FROM MILWAUKEE TO MADISON: LEGISLATING FOR WISCONSIN'S FUTURE

“Employers have much at stake in supporting improved educational standards. We rely on the analytical thinking and critical communication of our workforce; it is the foundation for our economy.”

—Tim Sheehy, President, Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce

Deeper Learning for a Stronger Workforce. As the region's advocate for business at the local, state and federal levels of government, the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce (MMAC) is committed to promoting systemic education reform to "build a region of skilled, adaptive and productive lifelong learners who fuel innovation." These descriptors correspond with the tenets of Deeper Learning, which provides interactive, engaging learning opportunities to give students a better understanding of core academic subjects while building the skills that will help them succeed. Through effective advocacy for educational policies that impact student achievement, MMAC is ensuring that all Milwaukee students have the skills and access to the resources they need to graduate and pursue their career goals.

Giving Parents a Voice in School Choice. Since its inception, MMAC has backed and generated support for the [Milwaukee Parental Choice Program](#)—the first and largest parental choice program in the country—to help at-risk students access high quality education. The program allows students who reside in certain Wisconsin school districts to attend a participating private school if they meet income-based eligibility criteria. The private school receives a state aid payment for each eligible student. MMAC has been at the forefront of the policy debate to provide education choices to low-income parents and students for 20 years. Legislative wins facilitated by MMAC include:

- Removing the program's enrollment cap—making the program available to more than 80% of families in Milwaukee
- Allowing schools outside the City of Milwaukee to participate
- Eliminating the School Choice “funding flaw” for local property taxpayers, so that the state no longer pays a smaller share of funding for choice students than for students in MPS

Facilitating the Role of Business in Policy. Through MMAC, business leaders with an interest in education have many opportunities to become involved in the political process, including forums and briefings with lawmakers. MMAC also runs

Quick Facts: Milwaukee

- Milwaukee is home to six Fortune 1000 manufacturers and is the second largest manufacturing area in the US. It has experienced a steady increase in precision manufacturing of X-ray equipment, steel foundry and mining machinery. (Source: [City Data](#))
- 41% of Milwaukee Public Schools' students lived in poverty in 2010 and 81% qualified for free or reduced lunch in 2012-2013. (Source: [Urban Milwaukee](#))
- While Wisconsin's high school graduation rate is 88%, Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS)—the state's largest district—falls well below the national graduation rate (80%) with a rate of 62%. (Source: [Alliance for Excellent Education](#))

MMAC is preparing students for workforce success by:

- Lobbying for full-on systems reform educational policy change across the metro area
- Focusing on closing the achievement gap among low-income families in the region
- Increasing students' exposure to manufacturing to emphasize career opportunities

MMAAction.org, an online tool to encourage and facilitate political involvement by MMAC members. Recent lobbying efforts have resulted in legislative wins including:

- Increasing state per pupil funding for Choice and Charter schools by more than \$20 million, starting in 2014
- Increasing per pupil revenue limits for MPS
- Providing \$1 million in state aid to help Teach for America recruit new teachers

Current goals in education advocacy include:

- Pursuing statewide education accountability through a report card that measures performance school by school
- Continuing implementation of the Common Core State Standards and communicating the standards' key role in deepening learning and raising proficiency
- Exposing K-12 students to various professions through short- and long-term interaction between students and members of FUEL Milwaukee (MMAC's community engagement network for young professionals)

Closing the Achievement Gap. Knowing that all children can learn and succeed when adults set high expectations for them and facilitate opportunities for Deeper Learning, MMAC helped found [Schools That Can Milwaukee](#) (STCM) in 2010. A national membership organization of high-performing, predominantly low-income schools, STCM works to document and curate best practices to grow other great schools across Milwaukee. Founded with a goal of enrolling 20,000 children in high-performing urban schools by 2020, STCM will grow from three founding schools to more than 50 high-performing schools in the Milwaukee metro area. STCM's recipe for success includes expanding and replicating high-performing Milwaukee schools; partnering with high-potential schools to accelerate their movement to high-performing; and recruiting high-quality school operators and leaders to Milwaukee.

Clear and Consistent State Standards

MMAC actively supports the implementation of the Common Core State Standards in Wisconsin schools. Advocacy undertakings include:

- Supporting an upgrade of Wisconsin's current state standardized test to the new, more rigorous and nationally benchmarked Smarter Balanced assessment—and communicating with business leaders about why this improvement is urgently needed
- Placing op-eds and articles by MMAC leadership in area publications and newspapers to explain the business imperative for implementing the Common Core
- Demonstrating how the Common Core State Standards and education reform play a critical role in economic development through presentations to statewide and interstate audiences



Deeper Learning uses interactive techniques such as project-based learning and real-world application to engage students in core academics and build the skills they need for success in college and career.

Your Chamber can prepare the future workforce for success in a globally competitive economy by building partnerships across sectors that help students become innovative, collaborative and flexible employees.

Visit http://www.mmac.org/public_policy/talented_workforce.aspx to learn more.