



## **WisPolitics: Walker promises educators tools, but few details on coming state aid**

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For WisPolitics

MILWAUKEE -- Gov. Scott Walker on Friday told a standing-room only crowd of Wisconsin school board members that he would give them "tools" to manage district budgets and to hire and fire teachers based on performance. But he offered no specifics other than calling for assurance that all future fourth-graders can read at a third-grade level.

Speaking on the last day of the Wisconsin State Education Convention, Walker said past state governments have cut funding to local governments without giving them the tools they need to manage the dollars they have.

"We're going to give you more tools," he said, citing the "need to make sure of certain benchmarks throughout a child's development."

"I think we've got to make a commitment, district by district, school by school, that for every one of our elementary schools, every time a kid graduates from third to fourth grade, we're going to be able to say with absolute certainty that they can read at a third-grade level before they go on to fourth grade. I just think that's imperative," Walker said.

Walker speculated that the state's high school dropout problem is caused in part by students who become academically frustrated starting in fourth grade.

Walker has previously called for the restoration of the Qualified Economic Offer, which allowed school districts to avoid arbitration by offering annual increases in wages and benefits of 3.8 percent. But he made no mention of the QEO at today's school board convention.

Asked afterward about his stance, Walker told WisPolitics, "We'll change the whole process in terms of what school districts can do, even beyond the QEO or not, in terms of, we're looking at options that give them ultimate flexibility over wages and benefits. But that will be coming out in the budget."

At a Milwaukee Press Club luncheon last month, Walker said of the QEO, "I frankly think that was too high under its current format of 3.8 percent. In today's economy, with where costs are at and where inflation's at, that actually would be too high."

Walker told school board members today they should be empowered to pay teachers based on performance and to replace teachers who do not meet "a whole series of assessments," but he did not elaborate.

He said he would perhaps initiate regular "town hall meetings" with local school boards, using telephone conference calls or Skype.

But Walker said added that he plans to continue moving quickly to make the changes he talked of during his campaign.

He said he offered no apologies when a worker at a steel company asked Walker on Thursday why Wisconsin's newly elected officials were moving so quickly.

"For the past 18 months I've been filling out a job application," Walker said. "I've been interviewing to be the CEO of the state of Wisconsin. I said, 'Here's what I'm going to do.' I wasn't very untransparent. I basically told people what I thought I should do, whether you like it or didn't like it, here's what I'm going to do."



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