

'Changing Mindset' on Technical Education

Governor **Scott Walker** says we need to elevate and promote technical education for high school students



"My request to all of you is to help us find a way to lift up every one of our young people who chooses a career."

Returning to themes from his January State of the State address, Gov. Scott Walker stressed the importance of providing opportunities for students to examine technical education and tied the effort to the state's economic vitality.

"My request to all of you is to help us find a way to lift up every one of our young people who chooses a career," Walker said. "Our

economy depends on it. And our society depends on it."

Walker continued, "We need to change the mindset about careers in this state. So many of the careers — the good paying careers I hear about every single day — require a two-year associate degree from a technical college."

He implored parents, guidance counselors — everyone who has

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“We need to do more to invest in public education...”

influence over young people — to help change that mindset. “This is a team effort,” Walker stressed.

He offered Germany as an example where “skilled workers are placed on a pedestal. When I hear from employers, their number one issue is the workforce. The challenge going forward is showing business there is a pipeline of quality employees,” the governor said.

Walker told convention attendees, “It’s not only about finding jobs. We want our young people to find careers in Wisconsin. (School board members and educators) are the foundation for all of this,” he said.

Since taking office, Walker said his administration has doubled the

number of youth apprenticeships creating “dramatic new opportunities” for the state’s students.

Walker noted his last budget added resources for 25 school districts to pilot academic and career counseling planning for middle and high school students. He said the \$3 million for dual enrollment grants through the Department of Workforce Development “is really a down payment for our state’s future.”

The governor also reiterated the proposal he floated at the State of the State speech in January to change state employee health care, promising “Every penny of savings in the General Fund will go to additional funding for public education.”

However, following the State of the State address, Republican leaders controlling both houses were skeptical. Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald (R-Juneau) told the *Wisconsin State Journal*, “I think it would take a lot of convincing to get the Legislature to move forward without seeing some hard numbers on what the benefit would be” adding that it couldn’t happen before July 2017 regardless of the merit or legislative support.

Walker said, “One thing I’ve heard as we travel around the state for these listening sessions and others we talk to is that we need to do more to invest in public education,” adding “but not just with a blank check.” ■

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