



State Superintendent's Adolescent Literacy Plan

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Foreword

Demand for high school graduates who can understand increasingly complex and technical materials never has been greater. As educators and policymakers, we have focused most literacy initiatives and funding on elementary reading. While this focus is a vital priority and supported by research, we must attend simultaneously to adolescent literacy.

Achievement gaps identified by Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examinations are confirmed by the National Assessment of Educational Progress data for Wisconsin. Through our New Wisconsin Promise, we are working to ensure a quality education for every child, to raise student achievement, and to close the achievement gap that exists between economically disadvantaged children, children of color, and their peers. This achievement gap is not acceptable.

I thank the Adolescent Literacy Task Force and the leadership team members for their thoughtful work in developing Wisconsin's Adolescent Literacy Plan. They have reviewed the status of adolescent literacy, identified key research, and developed an innovative plan based on that evidence. Their expertise and insight are invaluable as we improve adolescent literacy in Wisconsin.

Our approach to adolescent literacy is consistent with our work with the Partnership for 21st Century Skills that focuses not only on reading but also on the importance of literacy for the 21st century. We are collaborating with the Partnership for 21st Century Skills and the American Diploma Project to gain national and international perspectives for our work in Wisconsin.

I concur with the key actions in the plan; the actions capture ideas important to all of us including:

- ◆ Developing comprehensive plans for adolescent literacy at state and local levels;
- ◆ Focusing on literacy within and across our Wisconsin Model Academic Standards;
- ◆ Establishing systems of support for all students;
- ◆ Fostering professional learning communities around adolescent literacy; and
- ◆ Defining roles of literacy leaders.

Literacy is at the heart of learning. As we move forward, we will work together to create the most literate, well-educated citizenry and work force in the nation.

—Elizabeth Burmaster
State Superintendent



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Thanks for the generous support from the Alliance for Excellent Education and especially to Bob Wise, President, and Elizabeth Schneider, Vice President for State Advocacy and Outreach, for their esteemed support and guidance during the Adolescent Literacy Summit. Special thanks to Elizabeth Moje, Professor of Literacy, Language, and Culture, University of Michigan, for delivering the keynote speech and to Gloria Ladson-Billings, Professor in Urban Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison, for facilitating the panel discussion at the summit.

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Special thanks to adolescent literacy scholar, Judith Irvin, Executive Director of the National Literacy Project, who served as consultant to the task force, and to John Whitsett, Past President of the National Science Teachers Association, and to Michael Yell, President for the National Council for the Social Studies, for providing a national perspective on adolescent literacy in the content areas.

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1

Introduction

In November 2006, the State Superintendent’s High School Task Force released recommendations to ensure Wisconsin high school students continue to graduate with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in postsecondary education, in the high-skills workplace, and as citizens of our interconnected world. The High School Task Force also recommended adolescent literacy be a priority in Wisconsin so students enter high school reading at or above grade level. Additionally, the task force called for resources for literacy programming and professional development at the high school level.

Adolescent Literacy Task Force Charge

Wisconsin was privileged to be selected by the Alliance for Excellent Education as one of four states to host a national summit focused on adolescent literacy for educators, stakeholders, and policy makers. The one-day Adolescent Literacy Summit, held in Madison in May 2007, was spearheaded by State Superintendent of Public Instruction Elizabeth Burmaster, in partnership with Bob Wise, President of the Alliance, with support from Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center, Linda Miller, Director. The summit featured addresses by national leaders in the field and panel discussions related to significant components for improving reading and writing instruction for middle and high school students. The summit represented the initial meeting of the State Superintendent’s Adolescent Literacy Task Force.

The State Superintendent charged the Adolescent Literacy Task Force to:

- ◆ review state and local policies and initiatives that support adolescent literacy;
- ◆ identify research-based resources related to effective practices that promote literacy development, raise performance, and close the achievement gap; and
- ◆ develop an adolescent literacy plan for the state of Wisconsin.

Summit participants discussed and prioritized recommendations designed to improve adolescent literacy gleaned from nationally recognized policy documents. Professional development was identified as a key recommendation. Other highly valued recommendations were: developing broad support for adolescent literacy; developing comprehensive, coordinated literacy programs; and using research-based, best practices. Recommendations to ensure quality educators and to provide state guidance for adolescent literacy fell mid-range among respondents, followed by setting literacy standards, evaluating programs, and assessing performance.

The summit was followed by four day-long Adolescent Literacy Task Force meetings during 2007–2008. Highlights of the work of the task force included

Reading is the fundamental skill that separates children who succeed from those who struggle.

State Superintendent
Elizabeth Burmaster

a review of the status of adolescent literacy in Wisconsin and the nation; study of eight, evidenced-based policy documents calling for a focus on adolescent literacy; discussion of ideas and models designed to improve adolescent literacy; formulation of a definition of adolescent literacy; and development of an adolescent literacy plan.

First Lady Jessica Doyle, as a member of the task force and an educator for more than thirty years, shared her belief that a strong foundation in reading and writing is important for success for all ages.

The work of the task force was assisted by Judith Irvin, Director of the National Literacy Project, an adolescent literacy scholar who served as consultant to the task force, and by Terry Salinger, Chief Scientist for Reading Research, American Institute for Research, who shared her insight related to national perspectives on adolescent literacy.

Doug Buehl and Mary Pfeiffer, task force co-chairs, provided leadership and direction for the members and offered their expertise and guidance related to all aspects of the work of the task force. Danielle Carnahan, Senior Literacy Associate at GLWCC, shared literacy perspectives, provided national-level resources, and served as facilitator for the task force.

John Whitsett, President of the National Science Teachers Association, and Michael Yell, President-Elect for the National Council of Social Studies, provided a national perspective on adolescent literacy in the content areas.

Participants' recommendations for improving adolescent literacy align with the priorities of State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster's New Wisconsin Promise. These priorities include:

- ◆ Ensuring quality teachers in every classroom and strong leadership in every school;
- ◆ Improving student achievement with a focus on reading that has all students reading at or above grade level;
- ◆ Investing in early learning opportunities through the four-year-old kindergarten, Preschool to Grade 5, and SAGE class-size reduction programs;
- ◆ Sharing responsibility by increasing parental and community involvement in our schools and libraries to address teenage literacy, drop-outs, and truancy;
- ◆ Advancing career, technical, and arts education to engage students in becoming active citizens by understanding their role in the family, society, and the world of work; and
- ◆ Providing effective pupil services, special education, and prevention programs to support learning and development for all students while preventing and reducing barriers to student success.

Toward a Definition of Adolescent Literacy

2

At its core, literacy is the ability to read and write. While this ability remains the nexus of literacy for adolescents, additional abilities are needed to maximize learning in all content areas. In Wisconsin, we must infuse this core with the ability to invent, design, create, compute, and communicate so that adolescents can make critical judgments, identify and solve real-world problems, and become productive citizens who lead rewarding lives.

In simpler times, the ability to decipher words, and read and write them in a coherent manner, constituted literacy for many. A signature qualified a man to vote. Books were rare; written communication took months to travel relatively short distances; the printing process was painfully slow and limited to highly populated areas. Certain social, economic, and gender groups were not expected to be literate at all. Literacy was viewed as a privilege intended only for some, and “becoming literate” rested on the foundational skills of reading and writing.

What a different world students of today live in! Instant information bombards them on every front: schools, teachers, texts, friends, television, movies, music, blogs, Web sites, chat rooms, artwork, advertisements, and more. Today, the sheer speed at which information is created and shared necessitates a shifting and expanding vision of literacy in the 21st century. The work of making sense of it all and of managing, synthesizing, and analyzing these multiple streams of information now help define literacy.



Reading and writing continue to be essential skills for all students; however, literacy demands become increasingly complex in middle and high school, and students' ability to think critically to construct meaning is crucial. As they move from class to class, learners contend with new and evolving sets of skills that further define literacy within each subject. Students must think visually, build mental models, and interact with others in order to truly grapple with their dynamic and intricate modern world.

Wisconsin's vision sees all students so well prepared to do the work of becoming literate that it is no longer "work" but rather, a function of everyday 21st century life. Literate adolescents operate cooperatively and collaboratively as well as independently and think globally and creatively when identifying and solving problems. They recognize the interconnectedness of their world and the diversity of their experiences. Students understand both the interrelatedness of all content areas and the distinct skills needed to excel in each. Most important, they apply their knowledge and skills to contribute in the broader context of the community and world.

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Status of Adolescent Literacy in Wisconsin

The current status of adolescent literacy in Wisconsin demonstrates a critical need to move swiftly and purposefully to enhance development of literacy skills. A first step involves reviewing local, state, and national assessment results to see what data reveal about the ability of Wisconsin adolescents to read and write. In addition, the perceptions and expectations of others who interact with both early and older adolescents and graduates are considered. The following section outlines results and trends from the Wisconsin Student Assessment System as well as results from selected national assessments and statewide task force work. Findings indicate that although Wisconsin students as a group have a solid reading foundation, an increased focus on adolescent literacy is imperative to ensure all students are proficient and advanced readers and writers and are prepared to enter postsecondary schools and the work force.

Overview of Assessments Given in Wisconsin

Achievement levels of Wisconsin students in grades 4, 8, and 10 have been measured statewide since the early 1990s. Beginning in the 2005–06 school year, the federal No Child Left Behind Act required states to test all students in reading and mathematics in grades 3 through 8, and once in high school (designated as grade 10 in s. 118.30, Wis. Stats.). These tests are referred to as the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examinations (WKCE). Student performance on these assessments is reported in proficiency categories: minimal, basic, proficient, and advanced.

In addition to the WKCE, a small, representative sample of Wisconsin students takes the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The NAEP assessments provide a snapshot of student achievement with about 5 percent of fourth-graders and 4 percent of eighth-graders tested in reading and mathematics every two years. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act requires states receiving Title I funds to participate in NAEP assessment of reading and mathematics at grades 4 and 8 every two years. Results for NAEP are reported at the state and national levels. The results are reported in terms of subject-matter achievement for populations of students at grades 4, 8, and 12 (although not all subjects and grades are assessed each time), and groups within those populations (e.g., female students, Hispanic students). Since NAEP assessments are administered uniformly using the same sets of test booklets across the nation, NAEP results serve as a common metric for all states and selected urban districts.

ACT[®], a college entrance examination, shows 46,990 of Wisconsin's 2008 graduates took the ACT during high school. They represent 67 percent of the

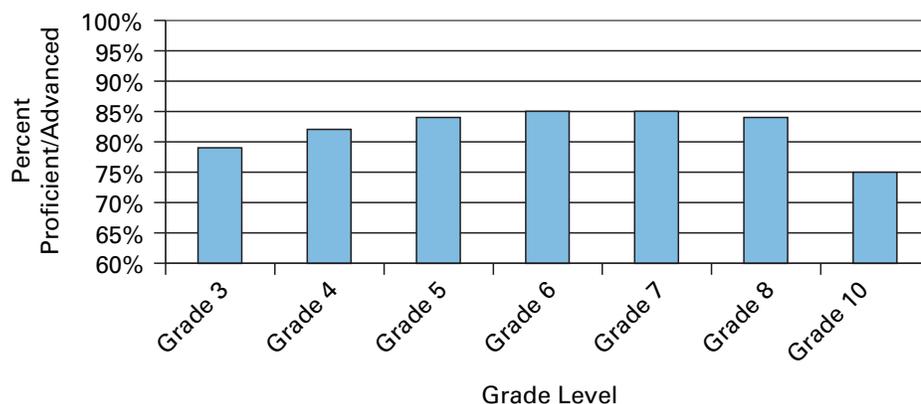
state’s 2008 public and private school graduates. Students who take the ACT receive composite scores, subscores in English, mathematics, reading, and science as well as information regarding their reading readiness for college-level courses. The ACT is reported on a scale of 1 to 36, with 36 being the highest score.

WKCE Data

State data from the WKCE confirm that gaps in reading achievement exist between students who are economically disadvantaged and those who are not economically disadvantaged (Appendix 1, Table 1), between students of color and white students (Appendix 1, Table 2), between English language learners (ELLs) and their English-proficient peers (Appendix 1, Table 3), and between students with disabilities and their peers (Appendix 1, Table 4).

Although statewide high school completion rates that result in a regular diploma have been stable at about 90 percent from 1996 until 2007, differences among student populations exist. Only 74.8 percent of American Indian students, 68 percent of African American students, and 75.4 percent of Hispanic students completed high school with a regular diploma as compared with 91 percent of Asian students and 93 percent of white students (WINSS 2007)

2007–08 WKCE Reading Proficiency, by Grade



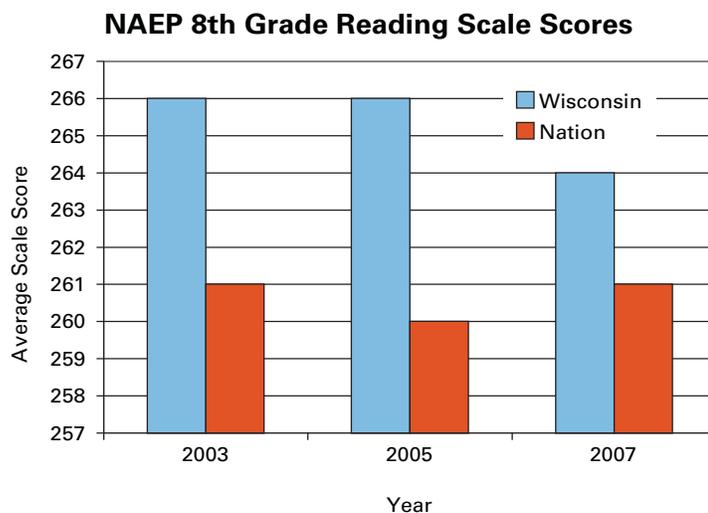
Assessment of reading achievement in Wisconsin shows that the proportion of students proficient in reading declines as they transition from elementary and middle school to high school. Data are clear. The lowest percentage of proficient performance in 2008 was 75 percent of students proficient in grade 10.

These patterns of declining performance, especially at tenth grade, hold true for mathematics, science, and social studies. In mathematics at grades 3 through 8, the percent proficient for all students falls in the mid-70 percent range, with 69 percent proficient at grade 10. In science, 75 percent of all fourth-grade students are proficient, compared to 75 and 72 percent of students in grades 8 and 10, respectively. In social studies, 91 percent of all fourth-grade students are proficient, compared to 81 and 76 percent of students in grades 8 and 10, respectively.

NAEP Data

Dramatic gaps in reading achievement between students of color and their peers are revealed by NAEP data (Appendix 1, Table 5). Findings also show gaps between students with disabilities and their peers (Appendix 1, Table 6) and between ELLs and their English-proficient peers (Appendix 1, Table 7).

Based on combined scores for all students, Wisconsin has historically scored above the nation on NAEP in reading. This was again the case in 2007. Scores in fourth grade reading continue to increase over time; however, reading scores for eighth grade NAEP have declined, although the drop is not statistically significant.



Wisconsin public school eighth-graders improved their performance on the NAEP writing assessment, with an overall average scale score of 158 for 2007, compared to 153 in 1998. The NAEP writing assessment was administered to 2,585 eighth-grade students in a sampling of schools throughout the state. Scale scores were above the national average for most student groups in Wisconsin; however, in Wisconsin and the nation, gaps in achievement remain between economically disadvantaged students, students of color, students with disabilities, those who are learning English, and their peers.

ACT Data

Wisconsin's statewide composite score of 22.3 is well above the national composite score of 21.1. Nationwide, a record 1.4 million high school graduates took the ACT.

In addition to besting the national average scores, Wisconsin students exceeded national averages for ACT College Readiness Benchmarks. These benchmarks are scores that predict success in credit-bearing college-level coursework. Seventy-seven percent of Wisconsin students met the ACT benchmark for English, compared to 68 percent nationally.

Although 67 percent of Wisconsin high school graduates took the ACT college admissions test in 2008, alarmingly, 93 percent of African-American students, 76 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native students, 77 percent of Asian-American/Pacific Islander students, 23 percent of Hispanic students, and 60 percent of white students were not considered ready for college-level biology classes.

It is not simply the lack of readiness for college-level science classes demonstrated by these students; these data do not include the large number of students who are not reflected—the ones failing to earn high school credits as twelfth graders because they cannot meet reading and writing demands, or those who drop out because they do not have reading and writing skills to learn across the content areas. One might predict that dropouts are those who fail to master foundational skills in reading and writing.

Of the 46,990 graduates who took the ACT, 36,397 were white, 2,271 were African American, 1,620 were Asian American/Pacific Islander, 1,297 were Hispanic, and 318 were American Indian/Alaska Native. Students of color represented 12 percent of Wisconsin's ACT test-takers, a slight increase from last year. While most state students bettered their national peers on ACT scores and benchmarks, achievement gaps are apparent.

ACT's core curriculum is four years of English, and at least three years each of mathematics, science, and social studies. Overall, Wisconsin had 58 percent of students reporting they completed a core curriculum, up from 52 percent in 2007. Nationally, 61 percent reported they took a core curriculum. On average, Wisconsin students taking a core curriculum score 1.7 points higher on the ACT than those who take a less rigorous high school course schedule.

ACT data reveal a considerable gap in achievement in the composite scores: 17.0 for African-American students, 20.4 for American Indian/Alaska Native students, 20.4 for Asian-American/Pacific Islander students, 19.7 for Hispanic students, and 22.8 for white students.

Conclusion

Adolescents must read proficiently to be successful. Many students in Wisconsin read quite well when compared to students across the nation, but significant achievement gaps exist for several populations. The WKCE, NAEP, and ACT data show the need for more concerted efforts in the area of adolescent literacy. In general, scores for all students from NAEP and ACT identify Wisconsin as a literacy leader; however, the achievement gap is alarming and is confirmed by WKCE data. All data support the need for enhanced attention on literacy instruction for all students, especially across content areas.

The rapidly accelerating challenges of the 21st century demand nimble, self-regulated, literate citizens who are prepared to compete in the global economy and who have deep knowledge across content areas. Increasing levels of poverty within Wisconsin's student groups creates an additional challenge. In our largest city, Milwaukee, the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch in 2007 is 80 percent. For this same year, the state level of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch is more than 31 percent, as compared with 24.1 percent in 2001.

In addition, demographic data reported in the March 2005 census of Limited English Proficient students identify more than 39,000 ELLs in grades Pre-K through 12 in Wisconsin. Eighty-five home languages other than English are represented in our state. Approximately 58 percent of ELL students speak Spanish and 29 percent speak Hmong.

In the context of these rapid changes, we must focus on improving reading and writing skills along with the development of comprehension levels of complex text for all middle and high school students. Increased adolescent literacy instruction is essential. Middle and secondary teachers are well prepared to



teach content but need support in helping students apply literacy strategies to improve their ability to read across all content areas.

An integral part of that support is provided by school library media specialists. Findings from *Student Learning through Wisconsin School Library Media Centers* (2006) showed that when library media specialists spend more time on instructionally-related student and teacher activities, students have higher WKCE scores. The evidence produced by this study indicates that quality Wisconsin school libraries contribute measurably to the academic achievement of students, as reflected in their WKCE test scores.

Another key finding from the study concluded that schools that have aligned and integrated the Information Technology Literacy Standards (ITLS) with content standards and lessons are able to provide instruction that makes content more relevant and exposes students to resources beyond the teacher or textbook. Supporting problem-based learning through information synthesis and analysis and through building technology literacy is shown to enhance academic achievement for all students and to close the achievement gap. Providing students with access to these resources is essential in narrowing the digital divide as well as improving the literacy skills required of students in the 21st century.

4

Urgency for Action: Review of Key Adolescent Literacy Reports

The first decade of the 21st century is witnessing a historic shift in literacy focus in the United States. Previously, state and national efforts centered on beginning literacy instruction and on building a strong foundation for reading and writing during the years of elementary schooling. As gains are being realized for beginning readers, a number of significant national initiatives have shifted the attention to the needs of adolescent readers.

A result of this trend is a remarkable convergence of recognition of the serious need to continue the development of literacy achievement for middle and high school learners. Advocacy for a concerted emphasis on adolescent literacy has surfaced from a chorus of influential voices: American College Testing Program (ACT), National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE), National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), National Governors Association (NGA), National Middle School Association (NMSA), National School Boards Association (NSBA), National Science Teachers Association (NSTA), and International Reading Association (IRA). Each of these important organizations has issued carefully constructed and highly informed policy documents regarding the need to upgrade significantly state and national efforts in adolescent literacy. Although these organizations represent a wide array of influential constituencies and stakeholders, their positions are consistent and compelling: adolescent literacy has been historically neglected in middle and high school classrooms around the country. This situation must change dramatically if students are to develop 21st century capabilities.

One of the most significant developments has been the formation of the Alliance for Excellent Education, a highly respected national policy and research consortium that advocates programming for the more sophisticated literacy needs of adolescent learners. Since 2001, the Alliance has released an impressive series of influential policy documents synthesizing research and practices for adolescent literacy intended to guide middle and high schools in the development of state-of-the-art programs for their students.

Key resources: Establishing a research base

To guide the work, the Adolescent Literacy Task Force embarked on a careful study of eight seminal research and policy syntheses. A common theme emerged from these reports: each concurred in the urgent necessity to improve the reading and writing development of middle and high school students. The landmark adolescent literacy documents examined in depth by the task force are summarized below.

Double the work: Challenges and solutions to acquiring language and academic literacy for adolescent English language learners

This Alliance for Excellent Education report extended the policy discussion of adolescent literacy to include the specific needs of the increasing numbers of English language learners (ELL) in middle and high schools. The report detailed six institutional challenges (Appendix 2) that districts and schools need to acknowledge to institute instructional practices and programming that recognize ELL students “are learning English at the same time they are studying core content areas through English.” (Short and Fitzsimmons 2007, 1))

Literacy instruction in the content areas: Getting to the core of middle and high school improvement

A critical Alliance for Excellent Education research and policy synthesis focused on the specific reading challenges and demands of the different subject matter disciplines. The report extensively considered necessary changes in teacher preparation and support. In articulating the serious inadequacies of current practices, the report outlined professional development initiatives so that “all content area teachers should know what is distinct about the reading, writing, and reasoning processes that go on in their disciplines; they should give students frequent opportunities to read, write, and think in these ways; and they should explain how those conventions, formats, styles, and modes of communication differ from those that students might encounter elsewhere in school.” (Heller and Greenleaf 2007, 27)

Writing next: Effective strategies to improve writing of adolescents in middle and high schools

This research synthesis, developed by the Alliance for Excellent Education, emphasized the need to integrate writing skill development into adolescent literacy instruction. The report detailed eleven key elements for writing instruction for middle and high school students (Appendix 2), and concluded: “Along with reading comprehension, writing skill is a predictor of academic success and a basic requirement for participation in civic life and in the global economy. Yet every year in the United States large numbers of adolescents graduate from high school unable to write at the basic levels required by colleges or employers.” (Graham and Perin 2007, 3)

Content area literacy instruction must be the cornerstone of any movement to build high quality secondary schools.

(Literacy Instruction in the Content Areas: Getting to the Core of Middle and High School Improvement. Alliance for Excellent Education 2007, 1)

Reading between the lines: What the ACT reveals about college readiness in reading

A highly respected ACT analysis of high school students' preparation for college-level reading revealed that only 51 percent of those students taking the ACT reading assessment demonstrated the ability to meet college reading demands. Furthermore, the ACT study detected declines as students move through high school, as the report noted that “more students are on track to being ready for college-level reading in eighth and tenth grade than are actually ready by the time they reach twelfth grade.” (ACT 2006, 1)

Standards for middle and high school literacy coaches

A historic collaboration between five major education professional associations—International Reading Association (IRA), National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), National Science Teachers Association (NSTA), and National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)—created the groundwork for supporting content area teachers in their delivery of literacy instruction across the curriculum. The national standards articulate the compelling need for literacy coaches in middle and high schools, noting, “There is a solid body of knowledge on adolescent literacy, so experts know what to do: Faculty members need to become teachers of reading and writing appropriate to their disciplines. Although many middle and high school teachers understand the importance of literacy, they do not automatically see its instruction as their job.” (International Reading Association 2006, 2)

The next chapter: A school board guide to improving adolescent literacy

The National School Boards Association (2006) documented eight strategies for improving adolescent literacy that engage districts in developing a comprehensive plan to make adolescent literacy a priority (Appendix 2). Acknowledging that adolescent literacy is a problem for *every* school district in the country, the report quoted Susan Frost, an education advisor to President Clinton: “We thought teaching every child to read well by the end of third grade would take care of the problem, but we were wrong.” (National School Boards Association 2006, 1)

Reading next: A vision for action and research in middle and high school literacy

Reading Next (Biancarosa and Snow 2006), a cornerstone policy document published by the Alliance for Excellent Education, cited a dispiriting progression of data that shows students losing ground as readers as they advance through the grades. The report outlined fifteen critical elements necessary for improving literacy achievement for adolescent readers (Appendix 2) and acknowledged that: “Ensuring adequate ongoing literacy development for all students in the middle and high school years is a more challenging task than ensuring excellent reading education in the primary grades, for two reasons: first, secondary school literacy skills are more complex, more embedded in subject matters, and more multiply determined; second, adolescents are not as universally motivated to read better or as interested in school-based reading as kindergartners.” (Biancarosa and Snow 2006, 1–2)



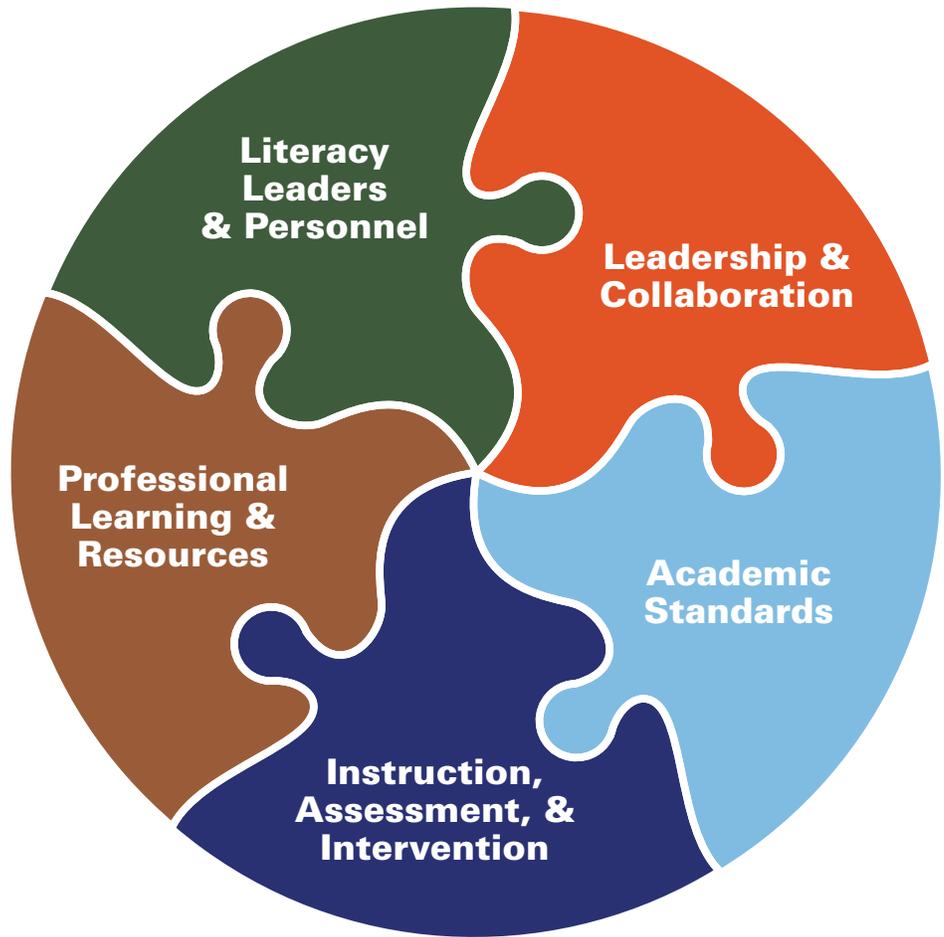
Reading to achieve: A governor’s guide to adolescent literacy

The National Governors Association bluntly stated: “Unfortunately, for too many students, literacy instruction ends in third grade.” (National Governors Association 2005, 1) The NGA report identified five essential steps for improving adolescent literacy: build support for a state focus on adolescent literacy, raise literacy expectations across grades and curricula, encourage and support school and district literacy plans, build educators’ capacity to provide adolescent literacy instruction, and measure progress in adolescent literacy at the school, district, and state levels. The report included recommendations for strengthening content teacher licensure and preparation requirements regarding literacy instruction, noting that “an excellent starting point for developing a school literacy plan is to provide all students with reading comprehension instruction and embed literacy instruction in content-area classes.” (National Governors Association 2005, 17)

A Plan for Action

In our detailed analysis of these eight expert research and policy documents, the task force tracked common themes and recommendations for incorporation into Wisconsin’s Adolescent Literacy Plan. Several broad plan areas emerged that recognize the need for support in various ways and at multiple levels across schools and districts. The following areas are addressed as part of Wisconsin’s plan for adolescent literacy: leadership and collaboration; academic standards; instruction, assessment, and intervention; professional learning and resources; and literacy leaders and personnel.

Core Components of Plan



The State Superintendent’s Adolescent Literacy Plan provides an action-based blueprint to improve the quality of adolescent literacy in Wisconsin. This effort requires a systemic and synchronized approach at the state, district, school, and community levels. This belief in the need for a systemic approach is reflected throughout the document. The plan presents statewide actions and the scaffolding necessary for improving adolescent literacy. Following the state plan, a school/district checklist is provided. This checklist is aligned with the state plan and offers guidance for school and district literacy leaders as they engage in their own planning to improve adolescent literacy.

State Superintendent's Adolescent Literacy Plan

After carefully reviewing the research, policy, and landscape of adolescent literacy in Wisconsin, the Adolescent Literacy Task Force has identified five interconnected core components important to improving adolescent literacy. The five core components are:

Leadership and Collaboration

Creating literacy teams and plans for organizing and implementing an effective approach to adolescent literacy.

Academic Standards

Examining Wisconsin Model Academic Standards through the lens of adolescent literacy.

Instruction, Assessment, and Intervention

Establishing systems of support and examining their effectiveness.

Professional Learning and Resources

Developing professional learning opportunities, Web resources, and initiatives that enhance literacy learning for educators.

Literacy Leaders and Personnel

Clarifying roles of specific literacy educators and supporting literacy instruction in teacher education programs.

5



Leadership and Collaboration

To meet the individual literacy needs of every adolescent in Wisconsin, all educators must play a role in enhancing literacy instruction. Within and across schools and districts, diverse teams of educators from every level must be involved in the discussion, planning, and implementation of school and district plans for adolescent literacy. Such teams of educators, in partnership with the greater community, have the capacity to build collective expertise from a broad range of perspectives. **Schools and districts form literacy teams and craft literacy plans with guidance from the greater community and the state.**

This section highlights the necessary steps for organizing and implementing an effective approach to adolescent literacy planning.

Action	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III
Create, disseminate, and monitor a multi-year adolescent literacy message and plan at the state level, in partnership with the Office of the Governor, educators, and the greater community	Develop a message documenting the importance of adolescent literacy and prioritize existing resources for adolescent literacy	Locate places of intersection with other state and/or local/community initiatives	Disseminate a message to districts and at professional conferences, make plan available online, and monitor effectiveness
Develop and implement technical assistance to support multi-year adolescent literacy plans at the school and district level	Develop a technical assistance plan for creating district wide adolescent literacy plans	Implement the technical assistance plan to help districts/schools to develop an adolescent literacy plan	Monitor the implementation of the technical assistance plan to ensure progress at state and regional levels
Partner with district administrators and principals to construct knowledge, vision, and understanding around leading adolescent literacy improvement	Develop a plan to partner with district administrators and principals to lead adolescent literacy improvement	Implement the plan to partner with district administrators and principals to lead adolescent literacy improvement	Monitor the implementation of the plan to partner with district administrators and principals to lead adolescent literacy improvement



Academic Standards

To meet the individual literacy needs of every adolescent in Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Model Academic Standards and supporting documents should serve as a roadmap for the explicit literacy instruction all students need in every class. As part of Wisconsin’s work with the American Diploma Project/Partnership for 21st Century Skills, English language arts and mathematics design teams examined the rigor and relevance of the WMAS in each of these two content areas.

WMAS should be further strengthened to include literacy components as part of each content area. Educators connected within and across content areas are able to help students meet literacy skills in a broad sense as well as in specific content areas.

This section highlights a plan for examining WMAS through the lens of adolescent literacy.

Action	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III
Identify and implement shared literacy standards across all content areas	Convene an internal DPI steering team of content consultants to discuss shared literacy standards and implications for content areas	Convene an external cross-curricular council of teachers, administrators, curriculum directors, and library media specialists to discuss explicit literacy strategies and language for use in cross content area literacy instruction	Identify and implement shared literacy standards and strategies across content areas
Identify and implement shared information and technology literacy standards across all content areas	Convene an internal, cross content area team to discuss the intersections between information and technology literacy standards and all other WMAS	Identify intersections and develop shared language for information and technology literacy standards across all content areas	Implement information and technology literacy standards across all content areas
Develop and implement a WMAS review process for content area standards as they relate to literacy	Convene content specific, external teams of teachers, administrators, curriculum directors, and library media specialists to review the WMAS and/or supporting documents for evidence of content area literacy instruction	Propose revisions or additions to standards that explicitly target content area literacy instruction	Collect feedback related to proposed revisions
Examine the impact of revised WMAS on higher education	Examine the impact of revised content area literacy standards on teacher preparation programs and articulate literacy expectations across Pre-K through 16	Begin conversations within and among content areas to support literacy expectations across Pre-K through 16 and in teacher education programs	Revise content expectations for teacher preparation programs to reflect adolescent literacy expectations; develop entry level expectations for higher education



Instruction, Assessment, and Intervention

To meet the individual literacy needs of every adolescent in Wisconsin, all educators must understand the role they, individually, play in the delivery of literacy instruction and support to students. **Systems of intervention must focus on instruction for all students including English language learners, students with disabilities, and emerging and advanced literacy learners.** Intervention services help students become successful readers and writers and prepare them for 21st century postsecondary and workplace opportunities.

This section highlights the importance of intervention systems and examines the effectiveness of those systems.

Action	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III
Disseminate information about high quality instruction	Establish internal and external partnerships that facilitate collaborative planning around high quality instruction	Develop information and include Web resources related to high quality instruction as part of the adolescent literacy Web resource	Provide information and technical assistance related to high quality instruction
Disseminate information about formative assessment	Establish internal and external partnerships to facilitate collaborative planning around formative assessment	Identify formative assessment techniques and strategies	Provide information and technical assistance related to formative assessment
Disseminate information about intervention systems as part of high quality instruction	Establish internal and external partnerships that facilitate collaborative planning around proven intervention systems as part of high quality instruction	Develop information and include online resources related to proven intervention systems as part of high quality instruction in the adolescent literacy Web resource	Provide information and technical assistance around intervention systems based on high quality instruction
Identify sources of funding and other resources for intervention services	Identify sources of funding and other resources for intervention services that may support adolescent literacy	Provide information to districts about sources of funding and other resources for intervention services that support adolescent literacy	Provide technical assistance to guide local districts in prioritizing/gaining sources of funding and other resources for intervention services that support adolescent literacy



Professional Learning and Resources

To meet the individual literacy needs of every adolescent in Wisconsin, a **rich compendium of professional learning opportunities, resources, and tools** must be created so that all teachers are prepared to deliver high quality, differentiated literacy instruction within their content area(s). **Administrators, principals, teachers, library media specialists, instructional coaches, and professional support staff must have access to materials and opportunities** that continue to foster their skills as literacy leaders and agents of change.

This section highlights the professional learning opportunities, Web resources, and literacy initiatives that will enhance literacy instruction in Wisconsin classrooms.

Action	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III
Develop and implement avenues for professional learning	Develop literacy academies and other literacy leadership opportunities with strands for all teachers and literacy and education leaders within and across disciplines to support literacy achievement in adolescents	Implement literacy academies and other literacy leadership opportunities regionally	Monitor the literacy academies and other literacy leadership opportunities for effectiveness
Identify opportunities to provide professional learning across the state.	Identify professional learning opportunities in which adolescent literacy sessions are currently occurring or can be added including those offered through higher education institutions and CESAs	Coordinate professional learning opportunities for literacy at conferences across the state	Deliver professional learning opportunities for literacy at conferences across the state
Establish connections between school and public library initiatives and adolescent literacy	Identify connections between school and public library initiatives and adolescent literacy	Implement collaborative adolescent literacy initiatives between school and public libraries	Expand school and public library/adolescent literacy initiatives
Develop an extensive adolescent literacy Web resource	Design an adolescent literacy Web resource to support adolescent reading and writing with help from external partners	Build an adolescent literacy Web resource in collaboration with external partners	Continue to update and add professional resources to adolescent literacy Web resource
Design elements within the Wisconsin Longitudinal Data System (WLDS) to support district assessment systems	Collaborate with the WLDS internal work group to help define elements of the system that enable districts to include results from local progress monitoring assessments	Provide access to and assistance for using the WLDS for district level reports that include disaggregated data, using subgroupings, and overall adolescent reading and writing data	Disseminate information about elements within the WLDS that enable districts to include results from local assessments



Literacy Leaders and Personnel

To meet the individual literacy needs of every learner in Wisconsin this plan promotes embedded literacy instruction in all content area classes to ensure a sound literacy foundation for all students. **Beyond that, specialized literacy leaders provide essential support to students, teachers, administrators and the community.** Because of their critical role in literacy leadership, specialized professional learning opportunities must be provided to support literacy leaders' effectiveness.

This section highlights the importance of supporting literacy instruction, clarifying the roles of specific literacy educators, and examining the depth of literacy instruction in teacher preparation programs.

Action	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III
Examine roles and responsibilities of literacy coaches	Form an external, cross-curricular literacy coaching work group and gather information about responsibilities and roles of literacy coaches with a view toward collecting examples of effective models	Establish dissemination guidelines for literacy coaches taking into account specialized literacy skills embedded in each content area	Review the responsibilities and roles of literacy coaches to develop a proposal for adolescent literacy coach licensure
Affirm the roles and responsibilities of library media specialists and public librarians as literacy leaders in partnership with educators	Form an internal, cross-curricular work group to examine the roles and responsibilities of library media specialists and public librarians as literacy leaders across content areas	Gather information and identify effective models related to the roles of library media specialists and public librarians as literacy leaders across content areas	Disseminate research and information about effective models related to the roles of library media specialists and public librarians as literacy leaders across content areas
Examine roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals who provide literacy support	Review competencies for paraprofessionals who provide literacy support to teachers and students	Articulate a non-degree certification process for paraprofessionals who provide literacy support to teachers and students	Provide professional learning opportunities for paraprofessionals as part of the non-degree certificate
Examine the depth of literacy instruction in teacher preparation programs including reading, content area, ELL, and special education instruction	Convene an external team of stakeholders to examine the depth of literacy instruction offered in teacher preparation programs including reading, content area, ELL, and special education instruction	Develop content guidelines for teacher literacy preparation in programs including reading, content area, ELL, and special education instruction	Disseminate content guidelines for teacher literacy preparation in programs including reading, content area, ELL, and special education instruction



Checklist for Local Adolescent Literacy Plans

6

To improve adolescent literacy in Wisconsin, conversation and reflection must take place at every level, and all educators need to see themselves as part of the work that lies ahead. The following checklist, developed as a part of the recommendations made by the Adolescent Literacy Task Force, is designed to help districts and schools plan and implement an adolescent literacy plan. This document uses the five components of the state level plan, but districts and schools are encouraged to focus on any core component as a starting place and to set goals early to measure successes.

A multi-year **adolescent literacy plan** at the district/school level should consider:

Leadership and Collaboration

- A **cross-curricular, multi-grade team of educators** to support adolescent literacy within the district/school
- A plan for hiring **highly qualified literacy leaders** including: administrators, principals, curriculum directors, library media specialists, and teachers
- A **system for measuring success**
- A **system for facilitating discussions** at every level
- A plan for review of **current funding sources** and for **exploration of new funding sources** (grants) to support adolescent literacy
- A **plan to coordinate adolescent literacy plan with other district plans** and **coordinate implementation and funding** with other district initiatives
- A process for providing **leadership** at district and school levels.



Academic Standards

- A district rollout plan as well as professional learning in districts and schools to support and to ensure the **implementation of the Wisconsin Model Academic Standards (WMAS) in all content areas**
- A focus on **integration of WMAS for Information and Technology Literacy** into content area instruction
- Professional learning and technical assistance related to WMAS** that honor what educators know and need, and support them in refining skills necessary to meet the needs of readers and writers across all content areas





Instruction, Assessment, and Intervention

- A **system of support** for adolescents including differentiation of instruction and interventions for all students, including English language learners, students with disabilities, and advanced and emerging literacy learners
- Professional learning and technical assistance to respond to students' reading and writing needs with a **wide range of differentiated literacy strategies**
- An ongoing, classroom based, **formative assessment system** to examine student progress



Professional Learning and Resources

- A plan to create/support **professional learning for teachers within and across disciplines** in relation to adolescent literacy
- Professional learning and technical assistance** to support the dissemination and implementation of the local adolescent literacy plan
- A plan to promote and advocate for **literacy professional learning opportunities** in the region/district/school for all educators and literacy leaders.
- Resource management for adolescent literacy** including staffing, library staffing and resources, and structural elements



Literacy Leaders and Personnel

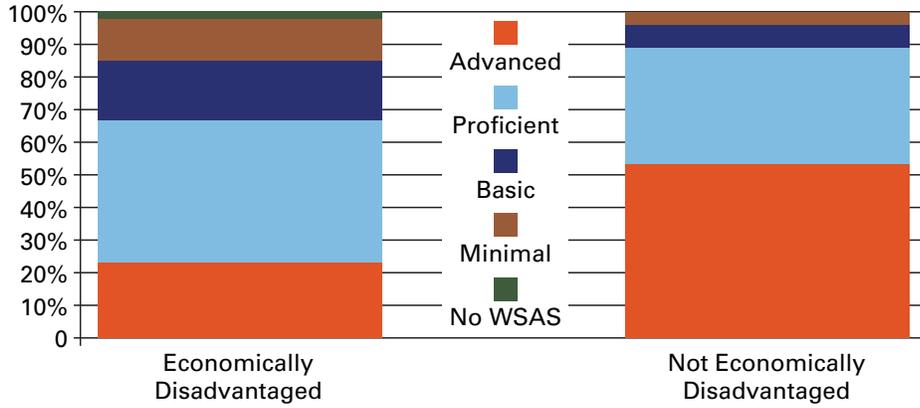
- A district plan to enhance **content area literacy instruction using literacy leaders** at all levels and across all content areas as resources
- Collaboration among library media specialists and other literacy leaders**
- Supporting participation by literacy leaders in regional networks, higher education communities, and professional literacy associations to facilitate and **expand professional learning and to build literacy leadership** across districts and schools
- Reviewing/refining the roles and responsibilities** for literacy personnel including literacy coaches, existing licensed reading personnel, school and public library personnel, and paraprofessionals

Appendices

Appendix 1: Reading Data

WKCE, 2007–08 Reading Proficiency, by Economic Status

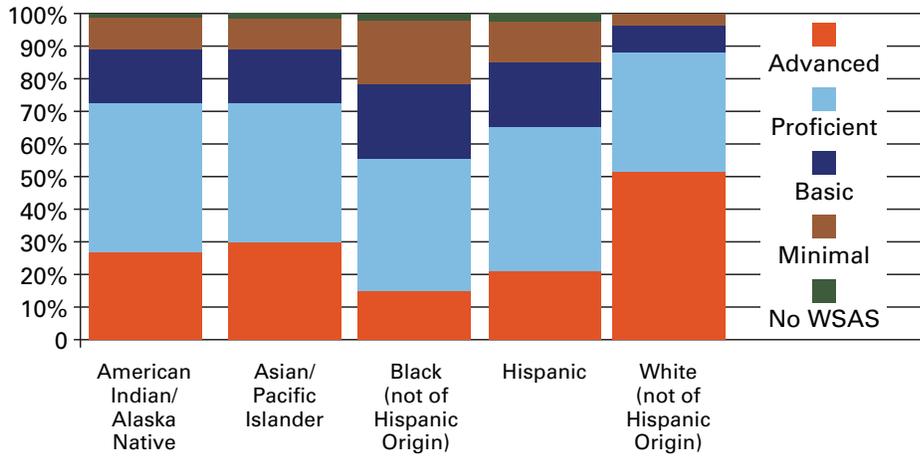
Table 1



Data represent all students in grades 6, 7, 8, and 10

WKCE, 2007–08 Reading Proficiency, by Race/Ethnicity

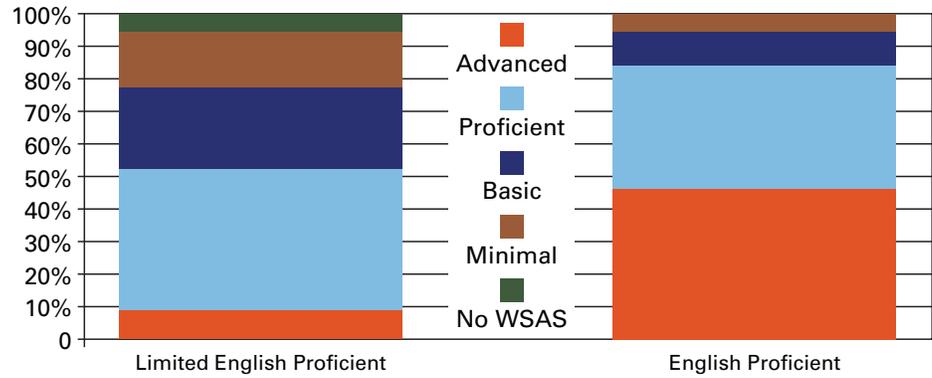
Table 2



Data represent all students in grades 6, 7, 8, and 10

Table 3

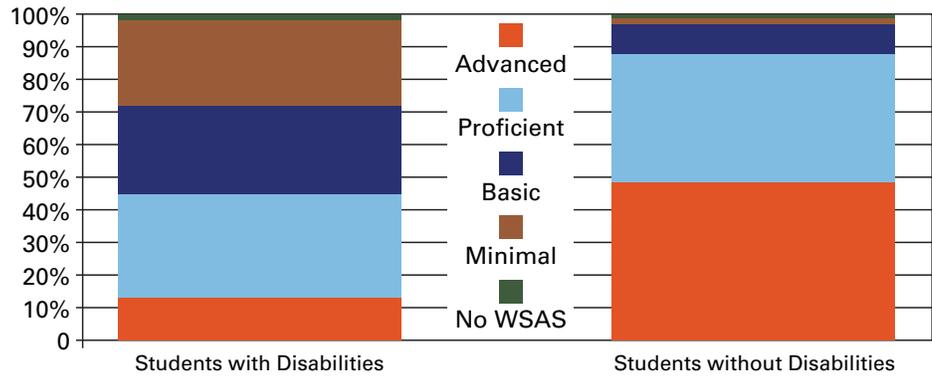
WKCE, 2007–08 Reading Proficiency, by ELL Status



Data represent all students in grades 6, 7, 8, and 10

Table 4

WKCE, 2007–08 Reading Proficiency, by Disability Status



Data represent all students in grades 6, 7, 8, and 10

NAEP 2007 8th Grade Reading Scores by Race/Ethnicity

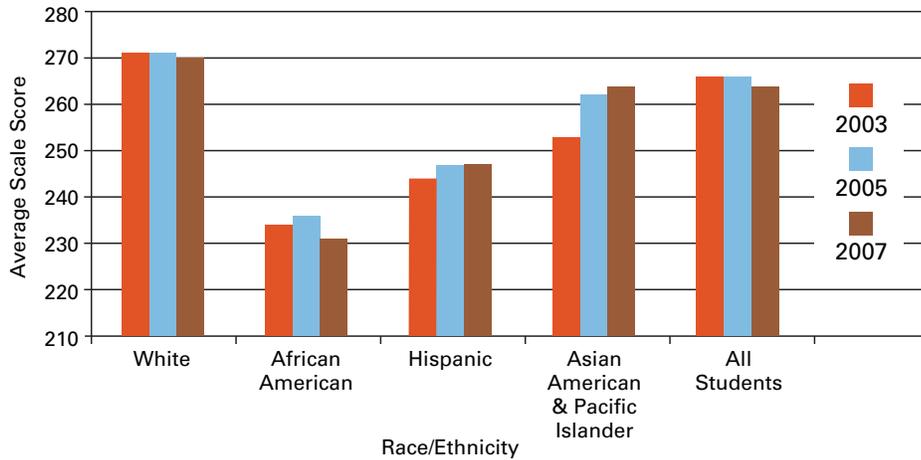


Table 5

NAEP 2007 8th Grade Reading Scores by Disability Status

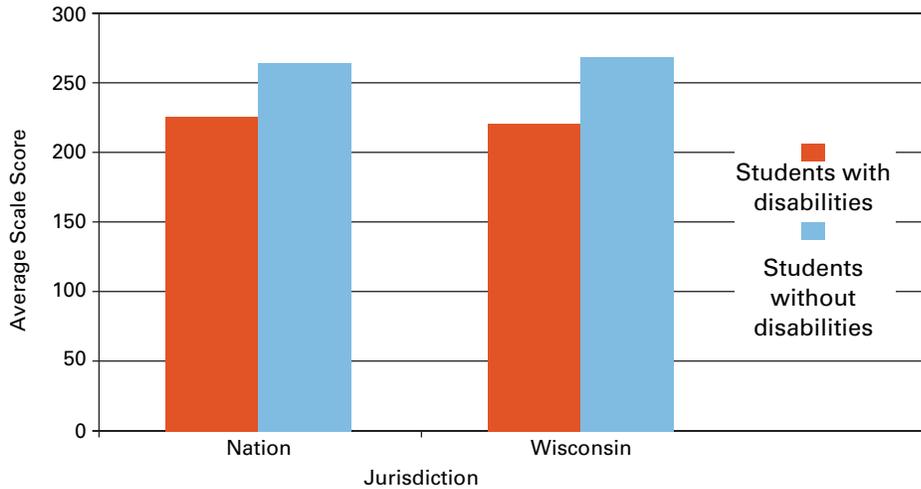


Table 6

NAEP 2007 8th Grade Reading Scores by ELL Status

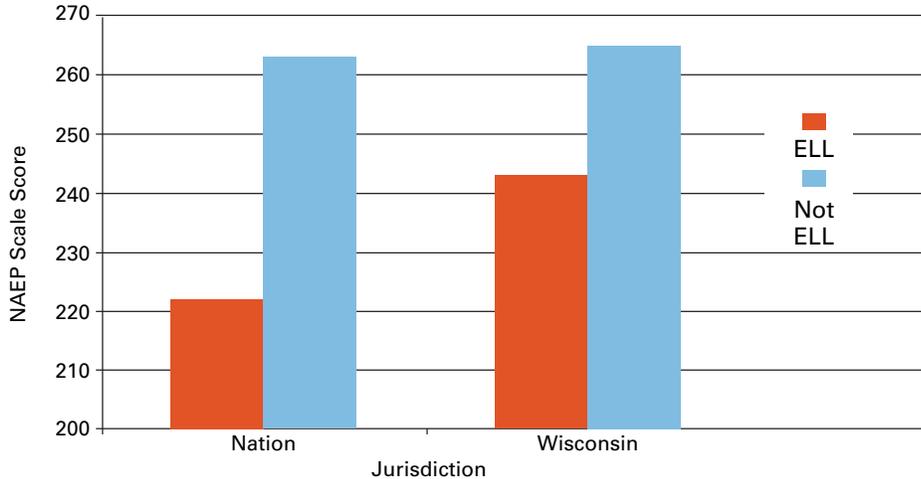


Table 7

Data Disclaimer

The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) has made a reasonable effort to ensure that the attached data/records are up-to-date, accurate, complete, and comprehensive at the time of disclosure. These records reflect data as reported to this agency by the educational community we serve for the reporting period indicated. These records are a true and accurate representation of the data on file at the DPI. Authenticated information is accurate only as of the time of validation and verification. The DPI is not responsible for data that is misinterpreted or altered in any way. Derived conclusions and analyses generated from this data are not to be considered attributable to the DPI. Willful intent to alter and intentional tampering with public records is punishable under s. 946.72, Wis. Stats. Offenses against computer data and programs are punishable under s. 943.70 (2), Wis. Stats.

Appendix 2: Resources from Reports

Six Major Challenges to Improving Adolescent ELL Literacy

1. Lack of common criteria for identifying ELLs and tracking their academic performance
2. Lack of appropriate assessments
3. Inadequate educator capacity for improving literacy in ELLs
4. Lack of appropriate and flexible program options
5. Inadequate use of research-based instructional practices
6. Lack of strong and coherent research agenda about adolescent ELL literacy

Short, Deborah J. and Shannon Fitzsimmons. 2007. *Double the Work: Challenges and Solutions to Acquiring Language and Academic Literacy for Adolescent English Language Learners—A Report to Carnegie Corporation of New York*. Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education. <http://www.all4ed.org/files/DoubleWork.pdf> (accessed October 27, 2008), 14.

Eleven Elements of Effective Adolescent Writing Instruction

This report identifies 11 elements of current writing instruction found to be effective for helping adolescent students learn to write well and to use writing as a tool for learning. It is important to note that all of the elements are supported by rigorous research, but that even when used together, they do not constitute a full writing curriculum

1. **Writing Strategies**, which involves teaching students strategies for planning, revising, and editing their compositions
2. **Summarization**, which involves explicitly and systematically teaching students how to summarize texts
3. **Collaborative Writing**, which uses instructional arrangements in which adolescents work together to plan, draft, revise, and edit their compositions
4. **Specific Product Goals**, which assigns students specific, reachable goals for the writing they are to complete
5. **Word Processing**, which uses computers and word processors as instructional supports for writing assignments
6. **Sentence Combining**, which involves teaching students to construct more complex, sophisticated sentences
7. **Prewriting**, which engages students in activities designed to help them generate or organize ideas for their composition
8. **Inquiry Activities**, which engages students in analyzing immediate, concrete data to help them develop ideas and content for a particular writing task
9. **Process Writing Approach**, which interweaves a number of writing instructional activities in a workshop environment that stresses extended writing opportunities, writing for authentic audiences, personalized instruction, and cycles of writing
10. **Study of Models**, which provides students with opportunities to read, analyze, and emulate models of good writing
11. **Writing for Content Learning**, which uses writing as a tool for learning content material

The *Writing Next* elements do not constitute a full writing curriculum, any more than the *Reading Next* elements did for reading. However, all of the *Writing Next* instructional elements have shown clear results for improving students' writing. They can be combined in flexible ways to strengthen adolescents' literacy development. The authors hope that besides providing research-supported information about effective writing instruction for classroom teachers, this report will stimulate discussion and action at policy and research levels, leading to solid improvements in writing instruction in grades 4 to 12 nationwide.

Graham, Steve and Dolores Perin. 2007. *Writing Next: Effective Strategies to Improve Writing of Adolescents in Middle and High Schools—A Report to Carnegie Corporation of New York*. Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education. <http://www.all4ed.org/files/WritingNext.pdf> (accessed October 27, 2008), 4–5.

Eight Strategies for Improving Adolescent Literacy

1. Identify students' literacy needs
2. Make adolescent literacy a priority in your district
3. Make time for literacy
4. Support strong professional development
5. Look for and nurture literacy leaders
6. Align your district's resources to support what works
7. Keep track of what's happening
8. Bring in the community

The Next Chapter: A School Board Guide to Improving Adolescent Literacy. 2006. Alexandria, VA: National School Boards Association. <http://www.carnegie.org/pdf/literacy/NSBTheNextChapter.pdf> (accessed October 27, 2008), Table of Contents.

The Fifteen Key Elements of Effective Adolescent Literacy Programs

Instructional Improvements	Infrastructure Improvements
1. Direct, explicit, comprehension instruction, which is instruction in the strategies and processes that proficient readers use to understand what they read, including summarizing, keeping track of one’s own understanding, and a host of other practices	10. Extended time for literacy, which includes approximately two to four hours of literacy instruction and practice that takes place in language arts and content area classes
2. Effective instructional principles embedded in content, including language arts teachers using content area texts and content area teachers providing instruction and practice in reading and writing skills specific to their subject area	11. Professional development that is both long term and ongoing
3. Motivation and self-directed learning, which includes building motivation to read and learn and providing students with the instruction and supports needed for independent learning tasks they will face after graduation	12. Ongoing summative assessment of students and programs, which is more formal and provides data that are reported for accountability and research purposes
4. Text-based collaborative learning, which involves students interacting with one another around a variety of texts	13. Teacher teams, which are interdisciplinary teams that meet regularly to discuss students and align instruction
5. Strategic tutoring, which provides students with intense individualized reading, writing, and content instruction as needed	14. Leadership, which can come from principals and teachers who have a solid understanding of how to teach reading and writing to the full array of students present in schools
6. Diverse texts, which are texts at a variety of difficulty levels and on a variety of topics	15. A comprehensive and coordinated literacy program, which is interdisciplinary and interdepartmental and may even coordinate with out-of-school organizations and the local community
7. Intensive writing, including instruction connected to the kinds of writing tasks students will have to perform well in high school and beyond	
8. A technology component, which includes technology as a tool for, and a topic of, literacy instruction	
9. Ongoing formative assessment of students, which is informal, often daily assessment of how students are progressing under current instructional practices	

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* One of the key resources used by the Adolescent Literacy Task Force.

