

## Guest Editorial

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### Libraries help us achieve our goals

*A guest editorial for National Library Week and School Library Month by Tony Evers, State Superintendent of Public Instruction*

For nearly fifty years now, Wisconsin has coordinated schools and libraries through the same state agency, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

It makes perfect sense. In our communities, we rely on these two neighborhood treasures for overlapping purposes. They are where we learn what we need to, to achieve what we want to. So, it's hard to argue with the theme of this year's National Library Week, April 13 to 19: "Lives change @ your library."

You don't have to explain a library's benefits to young children, who typically run, not walk, through the door. For them, this early childhood literacy environment is a joyful place, where they can learn, grow, and find their path. That's one reason library services are one of the best investments out there for developing skills those kids will use for the rest of their lives.

Later, our school libraries continue to help us engage and learn – not just by providing access to books and technology, but also because our teacher librarians have expert training in the best ways to *use* these resources – a good reason to celebrate School Library Month this April, too.

As adults, many of us depend on libraries to help us better provide for our families or move closer to lives we want to live. If you want a job but can't afford Internet access, libraries are your friend. Web access is required not only to research and learn about employers and current openings, but even to apply for many positions these days. And then there are citizens who visit libraries for other goals, like training, research assistance, or hard-to-find information that's available through our advanced interlibrary loan system.

Our libraries constantly innovate and develop, striving to address needs like these. I am proud to hear story after story of our public libraries cooperating with local partners to bring new services to their communities. Staff at these community treasures are always stretching their resources to serve you better – especially after recent budgets significantly cut state funding for libraries while the number of patrons to serve remained high.

I encourage you to celebrate National Library Week, and School Library Month, by making the most of your nearest library and all it has to offer. Like our schools, libraries are really about increasing our potential – and that's worth celebrating any time of year.

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**NOTE:** A high-resolution photo of the state superintendent is available on the Department of Public Instruction "Media Contacts and Resources" webpage at [http://news.dpi.wi.gov/eis\\_vm-media](http://news.dpi.wi.gov/eis_vm-media). This editorial is available electronically at [http://news.dpi.wi.gov/files/eis/dpinr2014\\_52.pdf](http://news.dpi.wi.gov/files/eis/dpinr2014_52.pdf).