

## News Release

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### Evers launches ‘Promoting Excellence for All’ report and website during State of Education address

MADISON — State Superintendent Tony Evers unveiled the Promoting Excellence for All report and website Thursday, products of the task force he appointed in April to tackle Wisconsin’s achievement gap.

“There is no more pressing issue in Wisconsin than the gap in academic achievement between students of color and their peers,” he said. “The educators I appointed to my Achievement Gap Task Force embraced that concept. The results are a report and website that challenge us to implement proven strategies that promote excellence for all and will close gaps among student groups.”

Evers tapped Mequon-Thiensville Superintendent Demond Means to chair the Promoting Excellence for All: State Superintendent’s Task Force on Wisconsin’s Achievement Gap. Seventeen educators from publicly funded schools across the state — traditional public, charter, and choice — brought their expertise to the effort. The 12 teachers and five principals were from schools where the achievement gap between students of color and white students was closing, and the achievement of students of color was growing at a higher rate than the state average. Their common ground was the work they were doing every day to help all children reach their full potential.

“The task force embraced what was truly best for kids,” Evers said. “They understood that poverty matters. However, they also concluded that if we don’t address the issue of race head on, we will fail. Many of their recommendations revolve around the importance of relationships as well as honoring different cultures. I am so pleased with their work. Every school in the state can benefit from using one or more of the ideas they researched. From the Angel List and Focused Events to Cultural Competency and Relationship Building, every strategy has been tried and tested to ensure it is effective and makes a difference for students.”

The strategies the task force is promoting span four broad categories: effective instruction, student-teacher relationships, family and community engagement, and school and instructional leadership. The four focus areas are based on school improvement and achievement gap research from the past two decades and may be familiar to those who have followed that research.

(more)

“Why now,” Evers asked rhetorically. “Simply, achievement gaps aren’t closing fast enough. Our kids need us to do more. Too often, school reforms come from policymakers rather than practitioners. The task force report and website, and learning modules that will follow, are resources from educators, for educators. The strategies are powerful tools, and in the hands of educators who believe their efforts matter, they will improve student learning and academic achievement.”

Evers noted that despite being one of the top states for ACT college admission scores, Wisconsin also has one of the largest achievement gaps in mathematics and reading for students of color. And although the state has one of the nation’s highest graduation rates, Wisconsin also has one in four Hispanic and American Indian students drop out, and one in three African-American students drop out each year. These dropouts represent lost opportunity for the individual, for society, for the economy.

“We know that families want the best for their kids. They want their children to have a chance at success,” Evers said. “The research is clear. Family engagement is one of the cheapest and most effective educational reforms available to our schools. Students have better attendance; higher achievement, credit completion, and graduation rates; and lower incidences of discipline when families are involved in school. And schools that build those relationships, that create culturally sensitive welcoming environments, have higher levels of family engagement.”

The task force report acknowledges that addressing disparities in academic achievement will require leaders and citizens to explore ways to improve the lives of all residents. While the strategies highlighted in the task force report and explained in further detail on the Promoting Excellence for All [website](#) will support Wisconsin educators in closing achievement gaps, alone, they will not close the gaps.

“We need communities to begin the sustained dialogue on how to work together to address achievement for all students,” Evers said. “And, our state’s educators will need the assistance of legislators, the business community, parents, and citizens to truly close achievement gaps so all students will graduate college and career ready. By working together, we can do this. Our kids are counting on us.”

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**NOTE:** The Promoting Excellence for All website can be found at <http://statesupt.dpi.wi.gov/excforall>. The introductory video, *Closing Achievement Gaps: Strategies for Promoting Excellence for All in Wisconsin*, is at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YH-VvjNsL2Q>. This news release is available electronically at [http://news.dpi.wi.gov/files/eis/pdf/dpinr2014\\_102.pdf](http://news.dpi.wi.gov/files/eis/pdf/dpinr2014_102.pdf).