

# A NEW DESIGN FOR EDUCATION IN WISCONSIN

SCHOOLS CAPABLE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

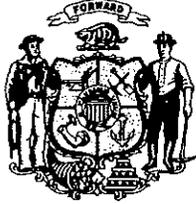
A Report to:

Honorable Tommy G. Thompson, Governor

Dr. Herbert J. Grover, Superintendent of Public Instruction

Commission on Schools for the 21st Century  
Ody J. Fish, Chair

State of Wisconsin, December, 1990



**TOMMY G. THOMPSON**

**Governor  
State of Wisconsin**

December 21, 1990

To Chairman Ody J. Fish and Members  
of the Commission on Schools for the 21st Century:

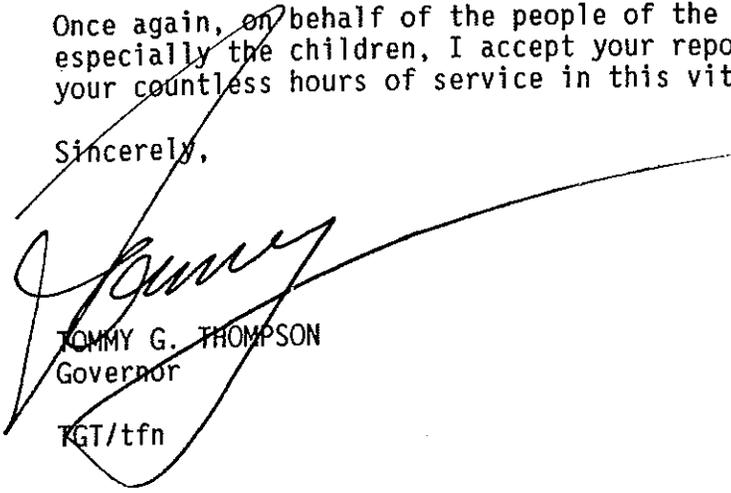
It is my distinct pleasure to accept from you the final report of the Commission on Schools for the 21st Century, entitled, A New Design for Education in Wisconsin: Schools Capable of Continuous Improvement. This report will have long-lasting significance and will be used by educators and policy-makers for years to come. Generations of Wisconsin residents will benefit from your exhaustive work on behalf of our children.

We in Wisconsin are justifiably proud of our educational system. Wisconsin students of all ages have the privilege of attending a host of outstanding public and private educational institutions.

As we approach the twenty-first century, it is vital that we improve our educational system to ensure the international competitiveness and success of our students. Our continued future economic and political strength depends upon our developing an educational system which is second to none. That is why your work is so important. This report will provide us with the framework for education reform in Wisconsin in the years ahead.

Once again, on behalf of the people of the State of Wisconsin, especially the children, I accept your report and thank you for your countless hours of service in this vital effort.

Sincerely,

  
TOMMY G. THOMPSON  
Governor

TGT/tfn

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**Herbert J. Grover**  
Superintendent of Public Instruction

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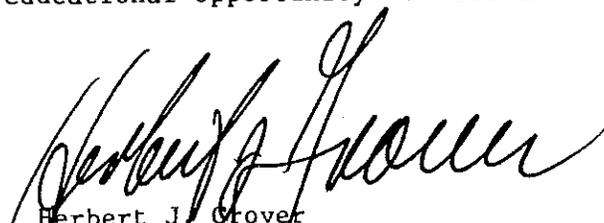
The charge for the Commission on Schools for the 21st Century created an ambitious and wide-ranging agenda for the 76 committed citizens who agreed to serve. For the past eight months, the Commissioners have met often, thought deeply, worked hard and debated much. Through considerable effort and out of concern for the future of Wisconsin's public schools, the Commission produced a comprehensive and complex report, and I am pleased to receive it.

This report contains many interesting ideas and recommendations. Its strong advocacy for early childhood education and support of families is timely. Never before has the relationship between the child's family and community experience and success in education been more self-evident. We have been slow to recognize and react to the effects of our collective failure to adequately nurture, in particular, our disadvantaged children. The Commission's recommendations address this and I applaud them for their efforts.

The report's focus on learner outcomes and tying education assessment and accountability to those outcomes charts a promising direction. Its recognition of the pressing need for investment in the recruitment, retraining and renewal of our teachers and administrators is commendable. The idea of multiple learning options for qualified 11th and 12th graders is exactly the direction our society needs to go if we are to provide a smooth school-to-work and life transition for youth. And since public education is a state responsibility, the call for a 50% state share of education funding is an important step.

While on balance, the report charts a positive direction for public education, some individual recommendations deserve further consideration and will undoubtedly add to the challenge of implementation. And because the report is complex and calls for far reaching change, the many recommendations cannot be digested, debated and implemented quickly nor cheaply. In fact, many of the ideas, like each student having an individual pupil portfolio to document learning mastery, may well take a decade of steady work before becoming a reality.

I wish to commend the individual Commissioners and Commission staff members for their hard work and thoughtful report. I look forward to the lively debate to follow on the Implementation Committee. As we reaffirm our commitment to our children and public schools, this report will surely help light the way to an equal and high quality educational opportunity for all children both now and in the century ahead.

  
Herbert J. Grover  
State Superintendent

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# IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE

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Dr. Herbert J. Grover, State Superintendent of Public Instruction

Ody J. Fish, Commission Chair

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Warren P. Knowles

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Senator David Helbach,

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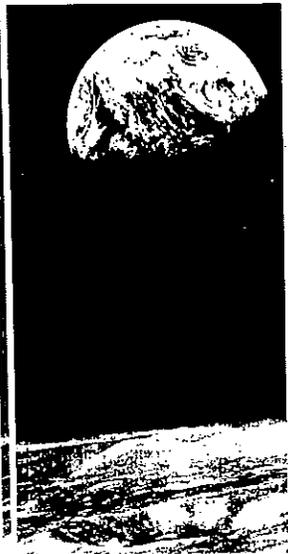
Kwame Salter, Chair

Student Readiness Committee

Gene Arn

Executive Director

The Implementation Committee serves only as an advisory group to recommend procedures to facilitate best methods to address issues for resolution. Membership does not imply support for all initiatives by all members.



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **A New Design for Education in Wisconsin Commission on Schools for the 21st Century**

Wisconsin's economic future and the quality of life of its citizens will depend on the ability of public education to prepare students for the unique challenges of the next hundred years. These challenges will only be met if Wisconsin schools have a clear mission directed by the educational goals of the state and achieved through a carefully designed curriculum. These challenges are not limited to academic preparation. Our educational policies must also consider the changing needs of the students' families and communities.

The Commission believes that the success of our schools must be judged by the performance of students, not merely compliance with state mandates. It also believes that the responsibility to manage schools must be moved to the school level and that teachers, parents, and students must participate in improving educational programs in their neighborhoods.

The Commission's recommendations call for restructuring our public schools to achieve a new set of goals. These goals reflect the importance of having an educated and responsible citizenry for a democratic society capable of competing in a world class economy. A renewed partnership among schools, parents, and the community will be required.

Quality must be the primary concern in all aspects of schooling, with teachers and administrators meeting exemplary rather than merely satisfactory standards in their work.

**■ Goal: The success of Wisconsin schools will be measured by performance outcomes, and all schools will improve their performance.**

#### **Selected Recommendations:**

The state should adopt an outcome-oriented educational policy based on a set of goals which define what all Wisconsin high school graduates are expected to know and be able to do as a result of their education. Teaching techniques should center on the students as "workers," actively engaged in learning, with teachers serving cooperatively as "coaches."

State educational goals should be expressed in a statewide curriculum framework that will guide local curriculum development. Each school should develop its own strategy for achieving the expected outcomes and should be judged on the results.

Academic performance should be assessed at regular intervals throughout a student's elementary and secondary schooling. Assessment should emphasize real-life problem-solving and preparation for a personally fulfilling life and productive work. Assessment should assist schools and parents in planning developmentally appropriate educational programs throughout the student's school years.

At the completion of the tenth grade, students should have demonstrated a level of mastery currently associated with graduation from high school.

For juniors and seniors, schools should provide learning options designed to meet the varying needs, talents, and interests of high school students. These options should provide avenues to advanced academic achievement and solid preparation for jobs and careers. They should

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include: continued emphasis on the common essential learner outcomes; college preparation including course work at universities or colleges; programs coordinating the last two years of high school with two-year vocational-technical college programs; and participation in cooperative learning-work and apprenticeship programs.

The state should evaluate the performance outcomes of each school-district and provide the findings in School Report Cards to school boards, school principals and staff, parents and students, and the community at large.

Successful schools should be recognized and rewarded with incentive grants.

School improvement teams should assist the lowest performing schools with planning, evaluation, organization, and management.

**■ Goal: All children will be ready to begin school.**

**Selected Recommendations:**

All children should be assessed at age three and provided with opportunities for improving learning readiness based on parental guidance and involvement.

Four-year-old children should have access to kindergarten programs or other learning experiences.

Full-day kindergarten should be required for five-year-old children.

**■ Goal: Parents will be fully involved in the educational process.**

**Selected Recommendations:**

Parents should be allowed to choose any public school within their district or in any other district. Quality neighborhood schools should be provided as the primary option.

Parents should participate through School Councils and share in decisions important to their children's education.

Employers should be encouraged to give parents adequate time for school visits and parent conferences.

Resource centers should be established as part of an overall effort to prepare parents for their important role in promoting learning.

**■ Goal: Quality education will be achieved through community partnerships.**

**Selected Recommendations:**

School-employer partnerships should promote student readiness for the world of work through student apprenticeship programs, teacher internships in business, and other forms of cooperation.

A State Commission on Children and Families should have sufficient authority to oversee state policy related to children and families; each community should establish an interagency coordinating council to provide a foundation of services.

School facilities should be used by the community as year-round Lifelong Learning Centers.

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An Education Service Corps of older adult volunteers should be created to serve the schools.  
All Wisconsin schools should offer nutritious breakfast, lunch, and milk programs.

**■ Goal: Wisconsin teachers will have the resources, preparation, and encouragement to teach successfully in a results-oriented environment.**

**Selected Recommendations:**

Through shared governance, teachers should participate as members of the school management team in the development of policies, programs, school organization, personnel administration, and the allocation of budget.

Beginning teachers should serve a three-year probationary period and receive special assistance through staff orientation, mentoring, and flexible assignments.

Professional development for teachers should be a high priority for the 21st century.

Teachers should have adequate time for collaboration in course planning and lesson preparation.

Teachers should be given the opportunity to advance in their profession through career ladders. Twelve-month contracts should become an option.

Career counseling should be available for teachers who are a poor fit in teaching and need assistance in finding more appropriate jobs.

School boards should have a fair, reasonable procedure for dismissing inadequate teachers.

**■ Goal: The learning environment will provide every opportunity for student success.**

**Selected Recommendations:**

Students and teachers should have computers and state-of-the-art technology necessary to achieve proficiency in integrated applications of knowledge and higher-order problem solving.

Schools should have electronic on-line library circulation systems and communication linkages, including interactive educational telecommunication systems for distance learning.

**■ Goal: School finance will be fair and adequate.**

**Selected Recommendations:**

The state share of school costs should be increased from the current 46% to 50% by 1992-93.

The equalization features of the school funding formula should be strengthened to support adequate programs in districts least able to pay, and to provide stronger spending disincentives for those districts with high costs-per-pupil.

The extra costs associated with overcoming the disadvantaged backgrounds of some children should be recognized through an additional 10% weight for these students in the funding formula.

Costly regulation and auditing of process and inputs in school operations should be kept to a minimum, with emphasis shifted to an assessment of educational outcomes.

Specific recommendations to achieve these goals are detailed in the report that follows.