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New school year holds promise

By Tony Evers, State Superintendent of Public Instruction

The new school year holds so much promise. There is excitement unleashed when school doors open and our teachers, principals, and staff welcome our students and parents. This year, the efforts we’ve been working on take root. We have new and more rigorous expectations for students in math and English language arts that are based on Wisconsin’s world-class academic standards. Our students will take new assessments, aligned to those standards and piloted last year, that will provide better information on their achievement and areas that can be improved. And, our educator effectiveness system will be utilized statewide to provide teachers and principals with feedback on their work that will help them be better educators.

Change takes time to gain hold. We adopted the math and English language arts standards in 2010 and Wisconsin became part of a consortium working on new assessments shortly after that. By collaborating with teachers, principals, and superintendents, we developed an evaluation system that honors the work educators do with students inside the classroom, with each other, and in the community to move education forward. These are worthy efforts, grounded in common sense strategies that work because the singular focus is to improve achievement for all students. All of this supports our efforts to make every classroom a center for learning and enjoyment.

Wisconsin has a strong educational system. We continue to have some of the nation’s highest graduation rates and college admission test scores. This is thanks to the work of our students with support from the parents, teachers, school administrators, and other school staff, as well as their local communities. Yet, serious action is still needed for our students. Along with our top performance, Wisconsin has some of the worst achievement gaps in the nation. This we must change. A group of talented educators is working on strategies and resources that will help us reverse the achievement gap. We will see results from their work in the coming months.

It takes hard work sustained over time by educators and communities to fulfill our vision of a better education and future for our kids. There’s no overnight transformation. Together, we can ensure every student returns to a classroom where the joy of learning is valued and experienced.

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