

News Release

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Wisconsin wins \$14 million grant for Safe and Supportive Schools

MADISON — Wisconsin is among 11 states winning a competitive federal grant to improve learning conditions for students through the Safe and Supportive Schools grant program.

The \$3.5 million award announced this week is for the first year of a four-year, \$14 million project. The Department of Public Instruction will use the first-year funds to expand the on-line youth risk behavior survey to include school climate data, develop a school safety score formula, support school districts' selection of evidence-based interventions, and provide training and technical assistance to participating school districts. The program requires states to select a small number of school districts to participate in the project based on high needs, such as large numbers or high rates of students expelled or suspended for drug- or weapon-related incidents.

The DPI and participating districts will conduct a thorough assessment of all high schools to determine a school safety score, using both survey data and incident data to rate the physical and emotional safety of the school setting. School safety scores will be used to determine which schools will receive funds for intervention activities in subsequent years of the grant. Interventions are intended to improve student achievement by creating a healthier school environment through reduced violence and alcohol and drug use. The survey will be administered annually to facilitate evaluation of the grant program.

“Students need to feel safe in school,” said State Superintendent Tony Evers. “Incidents of bullying, harassment, or violence are detrimental to learning. Our schools need to have fewer suspensions and zero use of alcohol and other drugs by students to create an environment that truly supports academic achievement.”

The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools awarded \$38.8 million in first-year Safe and Supportive School grants. Rather than using a formula to distribute funds to all public schools as the education department has done in past years, the Safe and Supportive Schools grants are a national discretionary grant program similar to Race to the Top funding.

“I am so pleased that Wisconsin's application was among the handful nationwide to be funded,” Evers said. “The data we collect on school safety and the interventions schools implement as part of this grant will help schools and the DPI to focus activities where they can be most successful.”

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