

State of Education Address Excerpts

September 26, 2013 — State Capitol Rotunda

By State Superintendent Tony Evers

It's both an exciting time and a challenging time for public schools and public libraries. We're changing what children learn, how they're taught and tested, and how schools and educators are evaluated. Our schools are investing in innovation and pursuing excellence at an unprecedented pace.

But to succeed, we need to stay the course and find common ground. Wisconsin has always embraced a shared value of public education — the great equalizer. But, the battle lines that have been drawn in recent years have divided communities, turned educators into enemies, and drained resources from our public schools. It has sometimes seemed as if the very idea of public education itself is being called into question.

We cannot go back to a time when our standards were a mile wide and an inch deep, leaving too many kids ill prepared for the demands of college and a career. We cannot pull the rug out from under thousands of kids, parents, and educators who have spent the past three years working to reach these new, higher expectations that we have set for them. To do so would have deep and far reaching consequences for our kids, and for our state. We must put our kids above our politics. And we owe it to them to stay the course.

I still believe that Wisconsinites remain committed to ensuring that every child, no matter where they live or how much money their parents make, can graduate from high school prepared for that next step — whether it's directly into a career, college, or the military.

As part of *Agenda 2017*, we have increased graduation rates to nation-leading levels, and set rigorous standards, modernized testing, improved reading instruction, and reformed accountability systems for educators and schools. And speaking of accountability, hey voucher schools — you get taxpayer money; you must be part of the new accountability system. No more excuses.

During my second term, we will tackle personalized learning, expand access to career and technical education and dual credit opportunities, create academic and career plans for all students, and reform school finance. ... This is vital work, and it's hard work. It takes commitment, leadership at all levels, and the resources to get it done right.

Now is the time to gather the public support and the political will to stay the course on our fundamental reforms, fix our broken school funding system, and expand opportunities for all of Wisconsin's children.

Public education in Wisconsin cannot be strong without strong teachers. In this time of great change, we need our educators invested and involved. We must once again find a way to value, honor, and invest in public service, especially teaching.

We've got much to be proud of, and a lot yet to do. As your state superintendent, I will continue to drive our agenda forward and advocate for our kids — for all of Wisconsin's children.

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Tony Evers is Wisconsin's elected state superintendent of public instruction.