

## News Release

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### Moving Wisconsin forward

*Evers praises perseverance, resilience, and grit of Wisconsin students and teachers*

MADISON — In his State of Education address at the Capitol in Madison, State Superintendent Tony Evers praised Wisconsin’s students and teachers for their perseverance, resilience, and grit. “They are able to withstand or recover quickly from difficult conditions and do incredible things,” he said.

“Some wonderful things have been happening in our public schools and libraries,” he added. “In the coming year, we need to stay focused, obnoxiously positive, and work together to educate every child, ensuring they are college and career ready.”

His speech looked back at the past year and laid out accomplishments and challenges facing the education community. He highlighted continuing work on Promoting Excellence for All, which includes new materials, videos, learning modules, and recommendations for engaging families and communities in the work of closing achievement gaps. His Parent Advisory Council has spent the past year articulating their own tips to give a parent’s perspective on Promoting Excellence for All strategies.

#### Looking Back

Evers noted that the best part of his job is visiting schools and meeting kids, educators, school leaders, and families. In his dozens of visits he said he has never once been disappointed in the dedication of Wisconsin’s educators and the engagement of students.

“We have a lot to be proud of in Wisconsin. I consistently see parent involvement, great leadership, and a supportive business community.”

“In every year since the 2009-10 school year:

- The graduation rate, including graduation for students of color, students with disabilities, and students who are economically disadvantaged has increased;
- Fewer students, including students of color, have dropped out of high school;
- Fewer students were being suspended or expelled;
- The truancy rate has decreased;
- Student attendance has increased;
- Students reported less alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana use;

(more)

- Students spent more time being physically active;
- More students are participating in co-curricular academic activities and athletic activities; and
- More students are receiving college credit for coursework they do in high school.”

“...[T]hese steps forward are due to the perseverance, grit, and resilience of our students and educators.”

### Challenges along the Way

Evers noted that parent and citizen groups had a huge impact on school funding in the recently enacted budget and applauded them for standing up for strong public schools.

“We cannot continue to neglect our obligation to provide students with a fundamental right to an equal opportunity for a sound basic education. The school funding system in Wisconsin has changed in the past 20 years, and we can no longer say that all our students are receiving that basic right.”

“Now, we have both worked with and disagreed with Governor Walker and legislative leaders on numerous issues in the past five years. At the end of the day, most people think that schools are doing good things for kids in Wisconsin. That will continue to be the focus of our work.”

Mentioning current political events, Evers called it unfortunate that a single legislator has introduced another divisive distraction directed at our schools.

“The founders of our state believed the duties and the direct election of a state superintendent of public instruction to be so important they enshrined those powers in the constitution. That action helped to create a strong system of public schools that are the envy of many states across the country. Taking that vote away from parents and other folks at the local level is a sad attack at the heart of our democracy and our state’s history.”

### Moving Forward

Educators have been working for years on initiatives that are part of Agenda 2017, the goal of every child a graduate ready for college or careers. Evers noted as a result of the difficult work:

“We have raised our expectations in terms of college and career ready standards.

“We have updated our state assessment system from an outdated paper and pencil test to something that is more useful and measures the increased rigor in our classrooms.

“We have implemented more efficient and effective ways to collect, display, and examine data, and are developing new tools to use that will improve instruction.

“We have begun the difficult task of defining what it means to be a highly effective educator and school leader, as well as what it means to have a highly effective school and district. Our accountability system must be about supporting improvement at the educator, school, and district level. It is not about punishing educators or shaming schools.”

Evers defined college and career readiness, saying

“Our vision for college and career readiness is not a political fad, and it is not just about academic preparation. Meeting proficiency on a statewide summative test is important, but it is not all that we want for our kids.

“The Wisconsin way of college and career readiness also values social and emotional competence and includes the skills and habits we collectively value. Our graduates must be critical thinkers, communicate effectively, collaborate with others, and use creativity to solve real problems. Our kids must also persist and adapt to survive difficult times that are inevitable in life.”

He added that the future of our state depends on the success of our schools in these non-tested areas and in political and school leaders finding common ground that unites our efforts on behalf of Wisconsin’s students.

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**NOTES:** The full text of the State of Education speech is available on the Department of Public Instruction newsroom website [http://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/news-release/dpinr2015\\_89.pdf](http://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/news-release/dpinr2015_89.pdf). This news release is available electronically at [http://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/news-release/dpinr2015\\_90.pdf](http://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/news-release/dpinr2015_90.pdf). Audio and video of the speech can be found at <http://dpi.wi.gov/statesupt/about/speeches>.