

## Guest Editorial

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### We must recommit to putting our children's education first, together

*A back-to-school message from State Superintendent Carolyn Stanford Taylor*

The 2020-21 school year will have a different look and feel because of the current reality of living and operating in a COVID-19 environment. But, when we bring our collective strength and wisdom together in service to our students, families, and communities, I have no doubt we will have a successful year.

The Department of Public Instruction's mission remains the same: Ensure every student has what they need to learn when they need it. To accomplish this, Wisconsin must work in partnership to provide the highest-quality education for our students. We have a unique opportunity to focus our time and effort on closing existing gaps and addressing inequities in our educational system.

When students, educators, parents, families, and communities work together, Wisconsin achieves great things. The pandemic and the racial and social justice movement have served to highlight the systemic inequities existing in our cities, state, and nation. As a state, we must strive to reduce and remove barriers and challenges standing in the way of all students receiving a quality education. Working to improve access to tools and resources needed to effectively learn is essential. We must continue to encourage lifelong learning, and recommit to putting our students' education first.

To the tens of thousands of educators across our state: Thank you for your dedication and commitment to our students. Continue to innovate, reimagine, and stay connected through this unusual and difficult time. Take a few moments each day to recognize the inspiration you bring, the impact you make, and the critical role you play in the lives of our students.

To the hundreds of thousands of Wisconsin students: No matter the circumstances, you have shown you can do anything you set your mind to. Challenge yourselves, and make this school year new and exciting. Make it the best one yet. Speak up and help your teachers by telling them what works for you and what does not. Be there for your peers, and always remember to be the best version of yourselves in all situations.

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To parents and families: Support of your children and their teachers is more critical now than ever before. Remain in communication with your school, trust they are looking out for the health and safety of your children, and have students' best interests as a top priority. Most of all, stay strong and resilient. Remember to take a breath, and realize we are all in this together.

As state superintendent, it is my pleasure to welcome Wisconsin students and educators back to school!

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**NOTE:** For a video message from State Superintendent Carolyn Stanford Taylor, visit [https://youtu.be/zXY1g\\_1r7Ew](https://youtu.be/zXY1g_1r7Ew). This guest editorial is available electronically at <https://dpi.wi.gov/news/releases/2020/stanford-taylor-back-to-school>.