2020-21
WISCONSIN RTI CENTER

impact
REPORT

ABOUT THIS REPORT

THE INFORMATION IN THIS REPORT is organized according to the stages of change that Wisconsin schools go through as they implement equitable, multi-level systems of supports to serve the needs of all learners.

First, we'll look at a brief summary of what the Wisconsin RtI Center accomplished in 2020-21 to help schools begin implementation.

Next, we'll dig deeper into why self-assessment is important.

Finally, we'll examine the impact that implementation has had on Wisconsin students by analysis of student outcome data; and through sharing five stories from Wisconsin schools and one story about an organization who is partnering with the center in this work. These short features reveal how our state's vision is being realized in each school's unique environment.
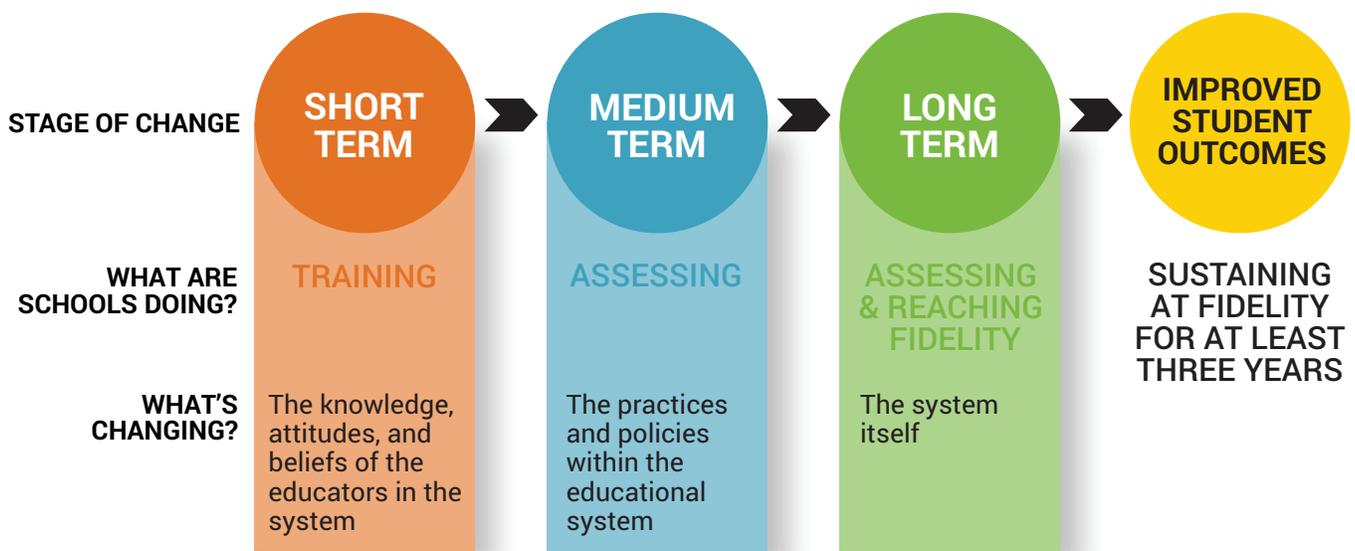
4 KEY MESSAGES

impact

1 We are focused on **equity**. Our work has been shown to impact all students, but we believe it's equally important to look at the impact that our work has on the **most underserved learners**, for example, our Black students and students with individualized education plans (IEP).

2 Implementation in an academic content area or in behavior both produce positive student outcomes. We often see **crossover between implementation** and how students are impacted. For example, behavior implementation can affect Forward Exam scores or academic implementation can reduce suspensions.

3 Implementation takes time. Rather than looking at one specific time period, our goal is to see **improvements over time**.

4 We look at **both** the impact implementation has on **schools overall** and the impact it has on **students**.

EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS CHANGE OCCURS IN STAGES

IN EDUCATION, systems change is a fundamental transformation of policies, processes, relationships, and power structures, as well as deeply held values and norms to achieve the goal of improved student outcomes for all. To measure impact on student outcomes, districts and schools need to sustain implementation of an equitable, multi-level system of supports.

Reaching the level of sustaining implementation takes a lot of time and effort. Implementation science tells us that it can take at least three to five years of implementation at fidelity (Fixsen, et al. 2005) to move even short-term outcomes. Research shows that most schools do not abandon school-wide PBIS after they have been implementing for three full years (Nese, et al. 2016). The Wisconsin RtI Center's focus is to move schools along this continuum.

STAGE OF CHANGE	SHORT TERM	MEDIUM TERM	LONG TERM	IMPROVED STUDENT OUTCOMES
WHAT ARE SCHOOLS DOING?	TRAINING	ASSESSING	ASSESSING & REACHING FIDELITY	SUSTAINING AT FIDELITY FOR AT LEAST THREE YEARS
WHAT'S CHANGING?	The knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs of the educators in the system	The practices and policies within the educational system	The system itself	

FIDELITY MATTERS

The reason that we're doing this work is—ultimately—to have a positive impact on student outcomes. We know from research that it's not enough to provide an intervention, but it has to be an evidence-based intervention that is delivered expertly and honestly. In fact, there's evidence that a poorly-implemented system actually harms students.
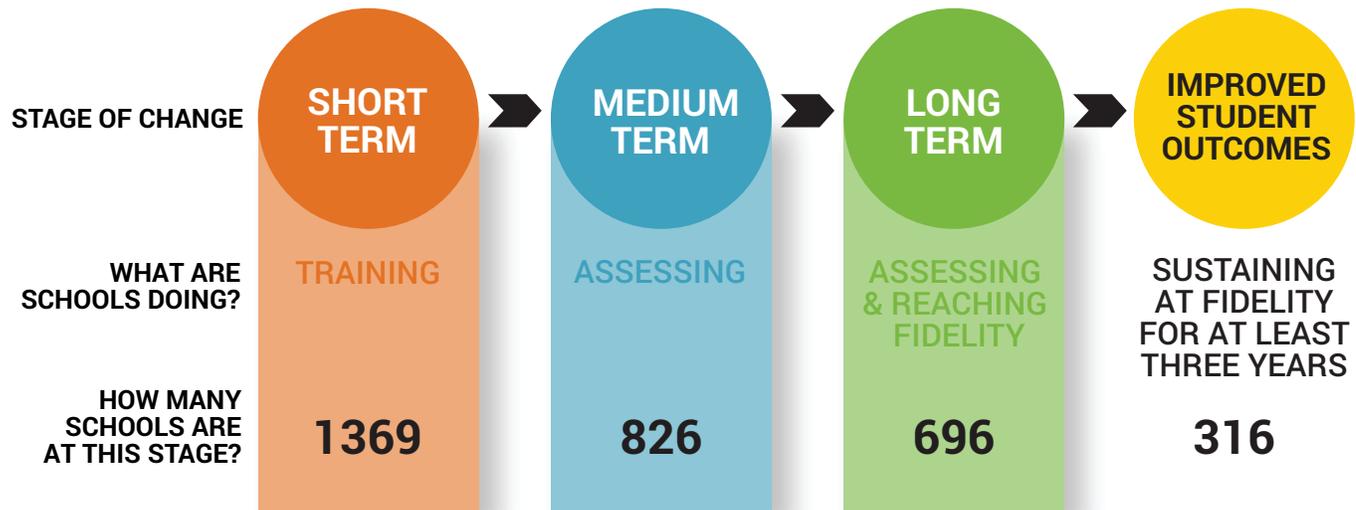
When a school accurately and consistently implements supports as designed *and* those supports achieve their intended results, that school has reached **fidelity**. It's only after a school has reached fidelity and is sustaining for several years that we can expect to see a connection to improved student outcomes.

Fixsen, D., Naoom, S., Blase, K., Friedman, R., Wallace, F. (2005). Implementation Research: A Synthesis of the Literature. Tamps, FL: University of South Florida, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, National Implementation Research Network.

Nese, R., McIntosh, K., Nese, J., Hoselton, R., Bloom, J., Johnson, N., . . . Ghemraoui, A. (2016). Predicting Abandonment of School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. Behavioral Disorders, 42(1), 261-270. doi:10.2307/26657369

PUTTING OUR THEORY INTO ACTION

Here is a brief glance of the number of Wisconsin schools who are in each stage of change. This information is based on the number of schools who have completed assessments (Tiered Fidelity Inventory or School-wide Implementation Review).

STAGE OF CHANGE	SHORT TERM	MEDIUM TERM	LONG TERM	IMPROVED STUDENT OUTCOMES
WHAT ARE SCHOOLS DOING?	TRAINING	ASSESSING	ASSESSING & REACHING FIDELITY	SUSTAINING AT FIDELITY FOR AT LEAST THREE YEARS
HOW MANY SCHOOLS ARE AT THIS STAGE?	1369	826	696	316

ACKNOWLEDGING COVID-19's IMPACT ON OUR WORK

WE WERE INSPIRED by the resilience displayed by the students, families, and staff of our Wisconsin schools during the school year of 2020-21, as the novel coronavirus continued to impact our nation. Schools and districts were focused on student and community health and well-being. Some were able to provide in-person instruction or utilize virtual instruction. Many developed a hybrid model of the two environments. Focus shifted to navigating how supports can be equitably provided in various situations.

At the Wisconsin RtI Center, we looked for new and effective ways to support our educators. All of our professional learning opportunities were offered virtually, as well as our PBIS Leadership Conference.

We continue to study the impact of implementation over time. Because schools and districts had limited ability to fully implement over the last two years, our ability to collect valid data has also been limited. We'll see repercussions of the pandemic in the data we are able to collect and review over the next several years; however, we are encouraged by the efforts from Wisconsin schools. For implementation stories on five of them, see p.13-17 of this report.

SHORT TERM

Changing the **knowledge, attitudes,** and **beliefs** of the educators in the system

WISCONSIN SCHOOLS engage in the work of implementing equitable, multi-level systems of supports through training and assistance from the Wisconsin RtI Center.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING IN 2020-21

This past school year, we continued offering professional learning opportunities to schools and districts. Here is a brief summary of those efforts:

39
schools engaged in 2020-21

141
schools received technical assistance in 2020-21

24
districts represented as a result of school engagement

84
districts received district-focused technical assistance

RECOGNIZED SCHOOLS PROGRAM IN 2020-21

Our recognition system commends schools for their efforts to implement and sustain equitable, multi-level systems of supports. Whether a school or district is just beginning to make changes to their system or if they have reached fidelity and are successfully sustaining systems' change, we believe in celebrating their progress. In 2020-21, we were pleased to recognize 841 unique schools.

841
unique schools were recognized in 2020-21

MEDIUM TERM

Changing the **practices** and **policies** within the educational system

Schools assess using the Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI), which measures behavior supports; and the School-wide Implementation Review (SIR), which measures reading and/or mathematics supports.

Professional learning is only the first step in the implementation of an equitable, multi-level system of supports. One of the most valuable tools to keep moving forward with implementation is **self-assessment of the system**.

When schools and districts schedule and complete assessments, there is a two-fold benefit: implementation improves and students demonstrate increased academic proficiency. Assessment data is a valuable resource when action planning for improvements.

REGULAR ASSESSMENT IS FUNDAMENTAL TO SUCCESS

Improved implementation

Implementation transforms school systems incrementally—not all at once. Self-assessment has been proven to keep schools on the path to continual improvement.

Each additional year of assessing **increased** the likelihood of a school being at fidelity by **84%** in 2020-2021.
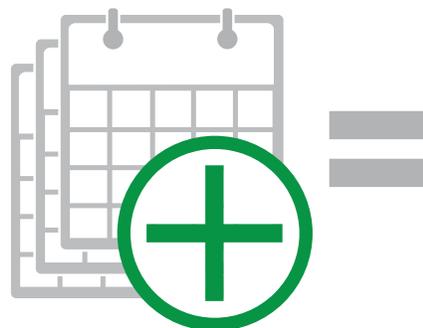
Each additional year of assessing increased the likelihood of a school being at fidelity by 84%

Improved student outcomes

Continual assessment is also important for student outcomes.

The amount of times a reading trained school missed an assessment was related to a decrease in student scores on the Forward ELA.

On average, missing an assessment was associated with a **4.3 point decrease** in average ELA score.

TFI

SIR
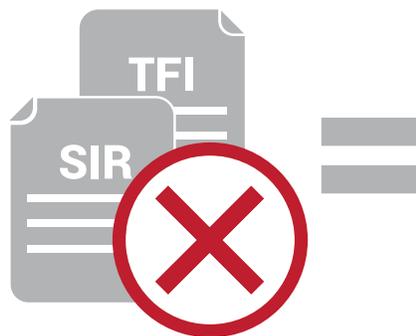
AVG. ELA SCORE

decreases by 4.3 points

LONG TERM — Changing the **system** itself

We believe that the implementation of an equitable, multi-level system of supports will benefit every learner in Wisconsin. Specifically, our priority focus areas for impact are **students with IEPs** and **students of color**.

USE OF STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DATA

When possible, we are using **statistically significant data**. This means that the outcome or difference shown is not likely due to chance. We are more confident that the outcomes are related to high implementation of an equitable, multi-level system of supports. With trend data, we can speculate about impact, but this lacks objectivity.

As you review this section of the report, watch for this icon; it indicates that the data is **statistically significant**.

DEFINITIONS

FIDELITY = when schools accurately and consistently implement supports as designed and those supports achieve their intended results

HIGH-IMPLEMENTING SCHOOL = a school implementing an equitable, multi-level system of supports with fidelity

SUSTAINING SCHOOL = a school implementing an equitable, multi-level system of supports with fidelity for 3 or more consecutive years

SUSPENSIONS NEGATIVELY IMPACT STUDENTS OVER THE COURSE OF THEIR LIVES

Research shows that suspensions have a long-term impact on those who receive them. Students not suspended see more positive long-term outcomes such as reduced dropouts and increased workforce productivity, compared to suspended students (Rosenbaum, 2018; Rumberger, 2016).
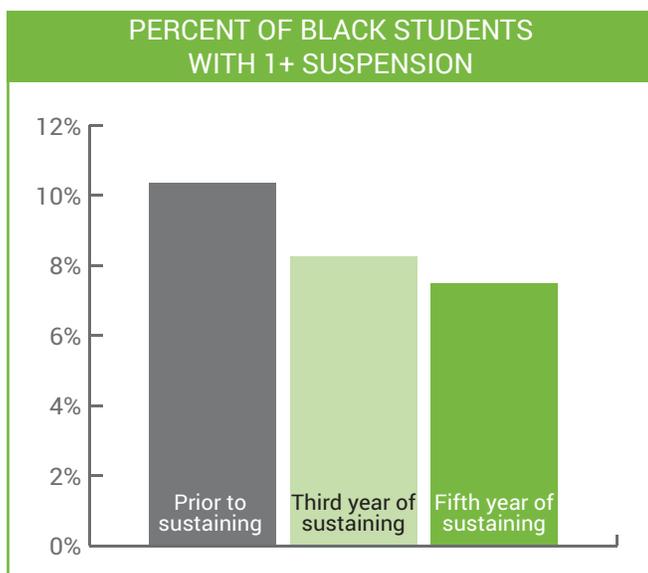
Twelve years after being suspended for the first time, youth were:

The study matched students on up to 60 variables to ensure those other variables did not influence the differences in outcomes, and to increase confidence in the likelihood that being suspended was the impacting factor on these outcome differences.
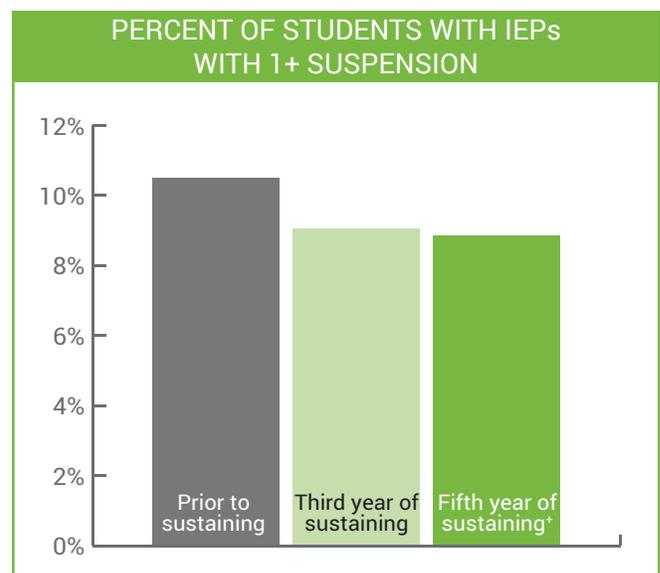
(Rosenbaum, 2018)

24% less likely to have earned a bachelor's degree than similar non-suspended youth

51% more likely to have been arrested two or more times than similar non-suspended youth

23% more likely to have been in prison than similar non-suspended youth

✸ SUSTAINING IMPLEMENTATION REDUCES SUSPENSION RATES

Suspensions reduce significantly with each year a school sustains fidelity.

PERCENT OF BLACK STUDENTS WITH 1+ SUSPENSION

	Prior to sustaining	Third year of sustaining	Fifth year of sustaining
	~10.3%	~8.2%	~7.4%

428 SUSTAINING SCHOOLS REPRESENTED

PERCENT OF STUDENTS WITH IEPs WITH 1+ SUSPENSION

	Prior to sustaining	Third year of sustaining	Fifth year of sustaining+
	~10.5%	~9.0%	~8.8%

461 SUSTAINING SCHOOLS REPRESENTED

+ The data in this column is not statistically significant

LONG TERM Changing the **system** itself

✺ SUSTAINING SCHOOLS SHOW MORE POSITIVE OUTCOMES
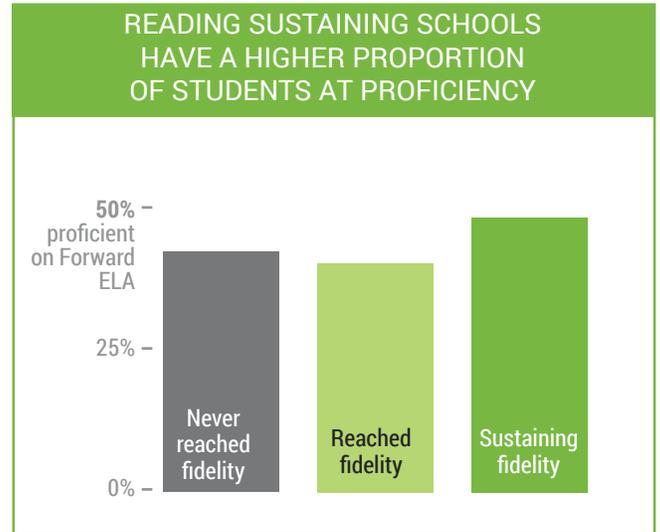
Students in sustaining schools show more positive outcomes than those in other schools that never assessed, never reached fidelity, or have not sustained fidelity.

Reading implementation is associated with increased Forward ELA scores

Schools that have been sustaining implementation in reading at fidelity have more students who are at proficient as measured by the Forward ELA Exam.
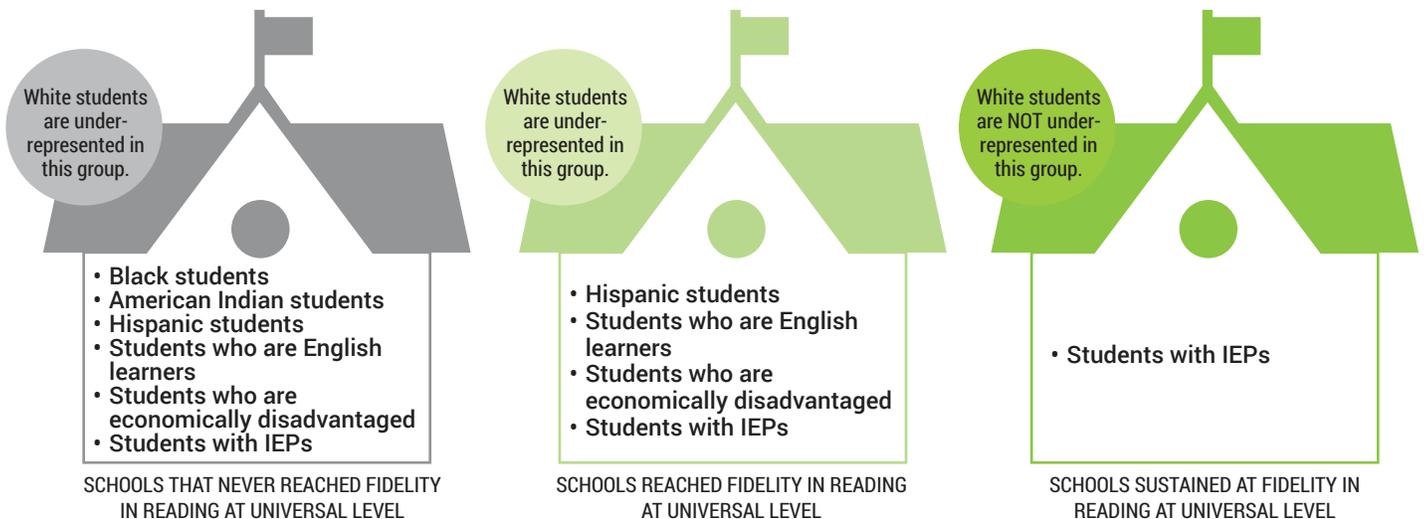
READING SUSTAINING SCHOOLS HAVE A HIGHER PROPORTION OF STUDENTS AT PROFICIENCY

50% – proficient on Forward ELA

25% –

0% –

Never reached fidelity

Reached fidelity

Sustaining fidelity

✺ IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR OUR MOST UNDERSERVED

A look at the students who scored in the lowest 10% on the Forward ELA Exam reveals a stark contrast between schools who have never reached fidelity and schools who are sustaining at fidelity.

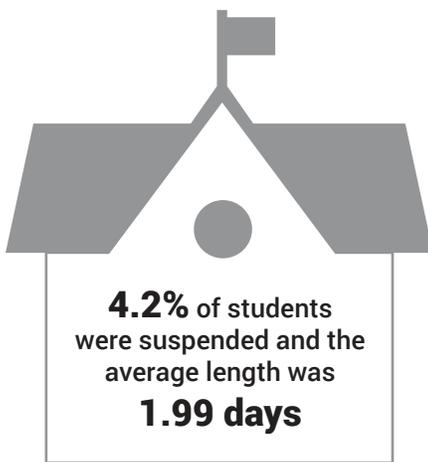**Student groups significantly overrepresented in lowest 10% of Forward ELA Exam**

White students are under-represented in this group.

- Black students
- American Indian students
- Hispanic students
- Students who are English learners
- Students who are economically disadvantaged
- Students with IEPs

SCHOOLS THAT NEVER REACHED FIDELITY IN READING AT UNIVERSAL LEVEL

White students are under-represented in this group.

- Hispanic students
- Students who are English learners
- Students who are economically disadvantaged
- Students with IEPs

SCHOOLS REACHED FIDELITY IN READING AT UNIVERSAL LEVEL

White students are NOT under-represented in this group.

- Students with IEPs

SCHOOLS SUSTAINED AT FIDELITY IN READING AT UNIVERSAL LEVEL

LONG TERM

Changing the **system** itself

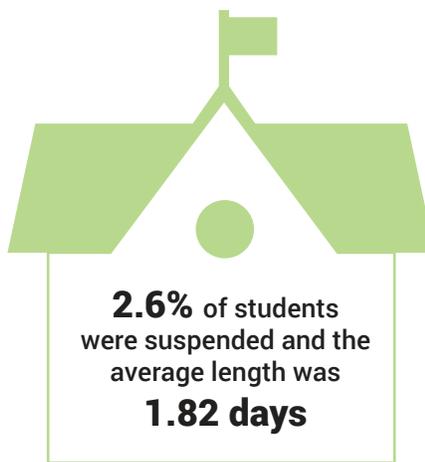## ✳ READING IMPLEMENTATION IS ASSOCIATED WITH LESS FREQUENT AND SHORTER SUSPENSIONS

When schools implement in an academic area—for example, reading—this often has an impact on behavior implementation. Research shows the connection between reading implementation and the reduction of suspensions.
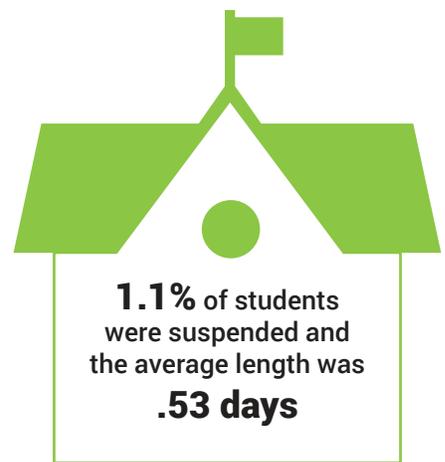
IN 2018-19:

4.2% of students were suspended and the average length was **1.99 days**

SCHOOLS THAT NEVER REACHED FIDELITY IN READING AT UNIVERSAL LEVEL

2.6% of students were suspended and the average length was **1.82 days**

SCHOOLS REACHED FIDELITY IN READING AT UNIVERSAL LEVEL

1.1% of students were suspended and the average length was **.53 days**

SCHOOLS SUSTAINED AT FIDELITY IN READING AT UNIVERSAL LEVEL

✳ STUDENTS IN BEHAVIOR-SUSTAINING SCHOOLS INCREASE THEIR ATTENDANCE RATE

Implementation of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) impacts attendance rates for students who were previously chronically absent.

Schools sustaining implementation for behavior at the universal level increased the attendance rates for students who were previously chronically absent. Data represented are from three consecutive school years (2016-17 through 2018-19).

Attendance rate **worsened** from
83.59% to 81.32%

SCHOOLS THAT NEVER REACHED FIDELITY
IN BEHAVIOR AT UNIVERSAL LEVEL

Attendance rate showed **little change**
(82.68% to 82.39%)

SCHOOLS REACHED FIDELITY IN BEHAVIOR
AT UNIVERSAL LEVEL

Attendance rate **improved** from
83.64% to 85.30%

SCHOOLS SUSTAINED AT FIDELITY IN
BEHAVIOR AT UNIVERSAL LEVEL
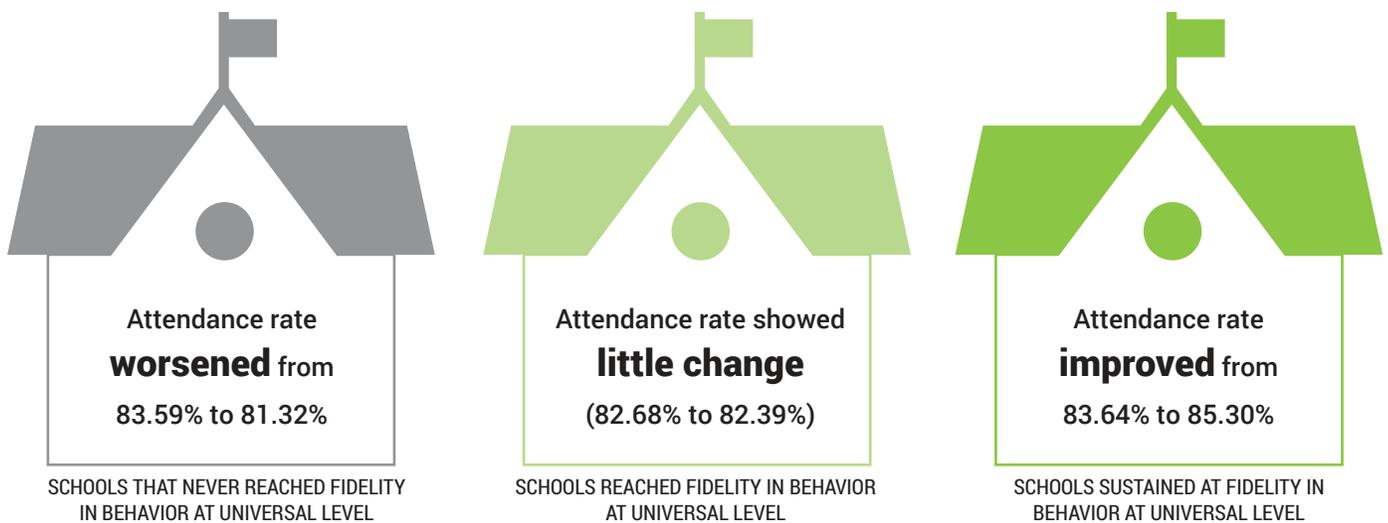
LONG TERM

Changing the system itself

As mentioned earlier, we examined outcomes for two student groups: Black students and students with IEPs. We see a positive impact in the reduction of suspension for both groups when they attend a behavior-sustaining school.

✱ BLACK STUDENTS SUSPENDED LESS FREQUENTLY IN BEHAVIOR-SUSTAINING SCHOOLS

Suspension rate: **12.67%**

SCHOOLS THAT NEVER REACHED FIDELITY IN BEHAVIOR AT UNIVERSAL LEVEL

Suspension rate: **14.71%**

SCHOOLS REACHED FIDELITY IN BEHAVIOR AT UNIVERSAL LEVEL

Suspension rate: **9.41%**

SCHOOLS SUSTAINED AT FIDELITY IN BEHAVIOR AT UNIVERSAL LEVEL

✱ STUDENTS WITH IEPs SUSPENDED LESS FREQUENTLY IN BEHAVIOR-SUSTAINING SCHOOLS

Suspension rate: **11.52%**

SCHOOLS THAT NEVER REACHED FIDELITY IN BEHAVIOR AT UNIVERSAL LEVEL

Suspension rate: **14.14%**

SCHOOLS REACHED FIDELITY IN BEHAVIOR AT UNIVERSAL LEVEL

Suspension rate: **9.71%**

SCHOOLS SUSTAINED AT FIDELITY IN BEHAVIOR AT UNIVERSAL LEVEL

Schools that begin to interact with the center do so because they are not seeing desired outcomes for their students. At the start of their engagement with the center, a majority of schools have higher suspension rates compared to schools that have not engaged.

"The way we respond to families has changed."

WEST MIDDLETON ELEMENTARY
Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District

KEY SYSTEM FEATURES: family and community engagement • positive culture • systemic implementation

STAGE OF IMPLEMENTATION: First assessed behavior (tier 1) in 2011-12, First assessed behavior (tier 2) in 2017-18 • First assessed reading in 2012-13

WEST MIDDLETON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL'S PBIS implementation story is one of empowerment: empowering the students to believe in themselves and empowering the staff to build their skills to support students and do whatever they can to reach families.

These changes led to improvements for West Middleton's students. In particular, students with IEPs have seen growth on the Forward Exam in mathematics.

STUDENTS WITH IEPs AT PROFICIENT/ADVANCED IN MATH ON THE FORWARD EXAM

17.24%	43.75%
2016-17	2018-19
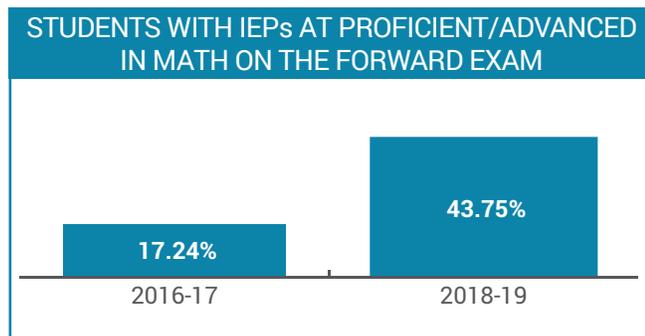
Former Principal Katrina Krych emphasizes the importance of positive school culture. The leadership team led the work of defining, developing, and embracing the school culture. The identity of the culture is not just for the students, but also for the adults in the building, Krych said. This cultural shift had staff "looking at kids through compassionate eyes, restorative eyes," she added. Staff began to ask, "How can we build OUR skills?"

By the time Jennifer Reynolds, special education coordinator, joined West Middleton's staff three years ago, the culture difference was conspicuous. "It was clear. Every student that walks through our halls belongs to every adult that walks through our halls."

This mindshift was supported by intentional professional learning. The school invested in training to build collaboration between special education and general education staff to address inequities and build inclusive environments. Math and reading interventionists, ESL teachers, and special education teachers all provide support to teachers and students within the classroom environment when possible. This co-responsibility mindset helps all students, Krych said.

The staff also challenged themselves to strengthen the partnership between families and their school. They set a goal to meet with 100% of their families for conferences around their children's education. Through persistence and using multiple approaches, the school was able to meet that goal. School social worker Emily Stockbridge described how West Middleton committed to putting families first; sometimes this meant that the school needed to adjust their practices. "The way we respond to families now has changed," Stockbridge said. "It builds trust for families sending their kids to school."

The leadership team recognized the value of systemic, sustained implementation to support change and the importance of making decisions based on data. The use of evidence-based interventions and a clearly-defined structure and data for identifying student need helps ensure equitable access to supports. Along with the support in mathematics, staff worked on systemic implementation of PBIS and embedding the guiding principles into everything they do.

"Parents have their child's best interest at heart and we believe that," Krych said. "The focus becomes 'How can we work together so your kid can be the best version of themselves?'"

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"Staff, as a whole, was really owning that process of what was happening in the classroom and across the building."
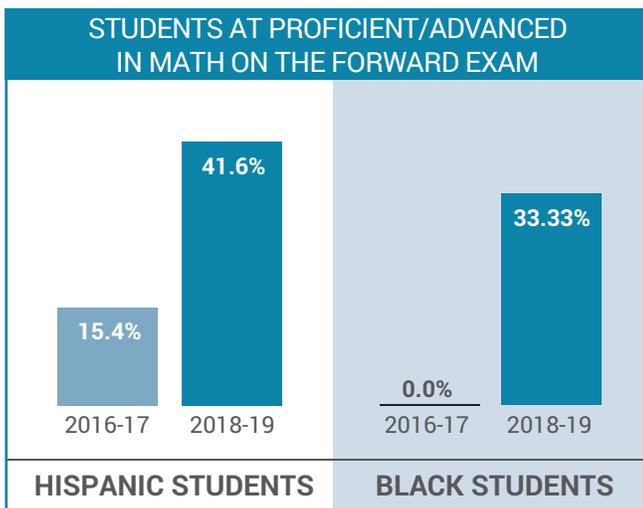
PUTNAM HEIGHTS ELEMENTARY
Eau Claire Area School District

KEY SYSTEM FEATURES: collaboration • strategic use of data • equity

STAGE OF IMPLEMENTATION: First assessed behavior (tier 1) in 2010-11; First assessed behavior (tier 2) in 2013-14 • First assessed mathematics in 2011-12 • First assessed reading in 2011-12

FOUR YEARS AGO, the leadership team at Putnam Heights Elementary School in Eau Claire reviewed their ambitious school improvement plan and found themselves at a crossroads. How could they best use their resources to have the most impact? The team decided to focus on deep understanding and alignment of the standards across grade levels.

Using their professional learning communities (PLC) to study the standards and data, a small group of staff across different grades learned and refined a process to unpack grade-level standards, practicing until each one was able to use it fluently and effectively. These individuals brought that process back to their PLC. Both special education and general education staff were included in PLCs as they continued to examine the individual standards at a deeper level, documenting their efforts. The teams worked to align practices, making sure students were succeeding.

STUDENTS AT PROFICIENT/ADVANCED IN MATH ON THE FORWARD EXAM

HISPANIC STUDENTS		BLACK STUDENTS	
15.4%	41.6%	0.0%	33.33%
2016-17	2018-19	2016-17	2018-19

The leadership team followed the progress of the PLC groups, continued to examine structures to allow the

necessary time for the work, and provided tools to support their efforts. The intentional collaboration grew beyond grade-level teams. PLCs shared what was working across grade levels, resulting in increased alignment across the whole school. "Staff, as a whole, was really owning that process of what was happening in the classroom and across the building," said Elissa Knight, instructional coach.

The school has seen positive outcomes for students over time, specifically in the percentage of Hispanic and Black students who are at proficient and advanced on the Forward Exam in mathematics.

Additionally, students with IEPs were also carefully considered. "One of the most valuable aspects of this was being able to collaborate with the general education teachers in unpacking the standards," said Tyra Perine, special education teacher. "We made sure our IEPs and goals in our IEPs were also coinciding with what was happening in the classroom." Additionally, the school utilized co-teaching in some of the classrooms to help with some of those standards.

As Putnam Heights Elementary examines their data, they continue to see inequities to address. The staff describe themselves as early in their journey towards equity. Three years ago, they assembled an equity core team and last year, the team did an equity audit. The school now has a building-wide, voluntary team with subcommittees to create action plans around the areas of school climate, professional learning, and staff. "The way that it's grown speaks to how our staff wants to continue this journey," said Melissa Greer, fifth grade teacher.

The school's equity work demonstrates that their families and students are important. "That speaks volumes for Putnam," Perine said. "They value their families."

"We have to find different ways to reach our kids."

HILLCREST SCHOOL
Kenosha Unified School District

KEY SYSTEM FEATURES: positive culture • family and community engagement

STAGE OF IMPLEMENTATION: First assessed behavior (tier 1) in 2014-15; First assessed behavior (tier 2) in 2020-21 • First assessed reading in 2016-17

HILLCREST SCHOOL (Kenosha Unified School District) is an alternative school that serves students who have experienced difficulties in traditional settings. Staff members don't mince words about the challenges that students face. "If suspensions worked, we wouldn't have kids in our school," Jason Paproth, intervention specialist said. "That consequence has not worked for our kids. That's why they are here. We have to find different ways to reach our kids."

The bedrock principles that anchor Hillcrest's staff are a commitment to universal expectations and an unwavering belief in the value of each student. Principal Eitan Benzaquen understands that students want to be acknowledged and recognized. "Recognizing each other is human," he said. "We start heavily increasing the positive behaviors that we want to see and recognizing those when we are teaching them," Paproth added. The school also began increasing the use of restorative practices and trauma-sensitive practices.
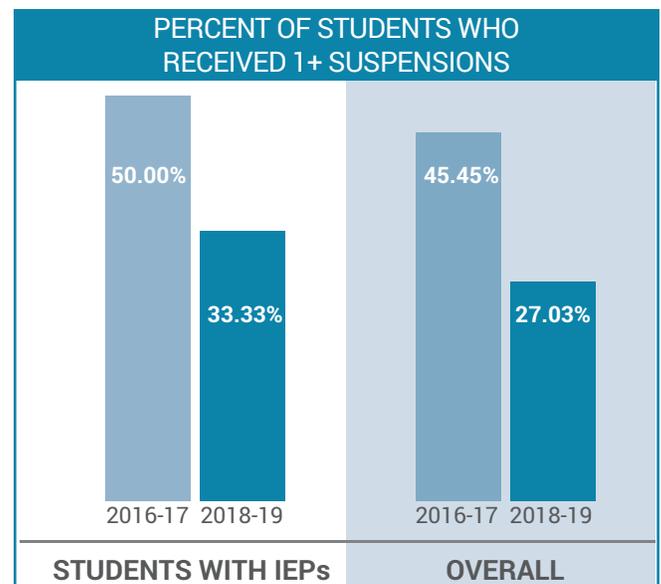
"When students get to us they've had such a negative experience in school and are recognized all too often for all of the negative things that they do or the things they don't know how to do well," said Erin Sturino, program support teacher. "Coming here and being recognized for the things they are doing well... helps with relationship building, it helps with work completion, it helps with a ton of stuff."

Benzaquen said this required a mindshift for teachers. Teachers went from thinking 'I don't know if they should be rewarded' to 'How can we reward them for doing the right thing?' Reinforcing positive social and behavioral skills in the classroom also shifted students' mindsets. The school shifted to systemic ways of addressing behavior, rather than reacting to individual student behavior. Staff wanted to understand what was really going on for students.

The school places a priority on family and community engagement. Hillcrest maintains partnerships with community impact programs and has a school-based mental health therapist on site. The staff has a high degree of parental involvement in IEP meetings, in part, because of their asset-based approach to their students. "Parents feel like they belong here and that they have a say in things," Melissa Szejna, school social worker, noted.

The focus on students and families has helped Hillcrest School to decrease suspensions at one of the fastest rates in the state. "There is a general willingness of our counselors, teachers, administration to all work to see a kid's behavior for what it is, know that it is something that can be worked through, and to get them back to the learning environment." Paproth said.

PERCENT OF STUDENTS WHO RECEIVED 1+ SUSPENSIONS

	STUDENTS WITH IEPs		OVERALL	
	2016-17	2018-19	2016-17	2018-19
	50.00%	33.33%	45.45%	27.03%

"The data drives our purpose."

LINCOLN ELEMENTARY
Port Washington-Saukville School District

KEY SYSTEM FEATURES: strategic use of data • strong shared leadership • collaboration

STAGE OF IMPLEMENTATION: First assessed behavior (tier 1) in 2014-15; First assessed behavior (tier 2) in 2017-18 • First assessed mathematics in 2017-18 • First assessed reading in 2011-12

WHEN LINCOLN ELEMENTARY in Port Washington-Saukville began to systematically screen and monitor student progress years ago, staff could not have imagined the impact that this decision would have on both their building and on their school district.

"Data is what we live and breathe by," School Psychologist Danielle Granrath said. What began with a few teachers has grown into a comprehensive assessment calendar with checkpoints throughout the year. The calendar includes both grade-level and district assessments. Teachers are committed to keeping their progress monitoring data current. Every six weeks, Lincoln's team meets and uses an intentional process to review the data, which allows staff to have robust conversations.

Principal Jane Gennerman believes the credit belongs to the teacher leaders. "We have built a large amount of shared leadership and ownership in our building," she said. "I'm so proud of our teams and how they look at the whole child." Gennerman values the staff's proactive, growth mindset. They use the data and all of the information they have to figure out how to best support students, she said.

Lincoln Elementary has worked hard to meet many student needs during universal instruction and added interventions. The school focused on significantly supporting students in the lowest quartile for academic achievement, year to year growth, attendance, and absenteeism. This focus has resulted in improvements in attendance and academic growth.

Aiming for long-term, systemic implementation across the district, the staff at Lincoln was instrumental in helping create Port Washington-Saukville's district data team and consistent processes. Eric Larsen, director of learning and assessment at CESA 6, supports the data team. "The data leadership teams that we've implemented in the district have been the driver to a lot of the change that has shown improvement across every building," Larsen said.

Both Eric Larsen and Jane Gennerman acknowledge the role of teachers in the success of the district data team. "Teachers are active participants," Larsen said. "They are leaders in the meetings." According to Gennerman, the teachers then bring the information back to their buildings. "We are finding better ways to share the data and the 'why' behind what we need to do," she said.

Gennerman believes that when teachers share their strengths, that collective impact can really benefit students. "The data drives our purpose and the heart of our staff gets the job done," Gennerman said.

80% of students (overall) moved up in percentile rank in math

64% of students (overall) moved up in percentile rank in ELA

75% of learners who struggled most made gains in both ELA and math

"Student behavior will change when adult behavior changes"

WILSON MIDDLE SCHOOL
Appleton Area School District

KEY SYSTEM FEATURES: strategic use of data • strong universal level of support

STAGE OF IMPLEMENTATION: First assessed behavior (tier 1) in 2011-12; First assessed behavior (tier 2) in 2013-14 • First assessed mathematics in 2015-16 • First assessed reading in 2011-12

WILSON MIDDLE SCHOOL in Appleton Area School District had been implementing PBIS at the universal level for several years when they experienced a noticeable increase in the number of students who were referred to the office. When staff disaggregated the data and examined it, they discovered that the majority of students with multiple referrals also had IEPs. The realization that the practices they had in place were not effective spurred the team into action.

To reduce referrals, the team wanted to change how they supported students with IEPs. This meant changing the behavior—not of the students, but of the adults in the building. "Student behavior will change when adult behavior changes," said Scott Werfal, former principal.
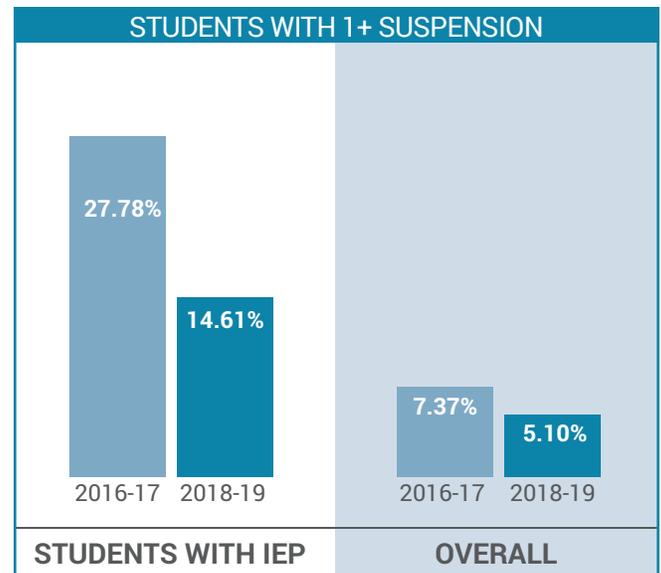
The school began by deepening the collaboration between general education teachers and special education teachers. Special education teachers became active members of the leadership team and student study teams. Case managers are contacted first when considering a discipline referral. Knowledgeable of students' circumstances, special education teachers partner with classroom teachers to strategize ways to meet a student's needs.

Wilson Middle spent time ensuring their universal level of supports was working for students. The school invested in continual professional learning and had challenged individual staff mindsets through the use of strategic questioning. What did staff believe the expectations of behavior should be? What outcomes did staff want? What was their data revealing?

The school also wanted to address attendance issues that were uncovered by their data exploration. After creating an attendance team to monitor the data, the school began implementation of tier 2 supports, including student academic instructional groups (SAIG) and check in, check out (CICO).

"We have a lot of caring staff that will do just about anything for our students behaviorally and academically," said Crystal Schroeder, school counselor.

STUDENTS WITH 1+ SUSPENSION

STUDENTS WITH IEP
- 27.78% — 2016-17
- 14.61% — 2018-19

OVERALL
- 7.37% — 2016-17
- 5.10% — 2018-19

Social-emotional lessons were embedded into their universal level of instruction. Two tools in particular, trauma-informed practices and restorative practices, helped teachers to adjust their approaches to be more effective and inclusionary. These tools helped staff understand their students and build better relationships.

Participating in restorative practice benefits students beyond managing a single incident. Special Education Teacher Doreen McCoy notes that students are learning life-long skills. "They learn how to communicate with others and to see other people's points of view and perspectives," she said.

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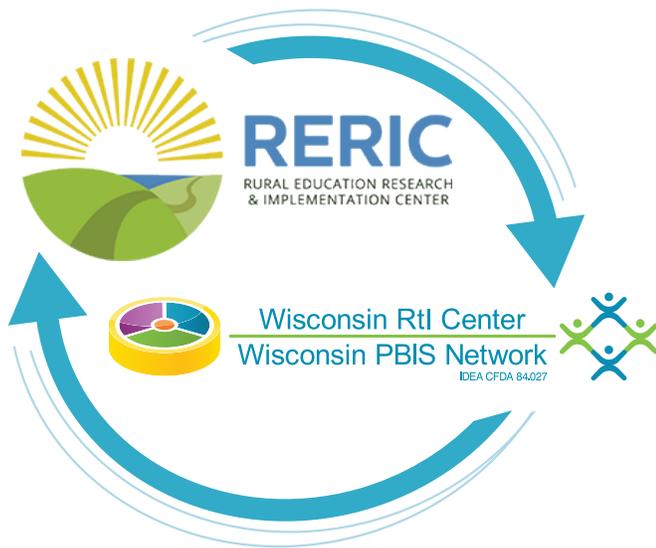
THE WISCONSIN RTI CENTER is committed to advancing and sharing knowledge around implementation of an equitable, multi-level system of supports. To that end, we began a formal partnership with the Rural Education Research and Implementation Center (RERIC) in 2019.

RERIC was founded in 2018 to conduct research on how to promote positive educational outcomes for students, families, and schools in rural education settings (https://reric.wisc.edu/).

The organization's goal is to enhance the capacity of rural schools to use and benefit from evidence-based educational approaches.

In collaboration, we are examining the **impact of implementation of PBIS on rural schools.** Still actively researching and analyzing, the partnership has already yielded several insights. For example:

Rural and town implementing schools with higher numbers of students of color are more likely to sustain assessing and fidelity.

We are particularly excited about this partnership because it offers a unique opportunity to transform traditional research into evidence that can be used in practice. This collaboration is producing relevant, accessible learning that deepens understanding, addresses problems of practice, and facilitates solutions. Ultimately, we believe it will bring us closer to our goal of providing every Wisconsin learner with equitable access to a great education.

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