

‘We’ve Got Much to be Proud Of’

State Superintendent **Tony Evers** addresses the challenges and opportunities for public education



Addressing hundreds of school leaders from across Wisconsin, State Superintendent Tony Evers called for support of the Common Core State Standards, increased state funding for education, and accountability for private voucher schools.

In the case of the Common Core, Evers said the standards set a higher and more realistic bar for students. However, the standards have come under attack, with some believing the standards will take away local control from school districts or that the standards set the bar too low.

“You know better than anyone that setting higher standards is actually about providing more opportunities for all kids to succeed in college and career,” Evers said. “You’ve done the hard work associated with implementing higher standards and higher expectations, and the stories you have to tell about the early results are compelling.”

Evers addressed school funding and emphasized that his “Fair Funding for Our Future” plan provides the state with the comprehensive school reform that it desperately needs. Evers pointed out that spending per student in Wisconsin has dropped by more than 15 percent since 2008 — the seventh

steepest drop in the nation. In dollar amounts, those cuts put Wisconsin second only to Alabama.

“We’ve all heard the claims that the past cuts did no harm or somehow even helped,” Evers said. “I can tell you that is not the case.”

In addition to less state funding, public education is also facing a challenge from voucher schools that don’t have to answer to the same set of accountability measures as public schools, yet still receive public funding. To highlight the trouble with voucher schools, Evers told a recent story about a voucher school in Milwaukee that shut its doors in the middle of the night during the school year, leaving its students without a school. Evers said the owners of this school are now reportedly running a voucher school for special needs students in Florida.

“Isn’t it long past the time that we hold all schools that receive public dollars to the same standards of public accountability?” Evers asked. “Taxpayers and parents need accountability from voucher schools now, not next year or next decade.”

Facing these challenges, Evers said during his second term as state superintendent, he will continue to work to expand high-speed internet access to all schools and libraries, invest in

personalized learning, and create customized academic and career plans for all students. Additionally, Evers said he will continue to work to expand access to career and technical education, course options, and dual credit opportunities, and reform school finance.

Through programs like Academic and Career Plans and a new Course Options program, Evers hopes more high school students will take courses at UW system schools, technical colleges, private colleges, approved non-profit education providers, and other school districts.

“It’s my goal that every Wisconsin child graduates from high school with college credit or an industry certification already in their pocket,” Evers said. “Course Options, dual credit, Academic and Career Plans, and reinvesting in CTE (career technical education) are all strategies to get us there.”

Evers acknowledged that there are many challenges to public education but also opportunities.

“This school year, and the next few to come, will bring many important, exciting and positive changes to Wisconsin schools. We’ve got much to be proud of, and a lot yet to do.” ■

“Isn’t it long past the time that we hold all schools that receive public dollars to the same standards of public accountability?”