

## News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Cultivate family and community engagement to boost student achievement

MADISON — “Families are our biggest allies in our work to increase student learning and close achievement gaps so all students graduate college and career ready,” said State Superintendent Tony Evers about recommendations from his Parent Advisory Council. He will formally present the report during his state education address today.

The State Superintendent’s Parent Advisory Council examined the Promoting Excellence for All initiative, taking a fresh and deeper look at how Wisconsin schools can engage families of the lowest-performing students so they are partners in their children’s success. While Wisconsin schools have many strengths, assessment and graduation data consistently confirm achievement gaps for students of color, economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and English language learners.

“To change achievement gaps that exist in too many of our schools throughout the state, we must cultivate family and community engagement practices that validate families as experts on their children and partners in their students’ success,” Evers said. “The work of effective instruction, positive student and teacher relationships, and school and instructional leadership hinges on strong partnerships with families. We all have a role to play in closing achievement gaps.”

With the start of a new school year, the report from the Parent Advisory Council encourages schools and educators to ask what more can be done to tap into families’ innate desires to help children and young people succeed in school. Council members recommend that schools “accept families as they are and make frequent efforts to know, listen to, and learn from parents.”

According to the council, schools must connect families to student learning in a variety of ways throughout the year. To make families partners and decision makers in closing student achievement gaps, successful schools:

- recognize and build upon students’ unique cultural and family strengths,
- communicate regularly with families in their languages and invite families to share their knowledge and needs,

(more)

- create multiple ways for all families to gain skills and knowledge that support children’s learning and achieve school goals, and
- help families become aware of and use community resources that prepare every child to be college and career ready.

Evers encouraged educators to explore the Parent Advisory Council report, which is part of the *Promoting Excellence for All* website. “Ask parents, grandparents, and community members what they need to support children’s learning. Enlist their help in building relationships that help close achievement gaps,” he said. “Our children are so precious.”

The State Superintendent’s Parent Advisory Council is made up of parents, grandparents, and community members who are representative of the geographic and cultural diversity of Wisconsin’s public school students.

Members of the 2014-15 council who assisted with development of the report are:

Ellen Chicka Superior	Suzy Rodriguez Milwaukee
Quincey Daniels, PhD Melrose	Janet Saiz Madison
Jakelyn Karabetsos Kenosha	Jenna Southard Eau Claire
Nicholas Kedrowski Osseo	Merideth R. Trahan Madison
Josephine Lorya-Ozulamo Madison	Laura Weaver West Allis
Melissa Lowe Black River Falls	Nasra Wehelie Madison
Erin Polkinghorn Pecatonica	

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**RESOURCES:**

**Promoting Excellence for All Website:** <http://dpi.wi.gov/excforall/family-and-community-engagement>

**Parent Advisory Council Report:** <http://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/excforall/pacreport.pdf>

**Parent Advisory Council Videos:**

[Considering Families and Communities as Experts on Their Children \(2\)](#)

Josephine Lorya-Ozulamo, Parent (Madison)

[Community Partnerships \(2\)](#)

Janet Saiz, Parent and Grandparent (Madison)

[Welcoming Environment](#)

Quincey Daniels, Parent (Melrose)

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