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Wisconsin Education Leaders Release Plan to Address Workforce Issues, Ensure All Public School Students Continue to Have High-Quality Teachers and Equitable Educational Opportunities

MADISON — School staffing issues, including fewer applicants for positions, high turnover, and shortages in a variety of disciplines, are occurring in Wisconsin and across the country. With fewer new teachers entering the profession and increasing teacher turnover, education leaders are looking for new approaches to deal with these changing workforce dynamics and ensure all children have access to the high-quality educators they deserve and an equitable education program.

Because of these growing challenges, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Evers and Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators (WASDA) Executive Director Jon Bales convened the Leadership Group on School Staffing Challenges. The goal of this group, comprised of high-level leaders from PK–12 and higher education, is to make improvements to the PK–12 educator workforce in Wisconsin and promote the overall attraction, preparation, recruitment, retention, and development of Wisconsin educators.

Over recent months, the group met to find solutions focused on attracting talent, preparation, licensing, support and retention, and data collection. The leadership group committed to using ideas from the field, along with the Professional Standards Council, the statutorily established advisory group, and other groups of teachers and leaders, to inform and develop recommended policies. Those changes are included in the executive and full summary documents released today.

The next stage of the process is to develop an administrative rule package with DPI and solicit feedback through the rule process. For the proposals that require statutory changes, the group is engaging the legislature.

The group's focus throughout its discussions was ensuring that every student, no matter where, has a high-quality teacher. Members feel that the proposals outlined in its summary give districts the ability to meet that workforce goal while providing new advancement and career options for teachers that will add value to students.

Link to the group's plan: <http://www.wasda.org/?page=StaffingChallenges>

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The group includes the Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators (WASDA), Association of Wisconsin School Administrators (AWSA), Wisconsin Association of School Personnel Administrators (WASPA), Wisconsin Council of Administrators of Special Services (WCASS), Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB), Wisconsin Education Association Council (WEAC), Wisconsin Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (WACTE), Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (WAICU), the University of Wisconsin System (UW System), and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI).

Note to editor: The following quotes are from various leaders of our group.

"The State Leadership Group on School Staffing Challenges prioritized the importance of ensuring all children in Wisconsin have access to high quality educators so they are college and career ready. The proposed changes bring together the strengths of our educator preparation programs and efforts to expand the workforce. We are pleased many of the strategies discussed at the UW System Deans and Directors retreat are represented in the proposals (e.g., "Effective Collaboration to Address Shortages and Other Workforce Needs" and "Reduce Testing Burden on Prospective Teachers"). The resulting proposals highlight the value of each stakeholder's professional voice and the importance of bringing people together to solve a problem. We appreciate being asked to participate and value both the process and resulting outcomes."

-Barbara Bales, UW System Director for Strategic Initiatives and Educational Innovation on behalf of UW system

"Wisconsin, like many other states, is not alone in facing teacher supply challenges. We need solutions that work for Wisconsin's unique circumstances and respect our tradition of local control of education. The Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB) supports these recommendations on behalf of our state's 422 locally elected school boards. These are positive changes reflecting a broad consensus among leaders of the public education community about steps that should be taken to make sure that available teaching positions in our state are filled by well-qualified teaching candidates. These recommendations will help Wisconsin school boards address a wide variety of staffing challenges, and will help to ensure that every public school student learning is guided by a well-qualified teacher."

- John Ashley, Wisconsin Association of School Boards

"This conceptual framework for licensing ensures teachers have input on decisions that directly impact the public education professions. The Wisconsin Education Association Council welcomes discussions on moving long-term solutions for the teacher shortage rather than quick-fixes that don't result in providing committed, qualified teachers for every Wisconsin child."

-Ron Martin, eighth grade teacher and president of the Wisconsin Education Association Council

"The teacher preparation programs in Wisconsin are committed to producing the teachers our communities need. These proposals will create flexibility in licensing which provide a greater range of employment options for our program graduates, while giving schools the ability to move their staff into roles that best serve their populations. In addition, the proposed changes will create a framework that offers us the opportunity to develop apprentice and residency models which have the potential to elevate teacher preparation and facilitate induction into the field. Ultimately, if fully adopted, the proposals will help us to develop a stronger teacher workforce and elevate k-12 student learning. "

-Reid Riggle, President Wisconsin Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

"The Department of Public Instruction provided outstanding leadership and a genuine commitment to collaboration. The recommendations focus on the need for greater flexibility in licensing structures without losing quality."

-Dr. Rolf Wegenke, president of the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (WAICU)

"This evidence-based plan will address Wisconsin's urgent educator shortage in a thoughtful way by broadening the pool of qualified, professionally prepared teachers while also maintaining our rigorous standards for determining who can teach in our public schools. This plan will ensure that Wisconsin public school students in every corner of our state will continue to receive equitable educational opportunities provided by highly effective teachers."

-John Forester, Executive Director of the School Administrators Alliance

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