



For Immediate Release

Wednesday, September 5, 2018

Contact: DSPS Newsroom, (608) 266-6795

Student Success: We are on the Right Path

Guest Column by Laura Gutierrez, Secretary, Department of Safety and Professional Services

As secretary of the Department of Safety and Professional Services, I oversee the credentialing and licensing of over 440,000 licensed professionals in our great state. Our agency provides administrative services to nearly 100 boards, councils, and advisory committees. DSPS is also the home to many programs as it relates to economic growth and stability, as well as public safety, and I have the privilege to build on that mission.

What you might not know about me is that I am a former middle school Science and high school Spanish teacher; I earned several administrator certifications, including my superintendent license; and I was Assistant Principal and Curriculum Director at Bruce Guadalupe Community School and Vice President of Academic Affairs at St. Anthony School. I worked for 17 years in all three sectors of education: public, private, and charter schools. So, although I have been called to serve the people of Wisconsin in a different role, I am still, and will always be, an educator at heart. From my experiences, the State of Wisconsin is on the right path educating and preparing our children. Taking inventory of all the accomplishments under Governor Scott Walker's administration, you realize just how much is being done to help our children succeed.

For Governor Walker, K-12 Education is a top priority. Highlights of the Governor's strong commitment to education include:

- The current biennial budget includes the largest investment in actual dollars into K-12 education in the state's history, including a \$200 per student increase this year and another \$204 per student increase on top of that next year.
- Sparsity aid for low-population districts has been increased by an additional \$6.5 million.
- Common-sense reforms through 2011 Act 10 have saved school districts billions. This has provided schools flexibility in spending to ensure that money is spent on student-centered needs in the classrooms and maintenance needs in buildings.

Additionally, graduation metrics across all demographics are up since 2010:

- Hispanic graduation rate is up from 69% in 2010 to 80.3% in 2017.
- African-American graduation rate is up from 60.5% to 67%.
- Asian graduation rate is up from 83.4% to 91%.
- American Indian graduation rate is up from 67.7% to 78.8%.
- Caucasian graduation rate is up from 90.7% to 92.7%.

Today, parents have more choices and more influence on their children's education:

- Over 35,000 students statewide participate in Parental Choice Programs.
- The parental choice program has expanded statewide, with \$9.3 million in 2013-14 and \$17.6 million in 2014-15.
- The Office of Educational Opportunity was created in UW to authorize charter schools and permit authorization of an addiction recovery charter school.
- The Special Needs Scholarship Program was created with 2015 Act 55.

Our children deserve a great education that prepares them for college, careers, and real life. Governor Walker understands this and has worked to ensure our curriculum is meeting the standards of an ever-changing workforce. Under the Governor's leadership and in partnership with the Legislature, Wisconsin has strengthened school accountability expectations to ensure

instruction is focused on core academic areas. Additionally, the state has invested hundreds of millions of dollars to support and develop the workforce through programs such as Fabrication Laboratory (Fab Lab) grants, Wisconsin Fast Forward worker training grants and other programs targeting students while in school.

All of this only scratches the surface of what has been done under Governor Walker's leadership to right the ship in education. As a former educator and administrator, as well as a mother of four, I believe this work will continue under Governor Walker's commitment to K-12 Education.