



WISCONSIN POLICY FORUM

For Immediate Release

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Wisconsin Policy Forum Makes Statewide Educational Data Easy to Compare

New School DataTool Includes Enrollment, Student Performance, Other Measures

MILWAUKEE – A new online resource from the nonpartisan, independent Wisconsin Policy Forum allows parents, teachers, school officials, and the public to examine and compare educational data for school districts throughout Wisconsin.

“We’re offering one-stop analysis of many major educational indicators, from enrollment and school spending to graduation rates and student performance,” WPF President Rob Henken said.

Henken noted the new School DataTool builds on annual publications developed by the two predecessors of the Wisconsin Policy Forum: *SchoolFacts*, a book of statewide educational data compiled by the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance, and *Public Schooling in Southeast Wisconsin*, which took a closer look at public school districts throughout southeast Wisconsin compiled by the Public Policy Forum.

The School DataTool draws on state Department of Public Instruction data to provide interactive dashboards in the following areas:

- Enrollment, including statewide and district-wide figures, enrollment for students of color, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students;
- Student performance, including ACT scores, Advanced Placement (AP) scores, and Forward test scores, measuring overall student performance as well as achievement gaps between groups of students;
- Student engagement, such as attendance, dropout, and graduation rates;
- District finances, including revenue and expense breakdowns by major categories and on a per student basis.

The tool also allows users to compare these measurements between school districts as well as to statewide figures.

WPF's analysis of statewide data shows the following trends:

- Overall enrollment continued to decline statewide, dropping 0.4% in 2018. Meanwhile, enrollment by students of color continued to rise, reaching 30.1% of the student population last year.
- Third-grade reading scores dropped to their lowest level since the Forward Exam was introduced in 2015-16. In 2017-18, only 29.3% of students tested as proficient or advanced. This is cause for concern as this is considered a measure of future academic success.
- On a positive note, eighth-grade math proficiency on the exam rose for the third straight year, to 29.7% in 2017-18.
- The dropout rate declined slightly in 2016-17 from a hike the preceding year. At 1.5%, the rate is 0.3 percentage points lower than in 2015-16, but still higher than it has been since the 2010-11 school year.
- Graduation rates rose slightly to 88.6% in 2016-17, marking the third consecutive year of increases. Additionally, the gaps between graduation rates for white and black and Hispanic students have decreased, also for the third straight year; the gaps remain large, however, at 25.7 and 12.4 percentage points, respectively.
- Composite ACT scores dipped slightly to 19.8 in 2017-18, down from 20.1 the previous year. The latest figure is the lowest average since all Wisconsin juniors were required to take the test beginning in 2014-15. Performance gaps between white, black, and Hispanic students have declined since 2016-17, but this appears to be due largely to a lower average for white students.
- Progress on reducing the gap in Advanced Placement (AP) scores between black and white students appears to have stalled in 2016-17, reversing a three-year trend.

The complete School DataTool can be found [here](#)

Support for the School DataTool comes from Alverno College; Children's Hospital of Wisconsin; Closing the Achievement Gap Consortium; Concordia University; Southeast Wisconsin Schools Alliance; Waukesha County Technical College, and an endowment from Mr. Jere McGaffey.