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Governor Doyle Signs into Law First Steps toward Major Education Reform

Better Positions Wisconsin to Compete for Federal Race to the Top Funds

MADISON – Governor Jim Doyle today signed into law Senate Bills 370, 371, 372 and 373, which take the first steps toward reforming education in Wisconsin and ensuring every student has a chance to succeed. Governor Doyle signed the laws at Wright Middle School just days after President Obama visited the school to call for states to make significant education reform. The bills take important steps to align Wisconsin with federal education reform goals laid out by the President and position Wisconsin to compete for Race to the Top funds.

"I want to thank state legislative leaders for acting swiftly to take these critical first steps toward major education reform," Governor Doyle said. "We are really proud of our state's great schools but we know we have to step it up and strive to reach the highest levels. We must continue moving forward reforms that put our students first and answer President Obama's challenge to race to the top."

The Governor will continue to work closely with the Legislature to move forward reform efforts to create clear lines of accountability at Milwaukee Public Schools, strengthen the State Superintendent's ability to turn around struggling schools and raise math and science standards so every student can compete in the global economy.

Governor Doyle thanked the Senate Committee on Education, the Assembly Committee on Education and committee chairs Senator John Lehman and Representative Sody Pope-Roberts for their work on the four bills. The Governor also thanked Senate Majority Leader Russ Decker, Speaker Mike Sheridan, Majority Leader Tom Nelson and Representatives Mark Pocan, Tamara Grigsby, Terry Van Akkeren, Donna Seidel, Peter Barca, Joe Parisi, Cory Mason, Christine Sinicki and Tony Staskunas for their hard work on the bills' passage.

The Governor today signed into law the following bills:

Senate Bill 370 allows Milwaukee Public Schools to directly apply to the Department of Public Instruction for annual grants to help improve student achievement. The bill allows the State Superintendent to have better control over this critical program to help turn around struggling schools.

Senate Bill 371 requires the University of Wisconsin System, the Wisconsin Technical College System and the Department of Public Instruction to establish a system to share and track student achievement data from preschool programs through postsecondary education. The bill allows agencies to use data to evaluate the success of education programs and improve student achievement.

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Senate Bill 372 allows student test data to be used in developing a comprehensive teacher evaluation plan that evaluates teacher performance to improve student achievement. The student test data may not be used to dismiss or discipline teachers. The bill reinforces the importance of linking teachers to longitudinal student data to help evaluate program effectiveness, close achievement gaps and improve overall education.

Senate Bill 373 requires school boards to consider standards established by the National Association of Charter Schools when creating a charter school. These stronger standards will help to ensure that all Wisconsin charter schools provide high-quality education.

Governor Doyle was joined by state legislative leaders, State Superintendent Tony Evers, Madison Superintendent Dan Nerad, WEAC union leaders Mary Bell and Dan Burkhalter, Wisconsin Charter School Association Director John Gee and Wright Middle School students for the event.