

Wisconsin Ranks 34th Nationally on the 2017 NAEP 4th Grade Reading Results

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SUN PRAIRIE, Wis. (May 8, 2018) – The Wisconsin Reading Coalition (WRC), a grassroots reading advocacy organization, released an analysis of Wisconsin’s 2017 4th Grade Reading Results on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). See the full report at <http://www.wisconsinreadingcoalition.org/>.

According to the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), the 2017 results were “flat”. According to the WRC, the results are a disaster. WI ranks 34th nationally, compared to 25th in 2015 and third in 1998. The reason for the 20 year slide is that Wisconsin’s scores have been flat since 1992, while scores in almost every other state have steadily improved.

State DPI Superintendent Dr. Tony Evers attributed these 4th grade results to “opportunity gaps” and “an increasingly diverse student population”. Yet every Wisconsin racial, economic status, and disability status sub-group is performing below the national average, not just students of color, or students living in poverty*. For example, Wisconsin’s White students rank 41st (behind Alabama and Mississippi) and they are 1.7 years (almost two grade levels) behind their peers in Massachusetts and New Jersey, both demographically comparable states.

“Our state has proportionately fewer students of color, and low-income students compared to many other states which means our 34th place ranking is likely over-stated”, said Moderate Republican Gubernatorial Candidate Robert Meyer. “When WRC readjusted the NAEP scores accordingly in 2009, Wisconsin’s ranking moved from 30th to 43rd place nationally.”

According to the WRC, the implementation of research-based advances in reading instruction and teacher preparation have driven the steady improvements on NAEP in other states. Such advances have benefitted the lowest subgroups the most, but higher achieving students too.

“Our state leadership simply has to address this problem”, said Meyer, “if for no other reason than Wisconsin’s ability to compete economically. I don’t care about the current employment statistics. We have scores of thousands of young people in Wisconsin who can’t read well enough to be able participate in the workforce, and now we’re investing millions of dollars in out of state worker recruitment ads. This is a dysfunctional mess and I’m the only candidate talking about it.”

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* Wisconsin’s African American students rank 49th, and are a year behind their Alabama and Mississippi peers, while our state’s students who qualify for free or reduced lunch perform a year and a half behind their peers in Massachusetts and Florida and 1.2 years behind those in Indiana, Kentucky, and West Virginia.