



VISION 2020 REPORT CARD

MOVING ALL WISCONSIN FAMILIES FORWARD



THE WISCONSIN COUNCIL ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES (WCCF),

THE WISCONSIN HEAD START ASSOCIATION AND THE

WISCONSIN COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM ASSOCIATION (WISCAP)

HAVE JOINED FORCES FOR ONE COMMON MISSION,

ONE SHARED HOPE: THE END OF CHILD POVERTY BY 2020.





VISION 2020 REPORT CARD

SUBJECT	GRADE	COMMENTS
ACCESS TO FAMILY-SUPPORTING WAGES	C+	<p>There has been great progress in job development and, overall, our economy is strong. However, significant barriers still exist for many workers for whom there is no ladder to jobs with wages sufficient to support a family.</p> <p>To raise Wisconsin's grade to an "A", the Vision 2020 goal is: By the year 2020, every child in Wisconsin will live in a household with caregivers who are prepared for and have access to family-supporting wages.</p>
SAFE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING	C	<p>There is a significant lack of safe and affordable housing, and affordable housing is expensive to build and maintain.</p> <p>To raise Wisconsin's grade to an "A", the Vision 2020 goal is: By the year 2020, Wisconsin must expand affordable housing options to end family homelessness and enable parents to raise their children in healthy and nurturing environments.</p>

SUBJECT	GRADE	COMMENTS
HEALTHY CHILDREN	B-	<p>We have one of the highest rates of health insurance coverage in the country, yet this high rate has not guaranteed good outcomes for many in the state. Significant disparities in healthcare outcomes based on race and ethnicity remain in Wisconsin.</p> <p>To raise Wisconsin's grade to an "A", the Vision 2020 goal is: By the year 2020, all Wisconsin children should have health insurance and access to appropriate, timely and consistent dental, mental health and preventative care services.</p>
EARLY CARE & EDUCATION	B-	<p>Despite Wisconsin's notable accomplishments in building early care and education services and access to them, many children still lack access to these critical educational building blocks. Too many communities lack quality, affordable early learning experiences that will prepare children for success in school and life.</p> <p>To raise Wisconsin's grade to an "A", the Vision 2020 goal is: By 2020, Wisconsin will build a universally accessible system of quality early childhood education, care and after-school programs that support optimal child development.</p>

VISION 2020 REPORT CARD MOVING ALL WISCONSIN FAMILIES FORWARD

Childhood is full of opportunity. Yet, it does not present itself equally to all children. The biggest obstacle to opportunity is poverty. We know that kids tend to do well when their families succeed economically. Despite hard work, however, too many Wisconsin families do not have access to secure jobs that pay enough to rise out of poverty. They do not have sufficient access to key supports like affordable housing and healthcare. All families deserve a chance at the American dream - work that pays a living wage, safe and healthy communities in which to raise their children, and access to affordable, high-quality health and childcare.



Wisconsin's state motto - "Forward" - suggests a place where all families have the opportunity to prosper. Unfortunately, many families in our state face substantial barriers to economic progress. In fact, for an increasing and alarming number of Wisconsin's working families, an "honest day's work" does not yield an "honest day's pay". In 2005, more than 177,000 Wisconsin children lived in families whose income did not cover their basic needs.¹ That's a group of children larger than the populations of Appleton and Green Bay combined. We can do a much better job of meeting the demands of the changing economic climate and providing brighter futures for our kids.

This Report Card provides an assessment of the current status of Wisconsin's children in four areas directly linked to healthy futures: family-supporting wages, safe and affordable housing, access to healthcare and early childhood learning. Children who grow up poor are likely to do worse in all of these areas than their peers in economically stable families. The best, and most challenging, way to achieve top marks in every category is to eliminate child poverty altogether. Our ultimate goal must be nothing short of that.

If we are to achieve the goal of prosperity for all of Wisconsin's families, we need to roll up our sleeves now and fix the systemic holes that currently undermine stability and prosperity. Doing so will benefit not only those most in need of opportunity, but will benefit all of us - making our state and communities healthier and making us better, richer citizens. In much the same way that school report cards measure students' school performance and indicate where improvement is needed, with this Report Card we grade Wisconsin on how well we are currently meeting the needs of all our state's children, with an eye toward identifying areas where we can do better.²

We intend to issue this Report Card every two years to measure our collective progress in improving these grades and working towards our ultimate goal of achieving "A's" in all areas - a goal we will deserve when all families have work that pays and access to all necessary supports, effectively ending child poverty in Wisconsin. We hope to reach that goal by the year 2020.

Join us in this effort by pledging to work toward the elimination of poverty by 2020 and urge our policy makers in Wisconsin to make ending poverty their priority as well. To find out more, visit www.2020wi.org

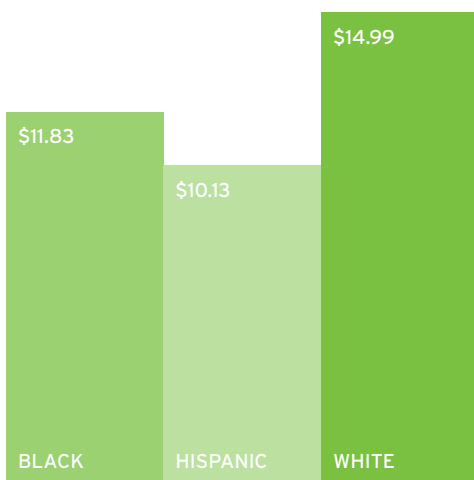
GOAL: By the year 2020, every child in Wisconsin will live in a household with caregivers who are prepared for and have access to jobs that provide family-supporting wages.

Family economic success depends largely on the ability of adults to earn family-supporting wages. They must also have access to affordable goods and services and support programs like childcare and healthcare, as well as the ability to save and accumulate assets. In short, they must live in a community that offers economic opportunity. While statewide wages in Wisconsin have increased recently, and the state is producing a significant number of workers with associate degrees and similar credentials – badly needed in today’s economy – there are still large sections of the job market that offer poverty wages with few or no benefits. Furthermore, many disparities related to employment and skills exist between whites and minorities in the state. There is also a glaring wage gap between men and women. Our economic development policies must address these gaps as we pursue strategies aimed at spreading opportunity among all populations.

RAISING THE GRADE IN FAMILY-WAGE JOBS:
HOW CAN WISCONSIN EARN AN “A”?

ENSURE THAT WORKERS EARN FAMILY-SUPPORTING WAGES

The only sure way out of poverty is to get a better-paying job. Children raised in economically secure families have an enormous advantage over their low-income neighbors. Research confirms that poverty is a substantial barrier to children’s health, school success and future economic independence. Wisconsin must do more to invest in strategies that move low-wage workers into well-paying jobs with access to employer benefits.



MEDIAN WAGES IN WISCONSIN
2005 AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY, US CENSUS BUREAU

Wisconsin’s median hourly wage is \$14.62, slightly higher than the national wage. And the state median wage has risen steadily since the late 1990s, even during the economic downturn that began in 2001, a time during which the national median wage actually fell. In spite of these gains, however, the wages of minorities and women are significantly lower than that of whites.³

In addition, the share of Wisconsin workers earning poverty-level wages has increased to 21.6 percent, up from 19.2 percent in 2000.⁴ The numbers are even more jarring for minority workers: 39.3 percent of African-American women and 28 percent of African-American men were in poverty-wage jobs in 2005. Both of these figures represent increases over 2000.

While 23 percent of all Wisconsin’s working families are considered low-income (earning below 200% of the federal poverty limit), ranking us better than all of our neighboring states except Minnesota, 45 percent of minority working families in Wisconsin are low-income, ranking us 30th nationally.^{5,6}

Wisconsin, along with twenty other states, has raised its minimum wage from the federal minimum wage, from \$5.70 to \$6.50 an hour. This increase benefited an estimated 250,000 workers, primarily heads of households employed in the service industry. However, the next step must be to index the minimum wage to the rate of inflation so that low-wage workers do not lose buying power over time. Had the minimum wage kept pace with increases in productivity, it would now be over \$15 per hour.⁷

ENSURE THAT TAXPAYER INVESTMENTS ARE USED TO CREATE FAMILY SUPPORTING JOBS

Wisconsin traditionally has high workforce participation. Our statewide unemployment rate of 4.7 percent remains below the national average.⁸ However, not all of Wisconsin workers share the same access to jobs. Stark disparities exist based on race and gender. Eleven percent of African-Americans and seven percent of Hispanics in Wisconsin are unemployed. There are also geographic disparities in our unemployment rate, from Dane County's below-average rate of 3.2 percent to Menominee County's rate of 10.3 percent. In addition, the gender wage gap has actually widened in recent years in Wisconsin, even as it has shrunk nationally. In 2000, Wisconsin women earned \$0.77 to the men's dollar; in 2005 that fell to \$0.75.

Wisconsin's emerging industries demand new skills and a nimble workforce. State investments in worker training must allow workers to prepare for these changing needs in order to benefit from the state's economic progress. We should not only focus our efforts on those workers in regions of the state with high unemployment and challenged industries, we must also focus our state's dollars on those workers (especially women and workers of color) who are most in need of skill training. In addition, the state must implement a transitional jobs program to assist W-2 participants with work barriers to gain experience in real jobs with an opportunity to advance.

Wisconsin must also do a better job of following the money – a number of the state's business subsidy programs employ wage standards and job creation requirements. However, the complete lack of an organized and transparent reporting system of the subsidies handed out and the outcomes associated with them leads to speculation about the state supporting low-wage jobs and uncertainty as to whether state and local investments are being targeted as part of a comprehensive economic and workforce development strategy.



PREPARE ADULTS FOR POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Educational attainment has a significant impact on an individual's likelihood of economic and social success. A high school diploma is a critical stepping stone to opportunity. Yet over 570,000 Wisconsinites over the age of 16 (nearly 16 percent) are without a high school diploma or GED and aren't enrolled in school. This presents a significant barrier to future economic stability for those individuals. These challenges are even more prevalent in communities of color. While 95 percent of white students graduate from high school, only 60 percent of African-American students receive a diploma.



In the short term, policies must be changed to provide needed basic skills for those workers without educational credentials to advance. A number of reforms as to how adult basic education (ABE) is provided are clearly needed if we are going to help more working adults upgrade their skills and obtain better jobs with higher wages. We should make ABE more relevant to specific occupations and industries, foster more transitions from basic courses to higher-level programs, and provide enhanced student services to those juggling work, family and school responsibilities. In the long run, the state must focus on improving the high school graduation rate and better preparing young people for post-secondary education or training. That preparation is the ticket to an economically secure future.

FOSTER WIDESPREAD PARTICIPATION IN AND COMPLETION OF POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

In our increasingly high-tech economy, post-secondary education (e.g., technical diplomas, associate and bachelor degrees) is quickly becoming a prerequisite to commanding a family-supporting wage. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, 90 percent of the fastest-growing jobs require some post-secondary education or training. While Wisconsin produces large numbers of workers with associate degrees – 13.6 percent of our workforce, compared to 9.8 percent nationally – we have trouble retaining and attracting workers with higher credentials than that. Only 25 percent of adults in the Wisconsin workforce holds a four-year college degree or higher. In contrast, nearly 30 percent of the national workforce holds such a degree.

For middle and low-income families, cost presents a significant barrier to higher education. The percentage of family income required to pay for college expenses (minus financial aid) at the state's technical colleges has risen from 17 percent in the early 1990s to 21 percent in 2006. For those attempting to attend school while also working and raising a family, financial aid is virtually nonexistent. Policy changes to allow part-time students to access financial aid for technical colleges would significantly boost the prospects of working parents trying to lift their families out of poverty through post-secondary education. Given what we know about the economic value of post-secondary education, we must implement policies that would guarantee qualified students the opportunity to attend college. Tuition at the University of Wisconsin has increased by 36 percent between 1990 and 2005. The Governor's Covenant initiative is an interesting start toward ensuring that all children have access to higher education.

GOAL: By the year 2020, Wisconsin will expand affordable housing options to end family homelessness and enable parents to raise their children in healthy and nurturing environments.

Quality, safe, affordable housing anchors families in their communities, contributes to children's school success and health, and provides the permanency necessary for parents to maintain stable employment or engage in education and training activities. Growth in the cost of housing in Wisconsin has far outpaced the growth in incomes in our state, resulting in a rising housing cost burden for a large percentage of Wisconsinites.

RAISING THE GRADE IN AFFORDABLE HOUSING: HOW CAN WISCONSIN EARN AN "A"?

CREATE A STATEWIDE HOUSING TRUST FUND

Housing is considered to be unaffordable when it consumes over 30 percent of a family's income. In Wisconsin, nearly half (46.6 percent) of low-income families pay more than one-third of their income for housing. The average household in Wisconsin would have to earn \$12.45/hour (twice Wisconsin's current minimum wage) to pay fair market rent in Wisconsin at 30 percent of their income. The creation of a statewide housing trust fund – a distinct fund established by the state that provides a dedicated source of revenue to support affordable housing – would support the preservation and production of safe, affordable homes and dramatically increase low-income families' access to them. It would also have a positive impact on job creation and local economic development. Currently, 38 other states and more than 350 cities and counties have established housing trust funds, and they have proven to be an effective tool for both helping individual families address their housing burden and expanding the stock of affordable housing in their communities.

ELIMINATE LEAD HAZARDS

In many areas of the state, housing stock that is affordable tends to be older (pre-1950s) and more likely to contain lead paint. Lead poisoning is an entirely preventable cause of brain damage. Although Milwaukee and other cities have made substantial strides in abating lead hazards, current funding is insufficient to eliminate the problem in the near future. There are still approximately 455,000 dwellings in Wisconsin with lead hazards, of which about 79,220 (17 percent, or about one in six) are occupied by families with young children.⁹ Full support for the recommendations of the Wisconsin Childhood Lead Poisoning Elimination by 2010 Committee will ensure that Wisconsin completes the work of eliminating these lead hazards. The creation of a state revolving loan fund to assist landlords and homeowners in replacing windows in older homes with new, lead-free windows will also move us towards an "A" grade in housing.



INCREASE LOCAL FLEXIBILITY

Many Wisconsin communities are working on local strategies, with local support, to expand affordable housing in their area. Unfortunately, certain state statutes limit the ability of local communities to address their own housing problems with their own resources. While working on statewide strategies to increase the stock of affordable housing, Wisconsin can also move toward an “A” in housing by supporting changes in state law to allow local communities to more easily create and expand housing resources through innovative and cost-effective local initiatives.



PREVENT HOMELESSNESS

Increased housing prices and the growth in low-wage service sector jobs have contributed to the inability of many families to maintain stable housing.¹⁰ In 2005, 11,525 people, including 3,399 children, spent time in Wisconsin homeless shelters. During the 2005-06 school year, 6,384 homeless students were served by Wisconsin public schools.¹¹ The growth in federal funding for homeless prevention has not kept up with the need in Wisconsin, and state funding has not increased in at least 15 years. To reach an “A” in housing, the problem of homelessness must be attacked aggressively by targeting assistance to homeless prevention. In addition to creating a statewide housing trust fund (see above), the state should be more aggressive in collecting earnings from interest-bearing down payments, earnest money and similar types of real estate payments (Interest-Bearing Real Estate Trust Account) for use in emergency shelter grants. It is also important to recognize that mental health problems and drug and alcohol addiction contribute to homelessness in many cases, and therefore any successful solution to homelessness must include a commitment to making treatment services available to people who need them in order to maintain stable employment and housing.

SUBJECT: HEALTHY CHILDREN

GRADE: B-

GOAL: By the year 2020, all Wisconsin children will have health insurance and access to appropriate, timely and consistent dental, mental health and preventative care services.

Wisconsin has always been a national leader in providing innovative healthcare solutions for our children and families. Continuing that leadership and taking the final steps to ensure that all kids have access to appropriate and timely healthcare, beginning with prenatal care, will have an enormously positive impact on children’s overall well-being. The implications of children’s access to good healthcare are far-reaching, ranging from their ability to learn to their parents’ ability to keep and be productive in their jobs.

Wisconsin enjoys a relatively high rate of health insurance coverage, though there still are a sizeable number of children who lack coverage. And while health insurance itself is critical, it does not guarantee access to services. A shortage of local primary care providers, as well as transportation, language and cultural barriers, can all prevent children from receiving essential health services. Not surprisingly, these obstacles disproportionately affect the poor.

Dental health services are frequently not available to many children, including those covered by BadgerCare and Medicaid, making cavities a leading cause of school absences in some communities. In addition, only about half of Wisconsin children have a “medical home” (or consistent primary health provider). Studies show that uninsured children do not get the care needed to treat common childhood illnesses such as ear infections and asthma.

Wisconsin’s grade in this area is fairly high because we compare favorably to other states in many categories, such as health insurance access, immunization rates, and timely prenatal care, and we have relatively low rates of hunger and food insecurity. However, there is still substantial room for improvement, particularly with respect to children’s access to dental and mental healthcare, and the elimination of healthcare-related disparities based on income and race.

RAISING THE GRADE IN HEALTHCARE - HOW CAN WISCONSIN EARN AN “A”?



ENSURE THAT ALL CHILDREN HAVE ACCESS TO HEALTH INSURANCE

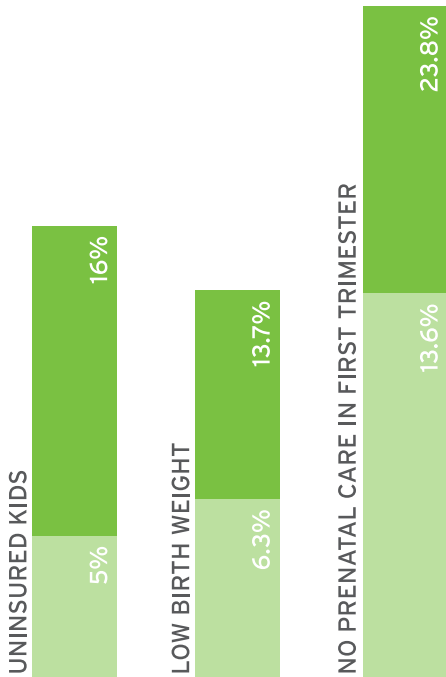
Wisconsin has been among the top 10 states in having a relatively small percentage of uninsured children, yet in 2005 about 110,000 Wisconsin children (9 percent) were uninsured for all or part of the year.¹² That’s a group of children larger than the entire population of Green Bay. The significant and growing number of uninsured children not only causes severe hardships for the families going without needed healthcare, but it’s also a significant problem for the quality and cost-effectiveness of our entire healthcare system. It’s time for Wisconsin to extend healthcare to the rest of the state’s children, as Illinois, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania have recently done. Support for initiatives like the proposed BadgerCare Plus proposal will take us a long way toward ensuring that all children in the state have health insurance.

EXPAND ACCESS TO DENTAL AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Good dental and mental health are key to overall child health and success. Untreated dental problems among children have been tied to poor performance in school and trouble with social relationships.¹³ Yet fully 75 percent of Medicaid and BadgerCare fee-for-service recipients received no dental services in 2005, and almost half of all Wisconsin children lack a “medical home” (i.e., a consistent primary health provider), making it difficult for them to obtain regular care and mental health services.¹⁴ When children’s health suffers, their social and academic performance suffers as well. We must fund more dental services at public health clinics and adopt mental health parity legislation that requires health insurance policies to cover mental healthcare on par with other healthcare services.

ELIMINATE RACE AND INCOME DISPARITIES IN HEALTHCARE

Disparities in healthcare outcomes signal a significant failure on the part of our healthcare delivery system. Though Wisconsin’s overall rates of healthcare coverage are high, low-income and minority families have far less access to healthcare than higher-income residents, and therefore have significantly worse health outcomes. For example, 23 percent of Wisconsin residents below the poverty level were uninsured for all or part of 2005, compared to just 7 percent of people above 200 percent of poverty. Similarly, 21 percent of blacks were uninsured in 2005, compared to 9 percent for non-Hispanic whites.¹⁵ Wisconsin’s black children were more than three times as likely as white children to be uninsured for at least part of 2005 (16 percent vs. 5 percent), and black infants had more than twice the mortality rate of whites (13.7 percent vs. 6.3 percent).¹⁶ To ensure that all of Wisconsin’s children have access to quality healthcare, we must improve outreach for public programs and remove barriers to enrollment.



RACIAL DISPARITIES IN HEALTHCARE
 WHITE BLACK
 WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY SERVICES

IMPROVE HEALTH OUTCOMES AND SERVICES FOR INFANTS

Though Wisconsin’s infant mortality rate remains slightly below the national average, it increased to 6.6 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2005, from 6.0 in 2004. Similarly, the proportion of infants born with low birth weights rose to 7 percent in 2005, compared to 6 percent a decade earlier.¹⁷ The immunization rate for children under two years old has improved significantly and is above the national average, but at 83 percent it remains well short of the state’s 90 percent goal for 2010.¹⁸ To reach that goal, we must improve the public health network and provide financial incentives to providers and health plans that achieve higher immunization rates.

ENSURE THAT NO CHILD IN WISCONSIN IS HUNGRY

Nearly 200,000 Wisconsin households (9 percent) experience “food insecurity” (limited or uncertain access to nutritional food), and about 60,000 households (2.8 percent) experience hunger because they are unable to afford enough food.¹⁹ Wisconsin ranks last nationally in the portion of students getting school breakfasts.²⁰ To begin to turn this around, Wisconsin must provide school districts with greater financial assistance for offering breakfast programs.

ELIMINATE BUREAUCRATIC BARRIERS TO COVERAGE

More than half of the uninsured children in Wisconsin are in families who meet the income-eligibility standards for BadgerCare or Medicaid.²¹ Yet bureaucratic barriers keep these families from receiving needed healthcare coverage. To reach those children, the state needs to simplify existing healthcare programs serving low-income families to minimize confusion, delays and unnecessary terminations of coverage. The BadgerCare Plus proposal, if implemented, will go a long way towards eliminating these hurdles to healthcare, but we must also work to ensure that the federal government takes proactive steps to eliminate recently enacted bureaucratic barriers that keep eligible families from receiving healthcare coverage.

SUBJECT: EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

GRADE: B-

GOAL: By 2020, Wisconsin will build a universally accessible system of quality early childhood education, care and after-school programs that support optimal child development.



Long before it is time to shop for the brand new backpack, pencil case and lunchbox, the experiences and relationships that form the basis for a child's success are taking shape. High-quality childcare, preschool and after-school programs that engage children and provide stable, nurturing environments have an enormous impact on children's well-being, including their school success, future employment and earning potential, and their capacity to be productive citizens. Programming that includes highly qualified teachers, small class sizes, and parent engagement also benefits the wider community by yielding higher educational attainment, reducing the achievement gap and reducing special education costs.

Wisconsin has been a national leader in early care and education, ranking high among states in support for childcare subsidies, pre-kindergarten programs, Head Start, and services to children with disabilities. However, children's access to high-quality education from birth through graduation is strongly influenced by the wealth of the communities in which they live. While the Wisconsin Shares childcare subsidy program, the SAGE program, and other state investments help to reduce this disparity, Wisconsin needs a more systematic approach to giving all children a foundation for success, regardless of family income.

RAISING THE GRADE IN EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION HOW CAN WISCONSIN EARN AN "A"?

EXPAND AFFORDABLE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY EARLY CARE AND AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Improving children's access to high-quality early education opportunities as well as appropriate after-school activities can improve their long-term success. Currently, less than half (an estimated 46 percent) of Wisconsin's three- and four-year-olds are enrolled in an early care or education program, such as four-year-old kindergarten, Head Start, or licensed childcare programs.²² While the majority (62 percent) of Wisconsin's elementary-age children (ages 6 to 11) are in after-school activities, there remains a sizable number who are unsupervised or home alone, increasing their likelihood of getting into trouble or becoming a victim of crime.²³ Although well over two-thirds of Wisconsin's preschool and school-age children have all parents in the workforce, and children are in some form of out-of-home care, parents' ability to afford programs with an educational component may determine whether children are prepared for school.

Wisconsin Shares, the state's childcare subsidy program, helps many low-income families afford childcare services. But the program is at risk of not serving all eligible families, being forced to lower eligibility standards, lower payments to childcare providers or raise co-pays for families. Wisconsin must maintain a stable base of funding for this program to continue to ensure affordable, quality childcare for low-income families. And the program's co-payment structure still leaves many families paying more than 10 percent of their income for childcare.²⁴ That's a significant financial burden on these low-income families, for whom the program remains out of reach. The state must also make an investment in encouraging after-school programs in all parts of Wisconsin.

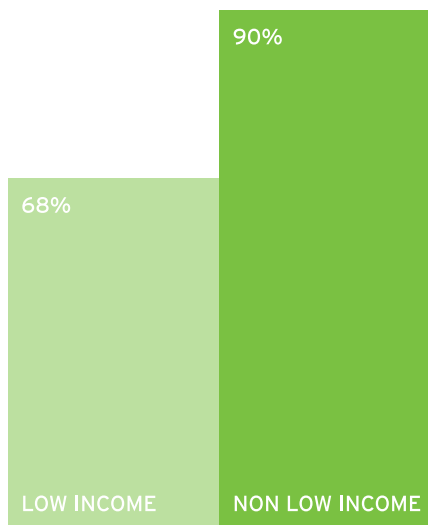
PERCENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS WITH A TWO- OR FOUR-YEAR DEGREE:

Licensed family childcare	24%
Licensed childcare centers (full-day)	29%
Head Start	70%
Public school 4-year-old kindergarten and special education for children ages 3-5; Birth to Three Intervention Program	99%

INCREASE THE QUALITY OF EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION SERVICES, WITH AN EMPHASIS ON CHILDREN AT RISK

The education level of early education teachers has a direct bearing on the quality of the early learning experience they are able to deliver. While nearly all public school teachers and staff at Birth to Three Intervention programs (which serve children with disabilities) have earned at least a bachelor's degree, 30 percent of Head Start teachers and over 70 percent of childcare teachers and family childcare providers have not earned a two-year associate degree or higher.²⁵ Only 7 percent of licensed childcare programs meet standards for high quality, such as those required for accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children or the National Association for Family Childcare.²⁶

Wisconsin does not currently have a systematic way to assess and improve the quality of its early care and education settings. Many states have quality improvement systems that provide financial incentives for programs to improve quality and professional development opportunities. Other states have moved to universal pre-kindergarten in partnership with community-based programs to improve quality across a range of early care and education programs.²⁷ It is time for Wisconsin to take comprehensive steps to improve early learning opportunities for its children, particularly those most in need, by implementing a quality rating system for childcare, improving the qualifications of teachers and providers working with young children, and expanding pre-kindergarten options in collaboration with community-based programs.



4TH GRADERS PROFICIENT & ADVANCED IN READING

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

IMPROVE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT FOR CHILDREN FROM ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED FAMILIES

People in Wisconsin have long believed that good education is a fundamental right. Sadly, the state's educational achievement gap demonstrates clearly that this right has been compromised for many economically disadvantaged children. The results can be disastrous. Staggering numbers of young people enter adulthood ill-equipped to fully participate not only in the workforce but in all of society. This wasted potential has frightening implications for both our economy and our democracy. Fortunately, research suggests that there are ways to close the gap. It is clear that expanding access to quality early learning opportunities is critical. Small class sizes are also key to quality education, suggesting that the state should prioritize expanding SAGE statewide. We must create incentives for highly qualified teachers to teach in low-performing schools. Increased research on promising models for cultural competency training for teachers and strategies to increase parental involvement are also needed.

CONCLUSION - ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

The value of a report card lies in its potential use as a roadmap for improvement. A mediocre student report card, when not acted upon, is nothing but a piece of paper to be concealed from one's parents. Wise parents use a report card as a tool, a baseline from which to measure progress toward the ultimate goal of eternal straight A's. The ultimate goal toward which we seek to progress is the elimination of child poverty, and its symptoms as reflected in the arenas of wages, housing, healthcare and early care and education. A report card full of B's and C's is cause for neither panic nor celebration. These grades simply reflect the fact that Wisconsin as a state can do much better. Recent state policies and proposals in the areas of health insurance coverage and economic development projects suggest that we have the expertise and desire to address child poverty. However, as this card suggests, we have much work to do. Policies that tinker around the edges should no longer be considered good enough. Achieving our goal of permanent straight A's by the year 2020 will require serious commitment and courage on the part of policy-makers and the public they work for.

Join us in this effort by pledging to work toward the elimination of poverty by 2020 and urge our policy makers in Wisconsin to make ending poverty their priority as well. To find out more, visit www.2020wi.org

END NOTES

- ¹The Annie E. Casey Foundation analysis of 2005 American Community Survey data
- ²The grades for each area rely upon the most recent data available, including data on disparities based on income and race
- ³Source: Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS) analysis of Current Population Survey (CPS), Outgoing Rotation Group (ORG) data, found in State of Working Wisconsin, 2006
- ⁴COWS analysis of CPS data. Note: This measure includes those jobs that pay a wage insufficient for a year-round, full-time worker to reach the poverty level for a family of four (less than \$9.52 per hour)
- ⁵Ibid
- ⁶American Community Survey microdata. Note: In 2006, 200% of poverty for a family of four was \$40,000 annually
- ⁷COWS, “When Work Doesn’t Pay”, 2006
- ⁸US Bureau of Labor Statistics
- ⁹Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services, Lead Poisoning Prevention
- ¹⁰DOA Housing
- ¹¹Department of Public Instruction, www.dpi.state.wi.us
- ¹²Wisconsin Family Health Survey 2005, Department of Health and Family Services
- ¹³ChildTrends Data Bank, www.childtrendsdatbank.org
- ¹⁴Wisconsin Medicaid Dental Facts, DHFS, Division of Healthcare Financing
- ¹⁵Wisconsin Family Health Survey 2005
- ¹⁶Ibid
- ¹⁷Wisconsin Births and Infant Deaths, 2005, DHFS, Bureau of Health Information and Policy.
- ¹⁸Using 2004 immunization data posted on Statehealthfacts.org
- ¹⁹Based on 2002-04 averages, from Household Food Security in the United States, Economic Research Service/USDA
- ²⁰School Breakfast Scorecard: 2005, Food Resource Action Council
- ²¹According to the Wisconsin Family Health Survey 2005, about three-fifths of children who were uninsured for all or part of the year (and for whom income was known) were in families below 200% of the poverty level
- ²²Estimates based on enrollment, licensing and childcare subsidy data from: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, and the Wisconsin Head Start Association
- ²³Urban Institute, Assessing the New Federalism, Snapshots of America’s Families: Data by State, Wisconsin Note: fully seven percent of six- to nine-year-olds and one in five ten- to twelve-year-olds are left unsupervised
- ²⁴Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, childcare subsidy data
- ²⁵Teacher/provider educational qualifications data from Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, Wisconsin Head Start Association, and Wisconsin Childcare Research Partnership (UW-Extension)
- ²⁶Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, data on accreditation and high-quality
- ²⁷Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, student test performance data



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Vision 2020 Report Card: Moving All Families Forward was produced through the generous support of:

The Joyce Foundation and The Annie E. Casey Foundation

This Report Card is a publication of the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families. Contributing writers include: David Edie, Jon Peacock, Vicky Selkove, John Keckhaver, and Martha Cranley.

Special thanks to Dick Schlimm and Bob Jones of WISCAP and Shelley Cousin of the Wisconsin Head Start Association for their ideas and editing assistance and their partnership in the effort to end child poverty by 2020.

Editing by Bob Jacobson • Design and Layout by Knupp & Watson • Photography by Julie Landrie, John Urban, Melissa Sargent • Printing by Think Ink

For more information about this Report Card, please contact Martha Cranley at the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, 555 W. Washington Avenue, Suite 200, Madison, WI 53703 (608) 284-0580, ext. 321 or mcranley@wccf.org



www.2020WI.org

TOGETHER WE CAN END CHILD POVERTY

