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For Immediate Release

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Governor Walker Announces Education Reform Legislation

Madison—Today Governor Scott Walker announced his support of legislation to implement a package of education reforms that will be based on the work of three separate bipartisan taskforces. The education reform package will improve accountability in our school systems, improve teacher training, and lay the foundation for our children to succeed.

“Improving our schools, measuring student achieving growth, and increasing accountability and transparency in education will help our children succeed,” said Governor Walker, who announced the reforms at the 2012 State Education Convention in Milwaukee. “While members of the working groups deserve credit for their recommendations, our work is not yet done. I encourage parents, teachers, school board members, and all community leaders to help implement these reforms that are key to our state’s long-term prosperity.”

"Our work with stakeholders has helped us get off to a great start," said Assembly Education Committee Chairman Steve Kestell. "We are poised to move forward with significantly positive education policy reform. I remain committed to working with Governor Walker and my colleagues to enact measures that will move our schools forward and enhance learning opportunities for Wisconsin students."

"We spent a significant amount of time last year engaged in design team processes to make important decisions about how to improve students' reading scores, ensure every classroom has an effective teacher, and gauge school success by looking at both growth and attainment," added Senate Education Chairman Luther Olsen. "This education package puts into law essential elements to help these initiatives succeed."

Below is a brief summary of work of the three taskforces, which formed the basis for education reform legislation that will be introduced in the near future.

Read to Lead—Convened by Governor Walker to improve Wisconsin’s long-stagnant reading achievement, this task force was comprised of reading teachers, researchers, advocates, legislators from both parties, and others. The recommendations from this taskforce include legislation to:

- Create the Governor’s Read to Lead Development Council which will be given statutory authority to raise money to support reading initiatives statewide.
- Require all students to take an early childhood reading screener in kindergarten by 2012-13.
- Require the state Department of Public Instruction to improve the rigor of the licensure exam for new elementary school reading teachers and coaches by 2013-14.
- Ensure districts and future teachers know which teacher preparation programs produce the best teachers while driving improvement at those schools that do not perform as highly.

From kindergarten through third grade, students spend the bulk of their time learning to read. But in fourth grade, start using reading to learn. Research shows that if a student is behind in fourth grade, they will almost never catch up. Once they are behind, students are much less likely to go to college and are much more likely to drop out.

Educator Effectiveness—Convened by State Superintendent Tony Evers during Governor Walker’s transition, this taskforce is aimed at creating a fair and rigorous system for evaluating teachers and principals. The design team had representation from the Governor’s Office, teachers unions, school boards, school administrators, and others. Legislation from this working group will:

- Create a framework for a teacher and principal evaluation system that would be based on multiple measures of student outcomes (50%) and educator practice (50%). Educators would not be held responsible for raw test scores but for value-added growth that focuses only on what an educator can control and does NOT punish a teacher or principal for taking on a tough assignment.
- Base the system on the 2011 Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) Model Core Teaching Standards (teachers) and the 2008 Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Educational Leadership Policy Standards (principals).
- Protect teacher privacy while ensuring parents have a right to know if their child receives a low-performing teacher.

Creating a fair system for evaluating teachers and principals will allow educators to receive timely and constructive feedback to improve their effectiveness.

School Accountability—Convened by Governor Walker, Superintendent Evers, Senator Olsen, and Representative Kestell last summer to design an alternative to No Child Left Behind that focuses on setting high standards, ensuring transparency, and measuring what matters to ensure all students are ready for college or career. The task force was comprised of teachers, school leaders, researchers, advocates, legislators from both parties, and others. The legislation will:

- Rate all schools (public, charter, and choice) on multiple measures of student growth and proficiency consistent with progress towards college or career readiness.
- Ensure current and prospective parents know how their child's school is performing.

A report card for schools and districts will provide parents with easy to understand information about the performance of their children's schools. It will allow the community to hold low performing schools accountable and focus all schools on continual improvement.

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