



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P. O. Box 7882 Madison, WI 53707-7882

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Contact: Rep. Jason Fields (608) 266-3756
Sen. Lena Taylor (608) 266-5810

Stop Defending a System that Perpetuates the Achievement Gap

MADISON – State Representative Jason M. Fields and State Senator Lena Taylor (D-Milwaukee) today expressed their frustration with the lack of progress in addressing the achievement gap between white and black students in Wisconsin.

In a report from the National Center for Education Statistics, Wisconsin had the second worst achievement gap in 4th and 8th grade mathematics. The state's achievement gap is the worst in the nation in 8th grade reading and second worst in 4th grade reading. The study looked at the scores of white and black students for 2007 on the federal National Assessment of Educational Progress tests.

The report defines the achievement gap between white and black students as the difference between the average score for white students and black students.

- Achievement score gap in math for grade 8: 45 points, national average: 31
- Achievement score gap in math for grade 4: 38 points, national average: 26
- Achievement score gap in reading for grade 8: 38 points, national average: 26
- Achievement score gap in reading for grade 4: 38 points, national average: 27

Wisconsin is the only state to have a white-black achievement gap larger than the national gap in both grades in math and reading. The report shows that the average score for black students in Wisconsin was lower than for blacks in Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, or any other Southern state.

“Forty years ago we fought for the civil rights of all people so that black kids and white kids in the south and all over the nation, could eat together at the same lunch counter. Today, our children cannot read the menu or even add up the lunch ticket. Wisconsin has become the educational deep south of the North!” Taylor exclaimed.

Kati Haycock, president of the Education Trust, in assessing the results of the report relating to Wisconsin, said “Black kids in Wisconsin do worse than in all these Southern states,” because Wisconsin educators “haven’t been focusing on doing what’s necessary to close these gaps”.¹

“I cannot understand why people are defending an educational system that has consistently failed our children,” Fields said.

¹ Dillon, Sam ‘Racial Gap in Testing See Shift by Region’, [New York Times](#), July 15, 2009