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Achievement Gap Signals Wasted Potential for Wisconsin *New Report: Mind the Gap Examines Solutions for Schools*

Madison – A new WisKids report by the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families shows how persistent barriers hamper educational achievement for children of color and makes recommendations for changes in policies and investments to improve educational outcomes. *Mind the Gap*, shows persistent barriers to educational opportunities continue to exist for many of the state's children of color and highlights effective models that have reduced the achievement gap.

“The release of the U.S. Department of Education’s *Nation’s Report Card* earlier this week shows us that we have more work to do to ensure that every child has the opportunity and support to achieve academically. Nowhere are significant disparities between children of color and white children more evident than in the area of educational achievement. Even before kindergarten, the gap in their readiness is profound,” said Martha Cranley, Kids Count coordinator for WCCF and author of the report.

- The results of the state 4th grade reading test still show a fairly large gap between african american, hispanic students and white students. While only 12 percent of white students scored below the proficient or advanced category, the same was true for 33 percent of hispanic students and 41 percent of african american students. Test results showed that the achievement gap got larger by 10th grade, with 19 percent of white students scoring below proficient and advanced, while 61 percent of african american and 48 percent of hispanic students scored at that level.
- Rigorous curriculum prepares students for college. Students of color are significantly under-represented in advanced placement classes, e.g., african american students represent 10 percent of total enrollment, but only 1 percent of advanced placement English enrollment.
- In order to compete for family supporting jobs, students must, at a minimum, gain a high school diploma. While Wisconsin as a whole has a high rate of graduation, hispanic and african american students in Wisconsin graduate at much lower rates: White 95 percent, hispanic 77 percent, and african american 66 percent.

“There are strategies that work that we can model for the rest of the state, and this report highlights some of those,” said Charity Eleson, executive director for WCCF. “More broadly, there are policies that could strengthen existing programs that we should support given the evidence of their impact on closing the achievement gap.”

***Mind the Gap* policy recommendations include:** improve the quality of early education programs, support SAGE, increase funding for summer and after school programs, attract qualified teachers, and provide sufficient funding for public education.

Models of success highlighted in the report include:

- Schools of Hope, Madison Metropolitan and United Way of Dane County
- Chicago Child Parent Centers, Chicago Public Schools
- Samuel Morse Middle School, Milwaukee Public Schools
- Success for All, whole school model Baltimore
- Student Achievement Guarantee in Education, Wisconsin's class reduction program for K-3

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (www.dpi.state.wi.us/sig/index.html) and the U.S. Department of Education's *Nation's Report Card* (www.nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/) reports released recently highlight the need to improve outcomes for children of color in Wisconsin.

Mind the Gap is a publication of the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families and was produced through the support of the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Joyce Foundation. The full report is available at: http://wccf.org/pdf/mindthegap_052506.pdf

Wisconsin Council on Children and Families: Raising Voices to Make Every Kid Count