

## REACH Initiative Abstract

Children come to our schools with diverse backgrounds and needs. As student diversity increases, so does the challenge schools face to be responsive to all students. A review of the research on system change in education suggests that successful efforts to improve student outcomes must address two primary considerations:

- First, educators must have a clear, unified vision for addressing the needs of students that can be translated into specific instructional program strategies.
- Second, successful initiatives must use system change principles if they are to result in long-term institutionalized reform.

The REACH Initiative is designed to promote effective system change in schools. All elements of the REACH Initiative support implementation of a framework for enhancing the success of all students – particularly those experiencing repeated school failures. The REACH framework components focus on collaborative problem solving using data-based decision making to implement evidence-based prevention and intervention practices at all levels in a school system.

The REACH Initiative, funded through an Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) grant awarded to Wisconsin's Department of Public Instruction, includes:

- A REACH Technical Assistance Center to develop tools and processes supporting the ten school improvement components which make up the REACH framework. The Technical Assistance Center also trains expert mentors to guide schools through the implementation of the framework.
- Four REACH regional centers to provide training and technical assistance on the REACH framework and tools throughout the state.
- Competitive district grants to a limited number of schools to support REACH framework implementation. In return for grant funding, schools provide data to the Department to assist in the analysis of the Initiative's impact on student success.

A diverse leadership advisory team provides regular feedback on the activities of the REACH Initiative and an annual external evaluation. All REACH activities include meaningful parent and family involvement. Through the statewide REACH Initiative, schools implementing the REACH Framework have access to training, resources, and technical assistance support.

Schools implementing the REACH framework have experienced:

- ★ Improved student achievement
- ★ Reduced achievement gaps
- ★ Reduced suspensions of students who are African American
- ★ Stabilized referral rates, increased referrals found eligible
- ★ Increased family involvement
- ★ Increased capacity of teachers to address student needs
- ★ Increased implementation of structures and practices associated with highly effective schools

All aspects of the REACH Initiative are guided by this philosophy:

*“Instead of expecting a child to be ready for school, we make sure our school is ready for the child.”* Principal, REACH Implementing School

# Responsive Education for All Children (REACH)

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