

Gov. Evers, First Lady Evers: Announce Collaboration with NGA on Social and Emotional Needs of Kids and Families

Posted on Thursday, Apr 8, 2021

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MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers and First Lady Kathy Evers announced that Wisconsin and five other states were selected to work with the National Governors Association (NGA) on strategies for equitably meeting the social-emotional needs of students and families during and beyond the coronavirus pandemic. The announcement comes as students and their families continue to confront fear, anxiety, trauma, isolation, and stress surrounding the ongoing pandemic in addition to increasing public concern across the country about persistent racial disparities and economic instability.

“Kids and families across our state have had a tough year, and it’s important now more than ever that we support our kids and families, talk about mental health and well-being, and connect the dots on equity,” said Gov. Evers. “Kathy and I appreciate this opportunity to work with the NGA on promoting the social and emotional health of Wisconsin’s kids, and this grant will allow us to benefit from NGA’s expertise in exploring new models for family engagement in Wisconsin.”

First Lady Evers has embraced social and emotional learning as a primary policy focus before and during the pandemic, visiting successful social and emotional learning early childhood education partners and participating in listening sessions with collective impact partners to connect the dots between agencies and sectors. “Especially as we transition into more in-person learning and activities, focusing on the mental health needs of students is a high priority,” said First Lady Evers.

“Thanks to NGA, we have an opportunity to explore how to better meet community needs and engage parents and caregivers in social and emotional learning efforts.” The pandemic has underscored the need for comprehensive whole-child approaches to education that are grounded in learning and development best practices and data-driven strategies such as community schools, wraparound services, and parent, family, student, and community engagements.

Wisconsin’s project is focused on conducting a series of focus groups around parent and family engagement to help increase the mental, social, and emotional well-being of kids and families. The project will also work to create a template for schools to use to engage parents around new and ongoing social and emotional learning efforts with an emphasis on equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

The NGA Center for Best Practices selected states to receive technical assistance from its staff and national and state partners, as well as grant funding support to develop and carry out action plans focused on one or more specific state policy priorities related to students’ comprehensive development. In addition, governor’s offices will engage with and learn from peers and national and state experts to advance their policy priorities. Other states selected for the program include Arkansas, Indiana, Michigan, North Dakota, and Oregon. This collaboration will continue through March 2022.