

We strive to live in a community where...

quality education is highly valued
and available for people of all ages.



Education Subcommittee

Jim McCluskey, Chair	UW Marathon County
Julie Burmesch	Wausau School District
Cathy Howe	Marathon County Child Development
Joanne Kelly	United Way of Marathon County
Jen Kowalski	Wausau Child Care
Micki Krueger	Child Care Connection
Andy Napgezek	Aspirus Wausau Hospitals, Inc.
Deanna Schuette	United Way of Marathon County
Rita Straub	Retired, UW Marathon County
Joel VerDuin	Wausau School District

"The significantly high and increasing graduation rates of Marathon County's school districts provide not only an incentive for companies seeking an educated workforce to locate their businesses, but also indicate the high quality of education in the county."

*Jim McCluskey, Professor
UW Marathon County*

Education

Section Summary

Community Success and Progress:

- Graduation rates and test scores in our school systems are strong compared to the state and nation.
- Early childhood programming like home visits, Head Start, family resource centers and financial assistance for child care are available to many families throughout the county.
- Charter schools and school to work programs have been established to meet unique needs of students.
- Partnerships exist between schools and community organizations both in-school and after-school programs.



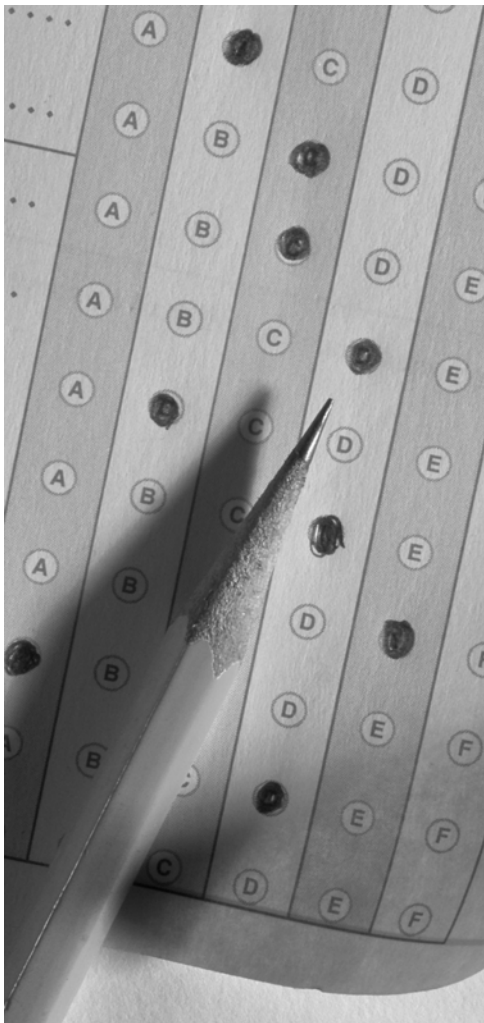
Challenges and Opportunities to Improve:

Challenges

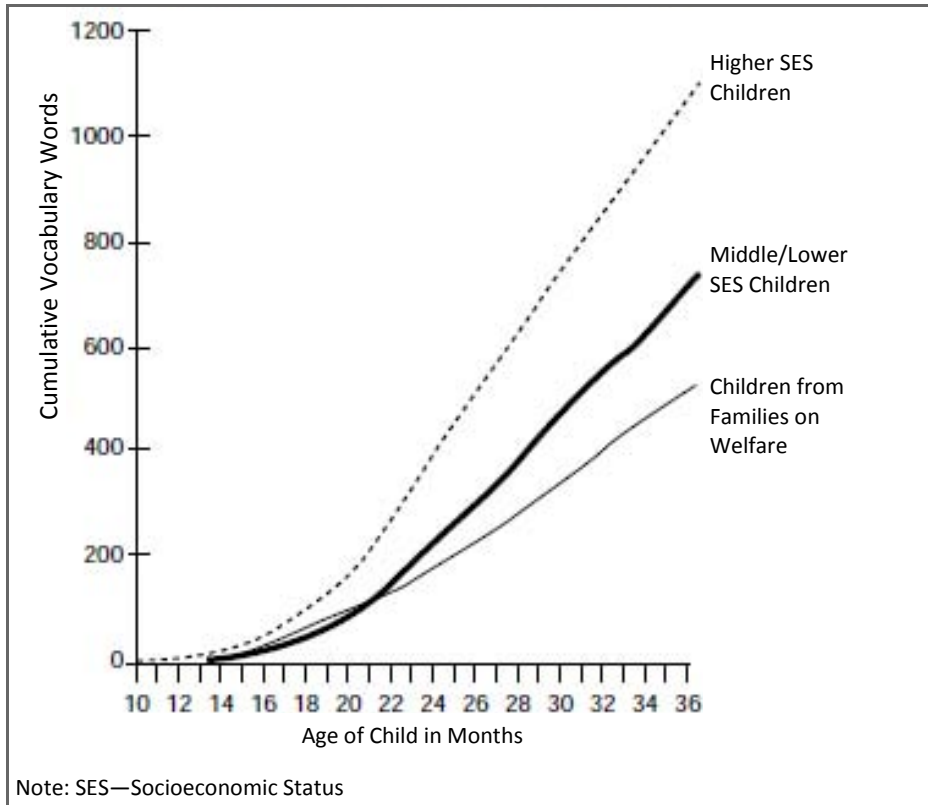
- Increased poverty and family stresses have the potential to increase the number of students coming to school who are not ready to learn.
- Waiting lists exist for Head Start.
- The importance of accessing quality child care and participating in home visiting or parent education is not understood or valued by many families.
- School funding may create strain on the system to continue quality.
- School extracurricular activities are not affordable to all students.
- Post-secondary education is not affordable for all students.

Opportunities to Improve

- Early Childhood Council is organized to coordinate and create attention on the importance of development for birth to six year olds.
- Schools and communities recognize the need for building stronger partnerships to make an impact on improving youth success.
- Maintain a community culture that values and invests in our youth.



Key Measure: Children's Language Ability by Income Level



COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

Many organizations are contributing to improved early child development throughout the county. However, with the increase of family stress, low income families, and other conditions that impact child development, we know there is more to do. Our vision is to ensure that every child in Marathon County enters school ready to learn and is supported for a journey of lifelong success. To improve our success we are working toward development of a county-wide measure for kindergarten readiness, expanded advocacy and community education and implementing a targeted initiative which shows results.

We are concerned that factors which disrupt brain development are increasing. The major factors are malnutrition and inadequate stimulation or learning opportunities. One indication of this increase is the increasing number of children coming to childcare settings with disruptive behaviors. Pre-school age children are 3 times more likely to be expelled in early care settings than in K-12. The increase of early care expulsion is

a symptom of lack of supports for social emotional development and unmet economic needs. A survey of childcare providers across Wisconsin shows 52% of providers reported behavior related expulsion at least once in the past 2 years.

To measure development of young children, a national screening tool called the ASQ, Ages and Stages Questionnaire, is used locally in some childcare centers, physician offices, and non-profits. Our community goal is to screen more children early and ensure that supports are provided to children. When children with developmental delays are identified and receive intervention early it can mean the difference between a need for lifelong support and the ability to live a more productive life.

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- 90% of a child's brain is developed by the age of four. Early experiences determine whether a child will have a strong foundation for all future learning, behavior, and health.
- Children in poverty are more inclined to be labeled "at-risk" and the number of children in poverty is growing.
- Measures of accomplishment at age 3 predict measures of language skills at age 9-10. 22% of children who have lived in poverty do not graduate from high school compared to 6% of those who have never been poor.
- A longitudinal study, The High/Scope Perry Preschool Project, demonstrated that there is a cost savings to the public of more than 7 times the initial cost per child of attending high-quality pre-school. The return on investment is due to lower crime and less delinquency, teen pregnancy, and welfare dependence.
- In the LIFE Survey, 86.0% of respondents agreed that it is important to provide support for families in the development of their young children, while only 5.8% disagreed. In addition, when compared with 9 issues relating to family, this was ranked the third most important factor to improve our quality of life.

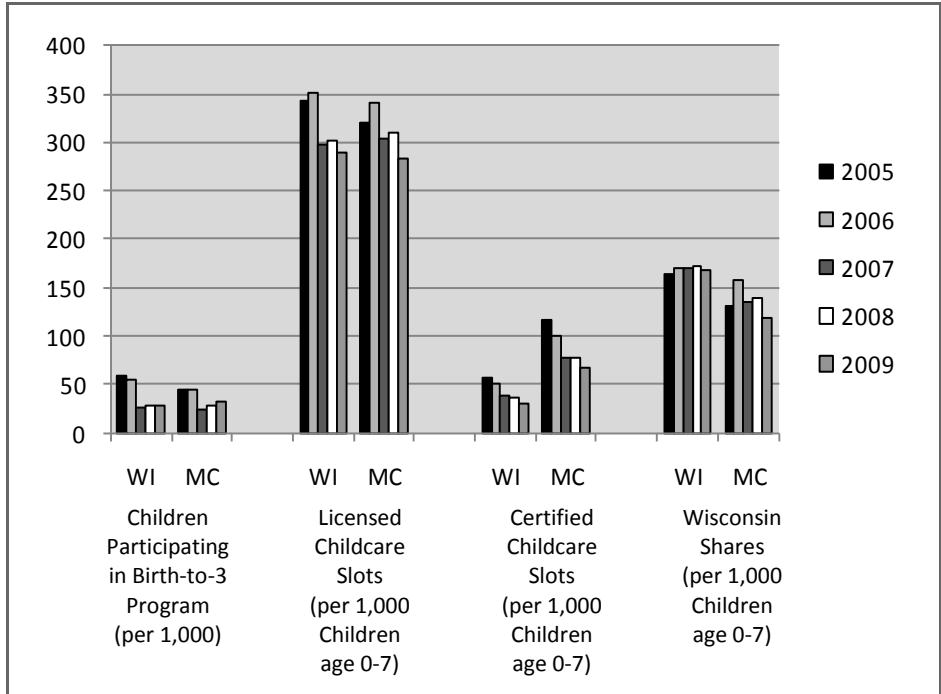
SOURCES

- **Education Review, Vol. 17 (1)**
The Early Catastrophe
<http://xa.yimg.com/kq/groups/8446968/1524504014/name/hart+%26+rисley+2003.pdf>
- **Supporting Families Together Association**
https://supportingfamielstogether.org/uploads/Expulsion_Survey.pdf
- **The Annie E. Casey Foundation**
<http://www.aecf.org/>

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- Children in quality early childcare are more likely to be in a stimulating environment that provides positive interactions and experiences to help with a child’s development.
- During the work week, the majority of young children with two working parents spend 50 hours in day care and 12 waking hours with their parents.
- As of June 2011, there were 186 family and 56 group regulated childcare programs with a capacity of 4,274. 29.3% of these slots are in family settings.
- Regulated care does not guarantee quality care. In 2012, the State of Wisconsin is implementing the YoungStar, a program to provide quality ratings to childcare centers. It awards stars based on a 5-star scale with reimbursement incentives to those centers with a higher star rating.
- Data from the LIFE Community Survey indicated that only 6.5% of respondents disagreed that childcare is accessible.
- In 2010, 556 Marathon County families reached out to Childcare Resource & Referral for assistance finding regulated childcare providers.

Key Measure: Availability of Childcare in Wisconsin and Marathon County



COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

There is usually adequate regulated care in the county, although at times, Childcare Resource & Referral sees gaps in regulated services, such as infant and school-age care, second or third shift care, and care in our rural communities.

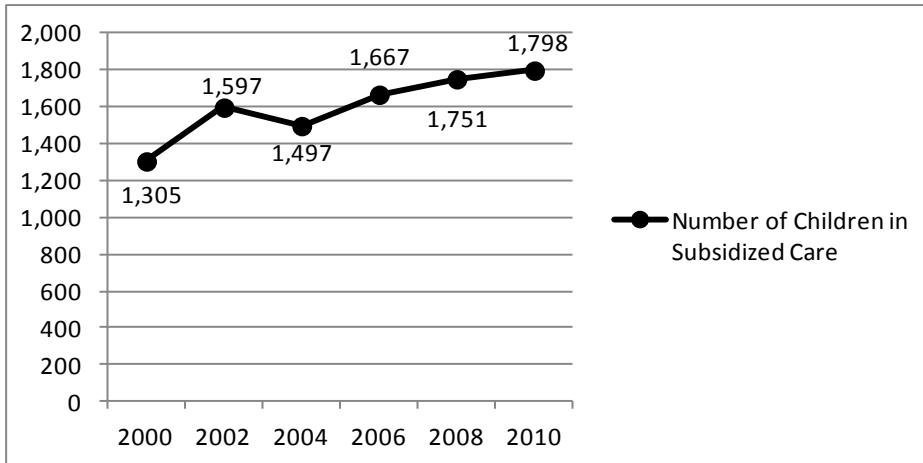
Childcare experiences outside the home are where much of a young child’s development and early learning occurs. Quality care is critical yet difficult to measure. One goal is to increase a families’ understanding of the value and importance of high quality care. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) provides accreditation of programs for young children to help families identify high-quality programs. However, parents often need to be their own judge of quality and have to balance that with cost and convenience. Parents may often feel they don’t have a choice and sacrifice quality for convenience, costs or other factors. Neighbors, grandparents, other family members, parents on shifts who share care, may or may not provide quality care.

Marathon County is fortunate that 4-year-old kindergarten (4K) programming through the schools is widely available, with 88% of the districts offering programs (Wittenberg-Birnamwood and DC Everest are the only districts without 4K). Children receive standardized curriculum and positive learning experiences when enrolled in a 4K program. Children who are lagging behind benefit from pre-K programs. For example, of the 460 students attending the Wausau School District’s Pre-K programs for the full academic year 2010-2011, 52 or 11.3% of the total enrolled were found to be at risk for social and emotional deficits. After program involvement, about 2/3 of the students with deficits improved to an average score which left only 18 students or 3.9% of the total, with deficits and 5 of these had identified special needs.

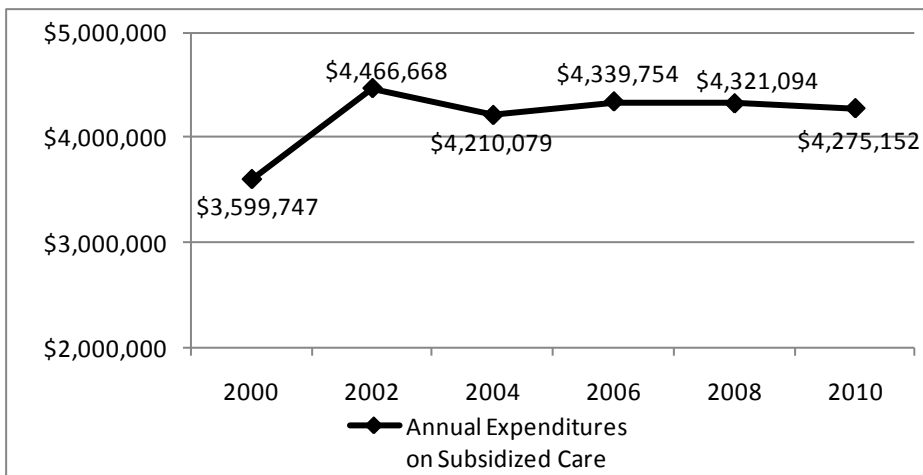
SOURCES

- **Wisconsin Department of Children and Families**
<http://dcf.wi.gov/researchandstatistics/rsdata/ccdata.htm>
- **Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction**
<http://dpi.wi.gov/ec/ecproghm.html>
- **KIDS COUNT Data Center**
<http://datacenter.kidscount.org/>

Key Measure: Marathon County Participation in Subsidized Childcare



Key Measure: Marathon Co. Annual Expenditures on Subsidized Childcare



COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

Many families find it difficult to afford quality childcare and are more likely to look for lower cost alternatives, sometimes in sacrifice of quality. Others may choose not to work because cost of childcare is more than the income that would be generated through employment.

In our community, many public school 4-year-old kindergarten (4K) programs are held in childcare sites, helping to increase access and affordability of quality curriculum, materials, and training for staff. In some instances, participating in a 4K may reduce a family's childcare costs.

During the recent tough economic times, group childcare sites are seeing a greater percentage of children enrolled who need subsidy. Wausau Childcare Director

Jen Kowalski stated, "80% of the calls I receive for childcare are asking for financial assistance. Many families have incomes just over the guidelines and don't qualify for assistance, yet affording care is extremely difficult." A few group childcare centers have closed and most have more vacancies. The decreased use is most likely the result of families being unable to afford care due to reduced wages or unemployment.

Recently, the number of families participating in subsidy have increased, but the total of financial support is declining. This trend may continue because of Wisconsin's budget challenges, where several cost-saving measures are affecting the childcare subsidy program which may create further challenges to families' eligibility or ability to meet their co-pay obligation.

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- In 2011, LIFE Community Survey respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with the statement: "Child Care is affordable." The results were:

Strongly Agree	3.1%
Agree	22.1%
Disagree	25.0%
Strongly Disagree	7.7%
Don't Know	42.0%

- The average cost for childcare is \$151.07 a week for full time care.
- There are 241 children enrolled and 55 children on a waiting list in 2010-11 for Head Start, a federally funded program for children at 100% of poverty or below.
- In 2011, in Wisconsin, excluding Milwaukee County, 86.1% of families enrolled in Wisconsin Shares, a childcare subsidy program, are single parent households. The average family share paid per month is \$94.94 or 15.6% of the monthly cost.
- 79% of families served by Wisconsin Shares have monthly incomes between \$500 and \$2,500 per month. Currently, families eligible for subsidy must have a gross income at or below 200% of poverty. There is a slight trend that more children are being served for less total funds.

SOURCES

- Wisconsin Shares—Department of Children and Families**
<http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/childcare/wishares/default.htm>
- Childcare Connection**
www.childcareconnectioninc.org/GroupRates.pdf

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- There was a slight decrease in enrollments in Marathon County's public schools of 0.7% between the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years.
- The urban school districts of Wausau and DC Everest accounted for 71.5% of the total enrollments in the county's public schools.
- Asian students make up 11.9% of the total enrollment in Marathon County's public school districts compared to just 3.5% in the state. The large difference can be attributed to the large Asian enrollments in the Wausau School (19.4%) and DC Everest School (12.1%) districts.
- African American students comprised 1.6% of the total enrollment in Marathon County's public schools during the 2010-2011 school year, significantly less than the 9.9% in the state. The Wausau and DC Everest urban school districts had 91% of the African American students enrolled in the county.
- Hispanic students make up 4% of the enrollment in Marathon County's public schools, less than the percent enrolled in the state at 9.3%.

Key Measure: Marathon County's School District Demographics, 2010-2011

District	Enrollment			Gender		Ethnicity			
	4K-12	F	M	Amer. Indian	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White	
Wausau	8,546	4,028	4,518	78	1,659	171	326	6,005	
DC Everest	5,646	2,750	2,896	27	681	73	125	4,679	
Mosinee	2,143	1,022	1,121	7	12	9	56	2,016	
Edgar	678	322	356	9	1	10	2	655	
Marathon	658	328	330	0	7	0	21	627	
Spencer	794	397	397	3	0	2	25	748	
Stratford	871	419	452	0	0	4	20	829	
Athens	506	243	263	3	5	0	20	467	
Public Total	19,842	9,509	10,333	127	2,365	269	595	16,026	
Private Total	2,004	1,003	1001	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	
County Total	21,846	10,512	11,334						

Note: Not all ethnicities are represented in the data table. Enrollment and ethnicity totals may not add up.

Key Measure: Marathon County's School District Economic and Limited English Proficiency Parameters, 2010-2011

District	Economics		Limited English Proficiency		
	%Economic Disadvantage	%LEP Spanish	%LEP Hmong	%LEP Other	
Wausau	43.4%	1.8%	14.3%	1.0%	
DC Everest	31.8%	0.5%	8.0%	0.4%	
Mosinee	30.6%	0.2%	0.0%	0.3%	
Edgar	29.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	
Marathon	17.6%	0.6%	0.0%	1.1%	
Spencer	36.6%	1.3%	0.0%	0.5%	
Stratford	25.4%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	
Athens	25.7%	2.4%	0.6%	0.0%	

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

The eight public school districts within Marathon County were previously grouped as either "rural" or "urban." The Wausau and DC Everest school districts are the urban districts. The rural districts are Athens, Edgar, Marathon, Mosinee, Spencer, and Stratford schools.

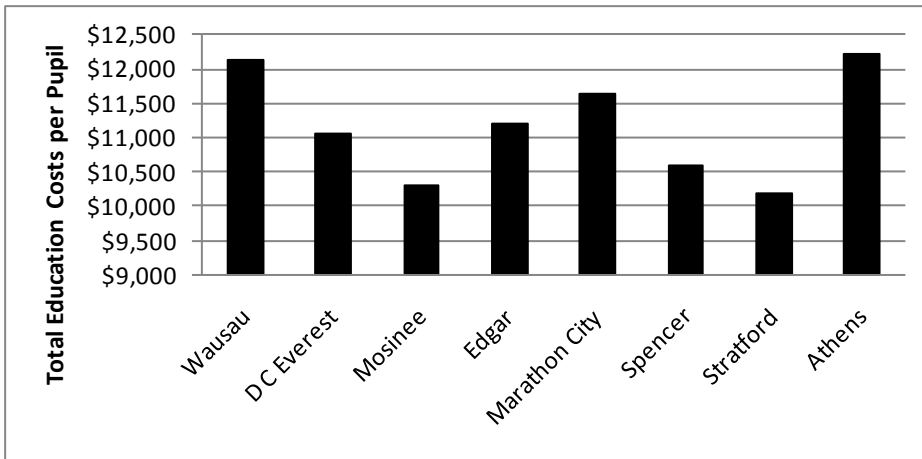
The school data published in the LIFE report is collected by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI). Detailed statistics are not available on private and parochial schools in the DPI database, as they are not measured by the DPI and are not subject to the same state regulations. However, private and parochial schools do provide total enrollment numbers.

The urban school districts in Marathon County have a much higher degree of racial and ethnic diversity than the rural school districts. This is especially true for Asian students where the percentage of Asian students in the Wausau and DC Everest School Districts are much higher than that of the state. The larger percentage of Asian populations in these districts contribute to a higher need for staff trained and certified in English Language Learner (ELL) specialties. In the future, there will be a significant increase in the number of Hispanic students in the county's public schools which will also demand more staff certified in ELL.

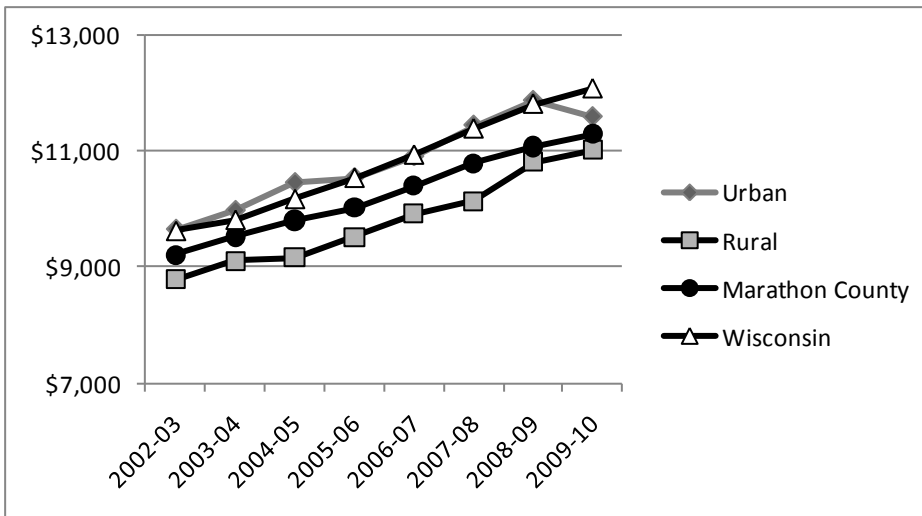
SOURCES

- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
dpi.wi.gov/sig/dm-demographics.html

Key Measure: Total Education Costs (TEC) Per Pupil by District in Marathon County, 2009-2010



Key Measure: Total Education Costs (TEC) Per Pupil by Urban and Rural Designation in Marathon County, County, and State, 2002-2010.



COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

The majority of school district expenses are general fund expenditures. Within general funds the largest expenditure is for instruction—or those costs related to the interaction between staff and students which includes salary and benefits, supplies, equipment and textbooks.

Support services include guidance counselors and psychologists, school health personnel and speech pathologists. Operation/administration includes school board, administration, building maintenance and fiscal operations.

With the current economic conditions and shortfalls in the state budget,

state aid to school districts and per pupil increases in the revenue caps were reduced in the 2009 state budget. Many school districts across the state saw local levy increases of 5-15% to meet 2009-2010 school year obligations.

With state imposed revenue caps in place since 1995, school budget increases have been limited and many cuts in programs and staffing have occurred. Local districts have the option to hold revenue cap referendums to increase their budgets beyond the revenue cap with funds from local taxpayers. Several Marathon County districts have successfully passed such measures.

DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- Total Education Cost (TEC) per student includes overall instructional support service costs, transportation, and expenditures for facilities acquisition. This figure does not include the cost of food service, community service activities funded by fees, or capital project funds funded through the issuance of long-term debt.
- The average TEC for all of Marathon County's school districts for 2009-2010 was \$11,305 per pupil, \$1,066 below the state average.
- The average TEC for 2009-2010 for rural school districts in Marathon County was \$10,945 per pupil and for urban school districts it was \$11,590 per pupil.
- Six of the eight school districts in Marathon County had a TEC per pupil less than the state average.
- The Athens School District had the highest TEC during the 2009-2010 school year at \$12,224 per pupil, while the Stratford School District had the lowest TEC at \$10,188 per pupil.
- The average TEC for all school districts in Wisconsin increased 6.2% from \$11,395 per pupil in 2007-08 to \$12,087 per pupil in 2009-10.

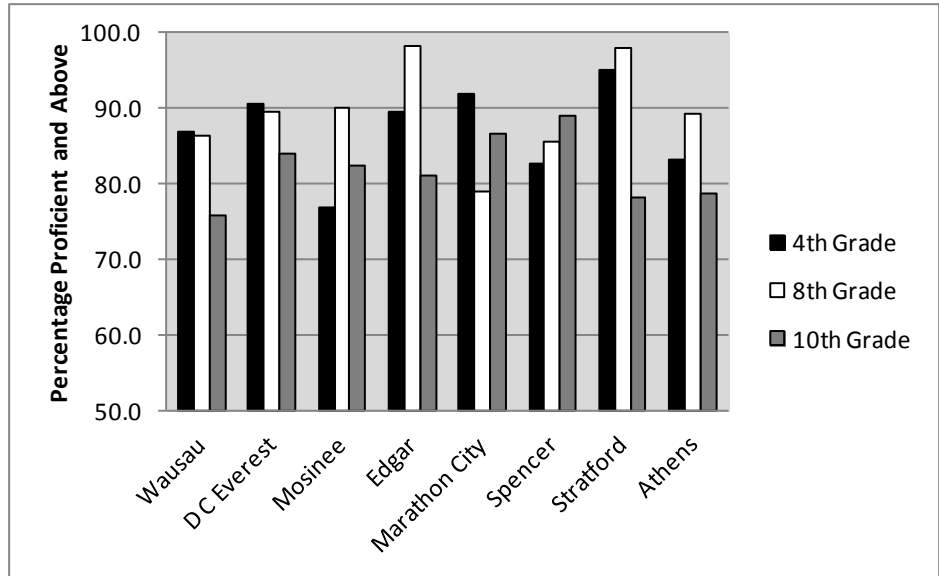
SOURCES

- **Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction**
Report: Wisconsin District and School Performance Reports
<https://apps2.dpi.wi.gov/sdpr/spr.action>
School Finance Data Warehouse
http://www2.dpi.state.wi.us/sfsdw/Std_Rpts_Results.asp

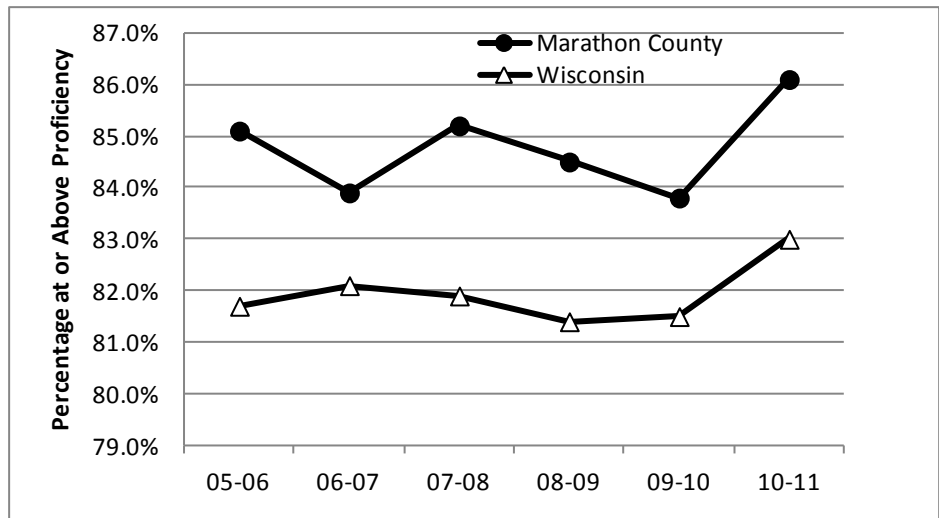
DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- In 2010-2011, 83% of all students tested in Wisconsin scored proficient or advanced in reading comprehension, an increase from 81.7% in 2005-2006.
- Beginning in 2005-2006, reading comprehension scores in Wisconsin and Marathon County remained fairly constant in all grades.
- The greatest overall gains in reading comprehension were made by the state's Asian students who had a 6.1% increase in their scores.
- In 2010-2011, 86.1% of all students tested in Marathon County scored proficient or advanced in reading comprehension, compared to 83% of all tested students in Wisconsin.
- There were minimal differences in reading comprehension scores between the urban and rural school districts of the county.

Key Measure: Reading Comprehension in Marathon County by District, Grades 4, 8, and 10, 2010-2011



Key Measure: Reading Comprehension - Marathon County and State, All Grades Combined, 2005-2011



SOURCES

- **Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction**
Report: Wisconsin District and School Performance Reports
<https://apps2.dpi.wi.gov/sdpr/spr.action>
Wisconsin Information Network for Successful Schools
<http://data.dpi.state.wi.us/data/>
News Release: Achievement Gaps Close for All Groups of Students
http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpinr2011_28.pdf

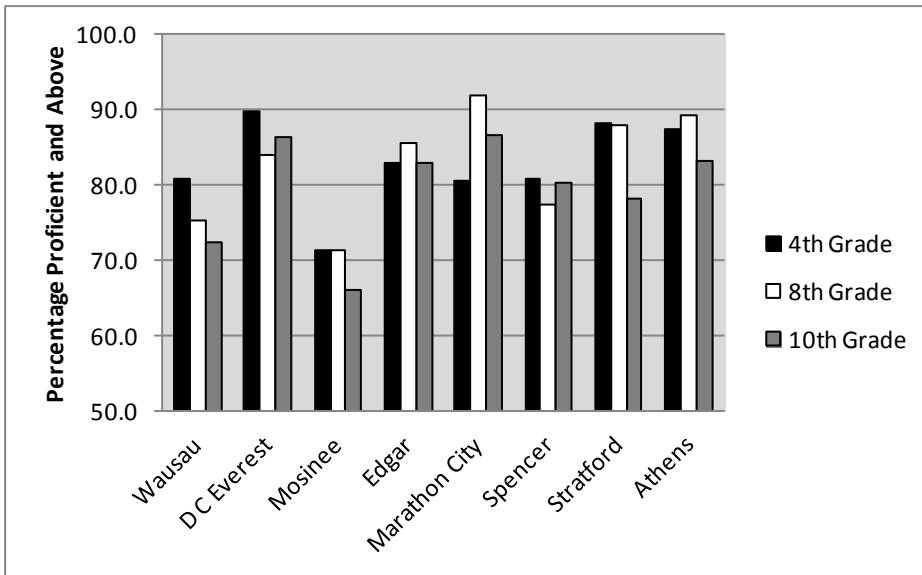
COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

Reading comprehension skills are critical to a child's success in school and life. Without good reading skills, all other subject matter becomes more difficult. Providing supportive services, remedial help, and programs that promote reading and literacy will have an impact on all curriculum areas and test scores.

Significant improvement in the reading comprehension of the county's Asian students, especially in the urban school districts, has been apparent for the last several years. These gains in a large part are due to the responsiveness of the county's school districts.

Marathon County's students are better prepared to transition from elementary school to middle school, from middle school to high school, and from high school to higher education or the workforce than the average Wisconsin student when it comes to reading comprehension.

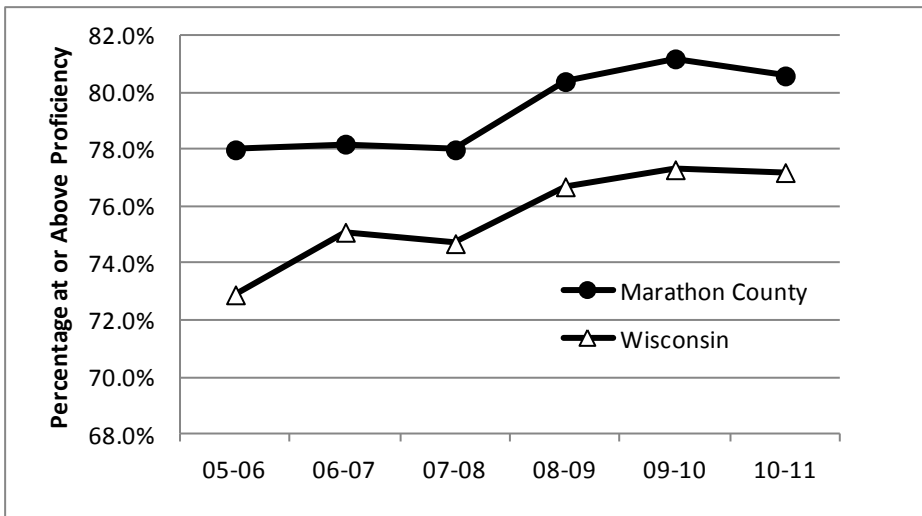
Key Measure: Mathematics Proficiency in Marathon County by District, Grades 4, 8, and 10, 2010-2011



DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- In 2010-2011, 77.2% of tested Wisconsin students scored proficient or advanced in mathematics. This is an increase from 72.9% in 2005-2006.
- Beginning in 2005-2006, mathematics achievement has continued to improve. Elementary and middle school students continued their improvement in math proficiency.
- In 2010-2011, 80.6% of all students tested in Marathon County scored proficient or advanced in mathematics proficiency, compared to 77.2% of all tested students in Wisconsin.

Key Measure: Mathematics Proficiency - Marathon County and State, All Grades Combined, 2005-2011



COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

Students who gain necessary skills in mathematics in elementary and middle school are better prepared for high school coursework. Most high schools in Wisconsin require two years of mathematics, but most colleges recommend three or four years to prepare students for college level work. Beyond future academic preparations, most adults use some level of mathematics to make change, figure percentages, convert weights to measures, compute interest and more on a regular basis.

Marathon County's students are better prepared to transition from elementary school to middle school, from middle school to high school, and from high school to higher education or the workforce than the average Wisconsin student when it comes to mathematics proficiency.

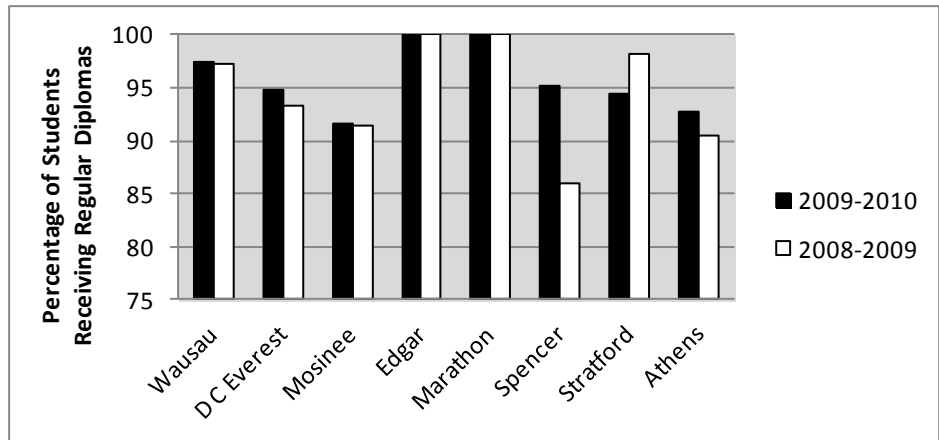
SOURCES

- **Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction**
Report: Wisconsin District and School Performance Reports
<https://apps2.dpi.wi.gov/sdpr/spr.action>
Wisconsin Information Network for Successful Schools
<http://data.dpi.state.wi.us/data/>
News Release: Achievement Gaps Close for All Groups of Students
http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpinr2011_28.pdf

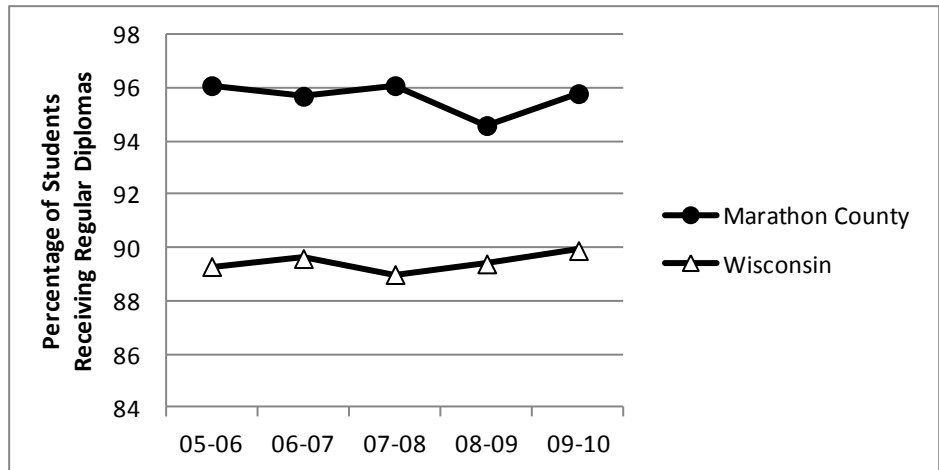
DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- In a national graduation report issued by the National Center for Educational Statistics, Wisconsin was ranked first in high school graduation rate.
- Wisconsin had a total of 64,687 seniors graduate high school in 2009-2010.
- The overall graduation rate for Wisconsin increased from 89.4% in 2008-2009 to 89.9% in 2009-2010.
- In 2009-2010, 413 of the state's 584 charter high schools had a graduation rate of 90% or better. Seventy-five charter high schools had 100% graduation rates.
- The average high school graduation rate for all eight of Marathon County's school districts was 95.8% for 2009-2010. The graduation rate for the county is significantly higher than the state average.
- Two of the county's school districts, Edgar and Marathon City, had graduation rates of 100% for the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 school years.

Key Measure: Percentage of Seniors Graduating With A Regular Diploma in Marathon County By District, 2008-2010



Key Measure: Percentage of Seniors Graduating With A Regular Diploma, County and State, 2008-2010



SOURCES

- **Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction**
Report: Wisconsin District and School Performance Reports
<https://apps2.dpi.wi.gov/sdpr/spr.action>
Wisconsin Information Network for Successful Schools
<http://data.dpi.state.wi.us/data/>
News Release: Wisconsin Graduation Rate Up
http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpinr2011_43.pdf
News Release: Wisconsin No. 1 in National Graduation Rate Report
http://dpi.wi.gov/eis/pdf/dpinr2011_50.pdf

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

A high school diploma is essential to finding a good job or obtain post-secondary education. All accredited colleges and universities require a high school diploma, or equivalent, for entrance, and it is a basic requirement for individuals to be considered for most jobs.

Students who have not completed the credits required for graduation in a traditional high school setting have the option to complete either a General Equivalency Degree (GED) or a High School Equivalency Degree (HSED).

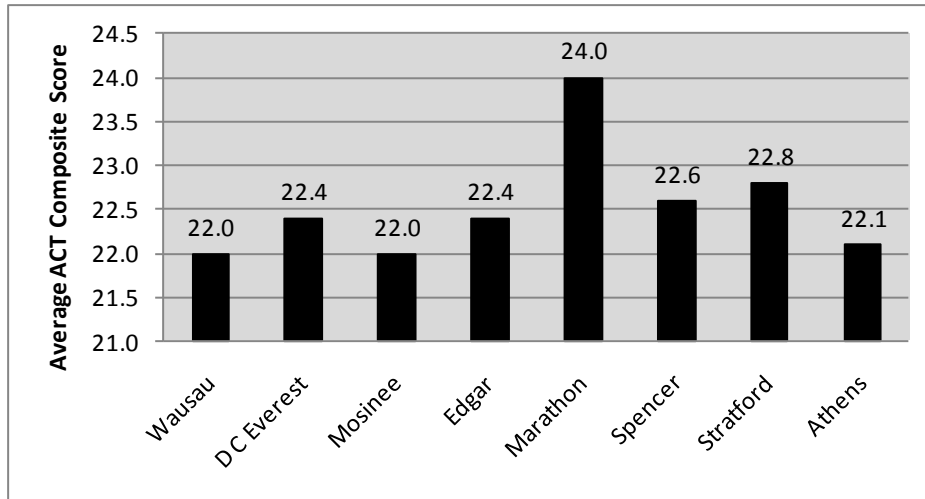
Earnings and unemployment are closely tied to education. For those without a high school diploma, average weekly earnings are significantly less than for

high school graduates and unemployment rates are significantly higher.

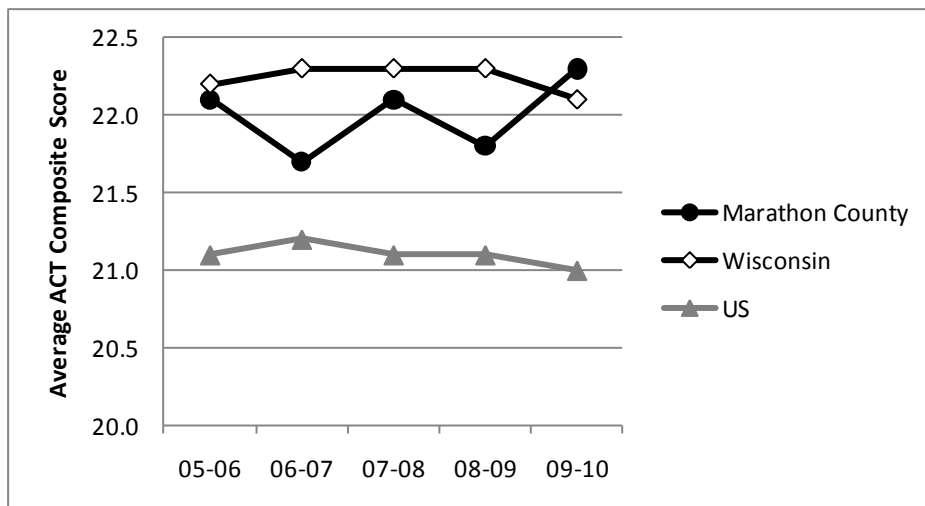
The implications of not completing a high school diploma extend beyond earnings and educational opportunities. Those who have not earned a high school degree also report being in poor health and are a disproportionately high percentage of the nation's prison population. They are more likely to be on public assistance, and have children at a younger age than their peers.

The significantly high and increasing graduation rates of Marathon County's school districts provide an incentive for companies seeking an educated workforce to locate their businesses within the county.

Key Measure: Average ACT Scores in Marathon County by District, 2009-10



Key Measure: Average ACT Scores in County, State, and US, 2009-10



DATA HIGHLIGHTS

- The average composite ACT score for all school districts in Wisconsin in 2009-2010 was 22.1 which is above the national average of 21.
- The Wisconsin and US averages for composite ACT scores in 2009-2010 dropped slightly from the previous year's averages of 22.3 for Wisconsin and 21.1 nationally.
- The average composite ACT scores in 2009-2010 for all school districts in Marathon County is 22.3. This average is above both the state and national averages.
- The average composite ACT scores for all Marathon County school districts increased from 21.8 in 2008-2009 to 22.3 in 2009-2010.
- Rural school districts in the county averaged slightly higher than urban school districts where the composite average ACT score for rural school districts in 2009-2010 was 22.4 while the composite average ACT score for urban school districts were 22.2.
- The Marathon City and Stratford School Districts had the highest average composite ACT scores at 24 and 22.8 respectively.

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

The ACT test is typically taken by college bound students in their junior or senior year. It is designed to assess educational development and ability to complete college-level work. ACT test results are one of the primary measures of college readiness relied upon by colleges and universities and help predict a student's future educational and work-life successes.

The ACT consists of four key subject areas: English, mathematics, reading, and science reasoning. Each area is scored separately and a composite ACT score is derived from the weighted average of the key area scores. The maximum score for each of the key areas and the composite is 36.

Benchmark scores have been established for each of the four key test areas to predict the probability of success in college coursework. The current benchmarks are; English 18, Reading 21, Math 22, and Science 24. Students not achieving these benchmarks are at a greater risk of having difficulties achieving a grade of "C" or better in the corresponding college coursework.

While the ACT is an optional test, it is an entrance requirement for many colleges and universities, including the University of Wisconsin system. Two-year Wisconsin technical colleges do not require ACT testing for admission. An alternative test, the SAT, may be required by some private and out-of-state colleges and universities.

SOURCES

- **Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction**
Report: Wisconsin District and School Performance Reports
<https://apps2.dpi.wi.gov/sdpr/spr.action>
- **ACT**
Report: What Are ACT's College Readiness Benchmarks
<http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/pdf/benchmarks.pdf>
The ACT Test Data
<http://www.act.org/newsroom/data/>