

# Education Indicators

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Education provides us a better understanding of the world around us; it is a key building block to a healthy community reaching its full potential.

**High School Graduation •1**

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# High School Graduation

# Indicator 1

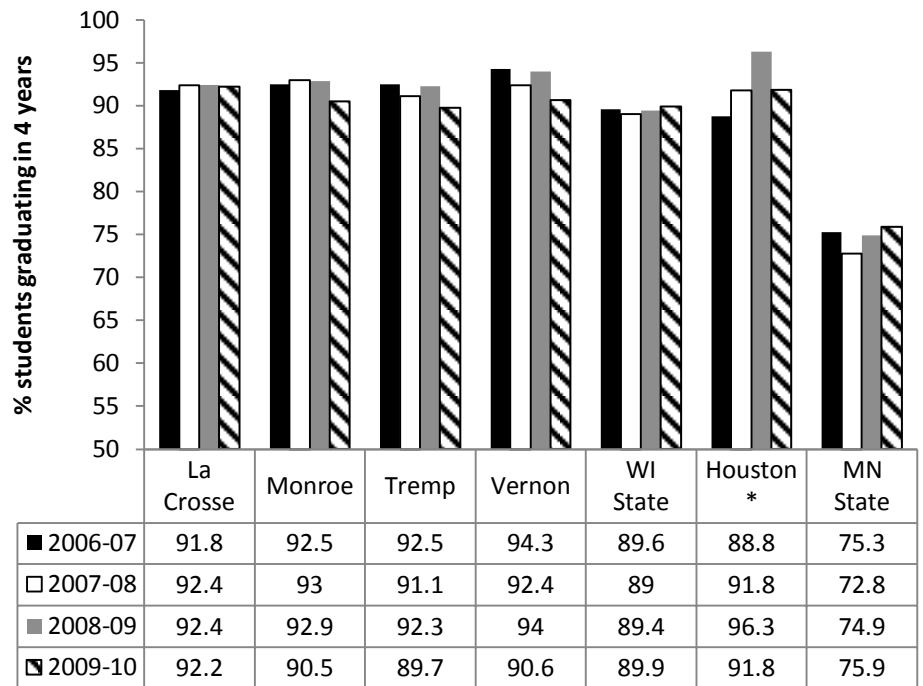
School district graduation rates in the region are higher than state averages

## Data Highlights

Blair-Taylor, GET, and Independence school districts in Trempealeau County had the highest graduation rates in the region in 2009-2010

Graduation rates among 27 school districts in the Great Rivers Region ranged from 76.6% – 96.8% for the 2009-2010

Over the past 4 years all Great Rivers Region school districts have consistently had higher graduation rates than their respective state averages



\*Graduation rates calculated only for cohorts greater than or equal to 40 students. Houston school district average does not include data from the Minnesota Virtual Academy (Online) and Summit Learning Center

## Sources

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

<http://dpi.state.wi.us/>

Minnesota Department of Education

<http://education.state.mn.us>

## Implications for Our Community

Graduation rates are an important indicator of school performance for parents, policymakers and other concerned community members. A high school diploma is necessary to further education and is a basic requirement for most jobs. Earnings potential and unemployment are closely tied to education. Those who do not graduate high school have a greater chance of being unemployed, incarcerated, have children at a younger age and are more likely to be on government assistance. Accredited colleges require a high school diploma or its equivalent for entrance. Wisconsin has traditionally had one of the highest graduation rates in the nation. Formulas for calculating graduation rates have changed over time and a new methodology recommended by the National Governors Association is gradually being adopted. Calculations for students who complete high school in an extended amount of time or receive high school equivalency diplomas are also available. The rates above show the percentage of students who graduate with a regular diploma in 4 years. Rate calculations do not include students who acquire a GED or other high school equivalency diplomas.

# American College Test (ACT)

# Indicator 2

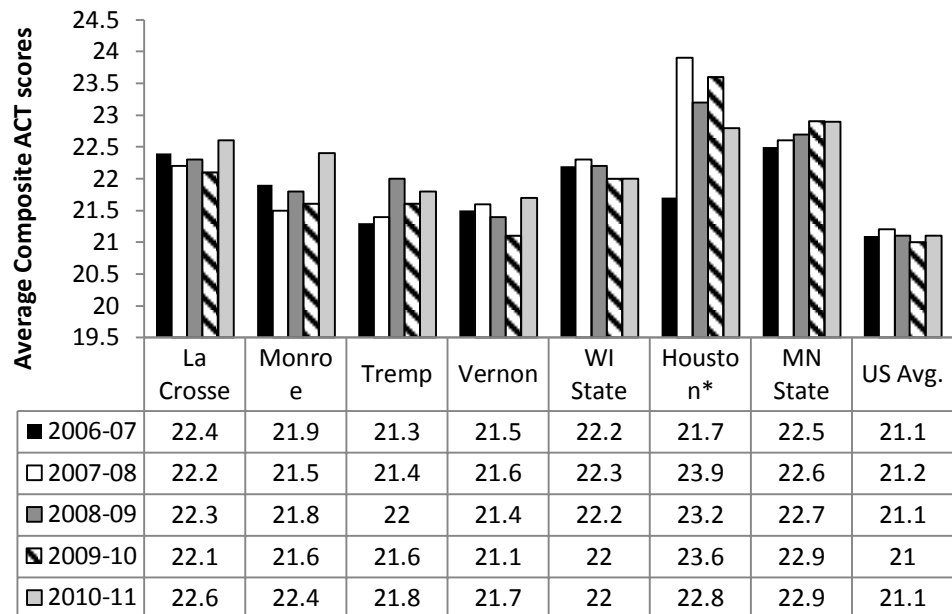
Wisconsin and Minnesota ACT scores are higher than national scores

## Data Highlights

Minnesota has led the nation in average composite ACT scores for six consecutive years

Onalaska High School had the highest ACT composite score for 2009-10 (23.8)

On average 67-70% of graduating students in WI and MN take the ACT



## Sources

WI-Dept. of Public Instruction;  
<http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/sig/dm-acadachmt.html>;

American College Test;  
[www.act.org](http://www.act.org)

Minnesota Office of Higher Education  
[www.ohe.state.mn.us](http://www.ohe.state.mn.us)

## Implications for Our Community

The American College Test (ACT) is designed to assess educational development and the ability to complete college level work. ACT test scores are one of the primary measures of college readiness and is an entrance requirement for many colleges and universities. The ACT test consists of four subject areas and a 30 minute writing test. The 215 question, multiple-choice test covers four skill areas: English, mathematics, reading, and science. The ACT, which is an optional exam, is typically taken by college bound students in their junior or senior years. The SAT, an alternative test, may be required by some private and out-of-state colleges.

Each portion of the ACT test has a maximum score of 36. The composite score is the weighted average of the four subject specific scores. In 2007, one in 4,000 students scored a 36 on their ACT. Typically, students who take a rigorous college preparatory curriculum will score better on the ACT. Composite score averages are influenced by the percentage of students who opt to take the test - the greater the percentage, the lower the composite average. Students are allowed to retake the ACT with only the most recent score being recorded.

The ACT is not required for admission to two-year Minnesota and Wisconsin Technical Colleges, however there is often an assessment process to go through as part of the application process.

# Post-Secondary Degrees

# Indicator 3

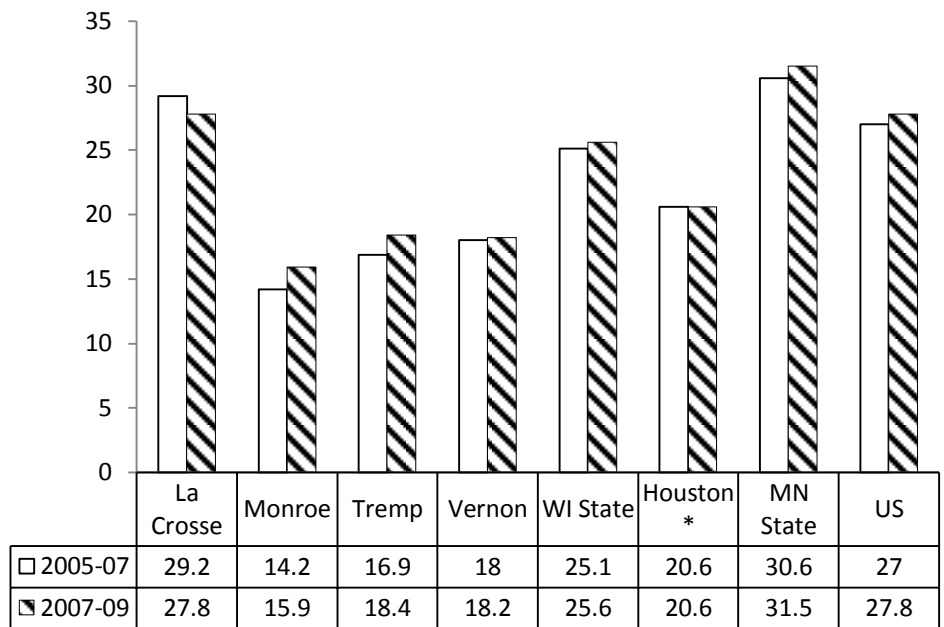
Post-secondary education can enhance earning potential and quality of life

## Data Highlights

Minnesota is above the national average for the number of people with a Bachelor's degree or higher, while Wisconsin is below the national average

All five counties have a demonstrated increase in the percentage of post-secondary degrees

By 2020, 64% of jobs will require a career certificate or college degree



The benefits of a college degree are motivating more and more people to pursue higher education. The percentage of the population with a bachelor's degree or higher is comprised of those who have received a bachelor's, master's, professional, or doctorate degree from a college or university. These data include only persons 25 years old and over. The percentages are obtained by dividing the number of graduates by the total number of persons 25 years old and over.

The percentage of people who have completed secondary education can be a good indicator of how well off a population is and what kind of opportunities for growth there are in the community. The percentage of people who have completed secondary education may also give some insight as to the types of jobs which are available nearby and their entry level or advancement requirements. Post secondary degree rates also show the percentage of people who have the potential to earn a higher salary. When a larger percentage of people have completed higher levels of study, it follows that there will be greater competition for higher level job positions.

## Sources

Wisconsin's WORKnet,  
[www.worknet.wisconsin.gov](http://www.worknet.wisconsin.gov)

Positively Minnesota  
 Department of Employment  
 and Economic Development,  
[www.positivelyminnesota.com](http://www.positivelyminnesota.com)

U.S. Census Bureau:  
 Census 2000 and American  
 Community Survey 2006-  
 2010

NCHEMS Information Center

# School District Expenditures

# Indicator 4

School districts are spending more per student in the region

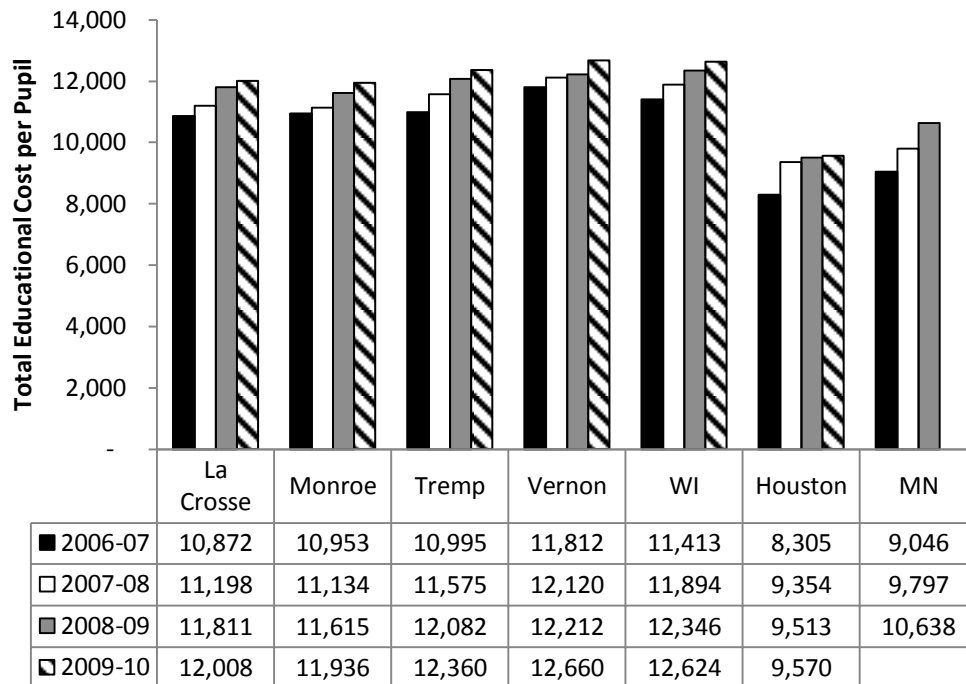
## Data Highlights

10 WI school districts in the region had a 4 year cumulative increase in expenditures of 12% or more

La Crescent, MN school district experienced the greatest increase in expenditures

Lafarge has the highest expenditure per pupil and Tomah has the lowest

Onalaska School District has kept expenditure increases to 4% which is less than half the state average



## Implications for Our Community

The majority of school district expenses are instruction related including teacher salaries and benefits, supplies, equipment and textbooks. Instructional support services include but are not limited to guidance counselors, psychologists, school health personnel and speech pathologists. The Total Education Cost (TEC) is a measure of the overall instructional and instructional support service costs, transportation, and expenditures for facilities attributable per student. This figure does not include the cost of food service and community service activities funded by fees.

Wisconsin state law imposes revenue caps that limit the amount of new funding each school district may acquire. Many school districts have held revenue cap referendums to increase their budgets beyond the revenue cap with funds from local taxpayers. Current economic conditions and cuts within the 2011-2013 WI state budget have reduced state aid to school districts by as much as 19%. The 4 WI counties of the Great Rivers area are poised to see a 27.8 million dollar reduction in the 2011-2013 state budget. School districts lacking funding may not be able to hire sufficient staff, purchase new books and equipment, or support extra-curricular activities. Classroom sizes may increase and enrichment programs may be limited or eliminated.

## Sources

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction: Comparative Cost per Member, <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us>

Minnesota Department of Education: School District Financial Profiles, <http://education.state.mn.us>

# Reading Comprehension

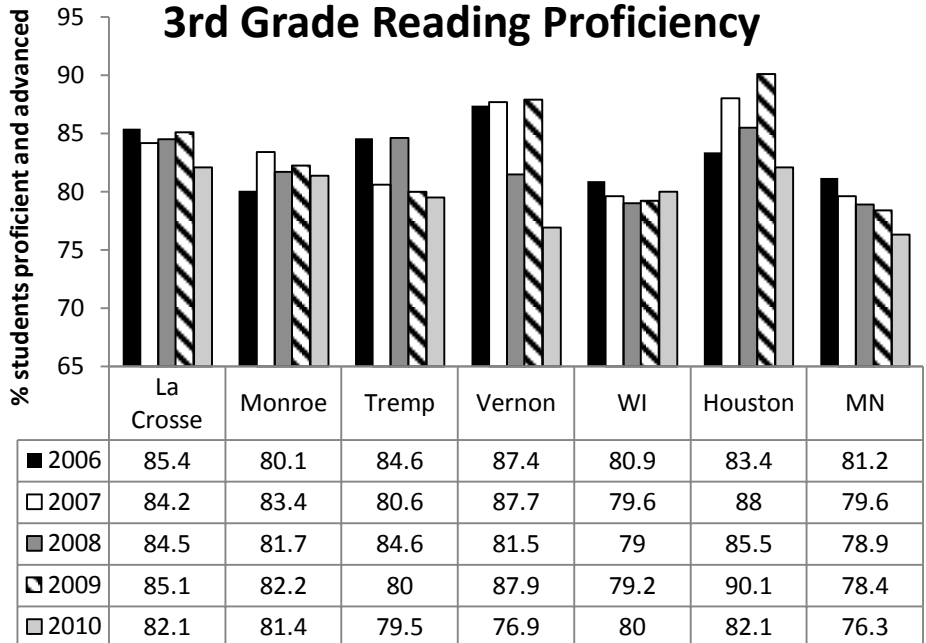
# Indicator 5

Overall reading comprehension levels are close to or above state average

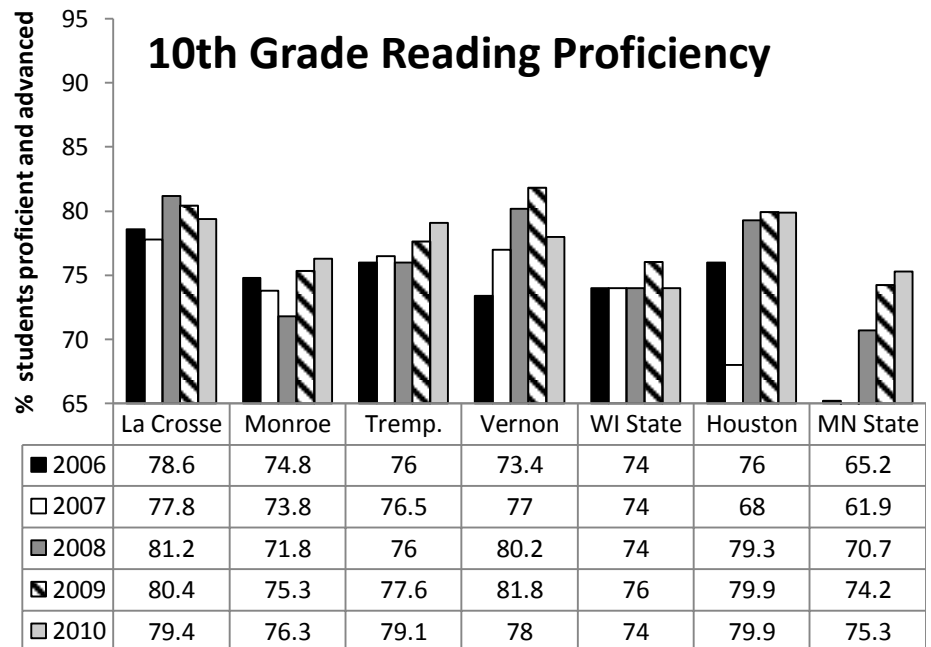
## Implications for our Community

Academic progress depends on understanding, analyzing, and applying the information gathered through reading. To build a foundation for college and career readiness, students should be challenged to read literature and other materials that reflect and stimulate their interests and intellectual abilities. The lack of strong reading comprehension skills affects a student's success in school. The goal of every reading program is for all students to read and comprehend material at grade-level or above. The Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE) is state mandated and tests students in grades 3, 5, 6, and 7 in Reading and Mathematics and students in grades 4, 8, and 10 in Reading, Mathematics, Science, Language Arts, Writing, and Social Studies. In Minnesota, the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCAs) are the state tests that help school districts measure student progress toward Minnesota's academic standards and meet the requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Reading and mathematics tests are given to students in grades 3–8, 10 and 11.

### 3rd Grade Reading Proficiency



### 10th Grade Reading Proficiency



### Sources

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction  
<http://dpi.state.wi.us/>  
 Minnesota Department of Education  
<http://education.state.mn.us>

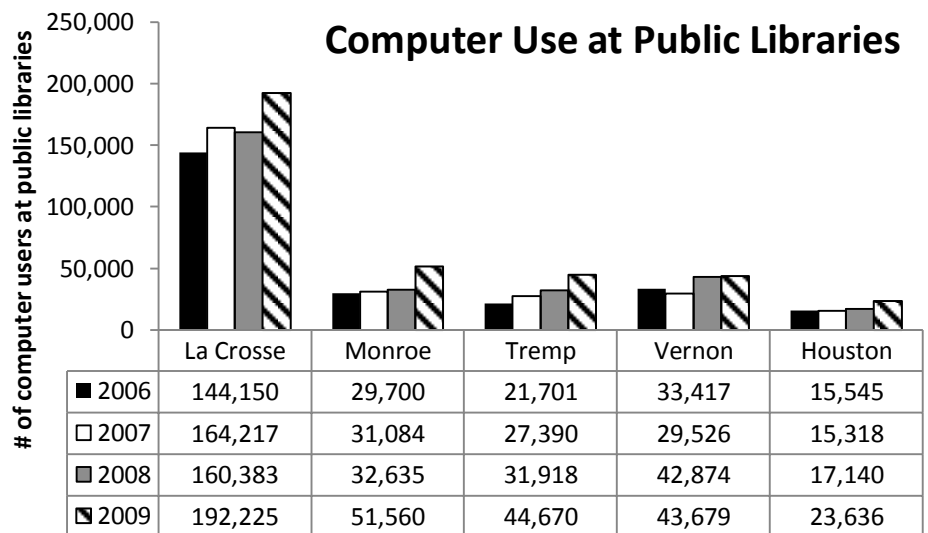
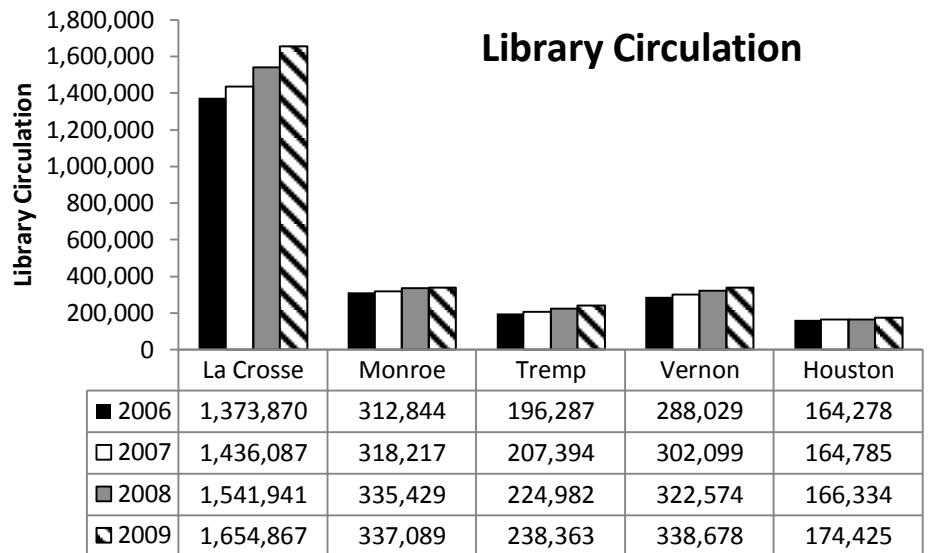
# Library Circulation and Computer Use

# Indicator 6

Libraries offer many services to the community and usage continues to increase

## Implications for Our Community:

Public libraries provide educational and cultural opportunities and experiences for people of all ages. Libraries provide a variety of activities and a range of reading materials to accommodate diverse learners and learning styles. Libraries play an important role in supporting childhood education through creative and fun summer reading programs for children and young people. Funding for public libraries comes mainly from local, county, state, and federal sources. Adequate funding for public libraries enhances the quality of life in a community and also allows the library to offer programs, services, and updated collections. In challenging economic times, public libraries offer important cost saving services such as free Internet and computer access, and traditional circulated items such as books, DVDs, videos, and audiocassettes. Library services are difficult to measure in part because their benefits are often intangible. The amount of library materials circulated is an indication of utilization but does not fully measure library service usage.



## Sources:

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction  
<http://dpi.state.wi.us/>

Minnesota Department of Education  
<http://education.state.mn.us>

## Data Highlights

87% COMPASS survey respondents rated the availability of preschool opportunities in their community as either good or excellent.

## Sources

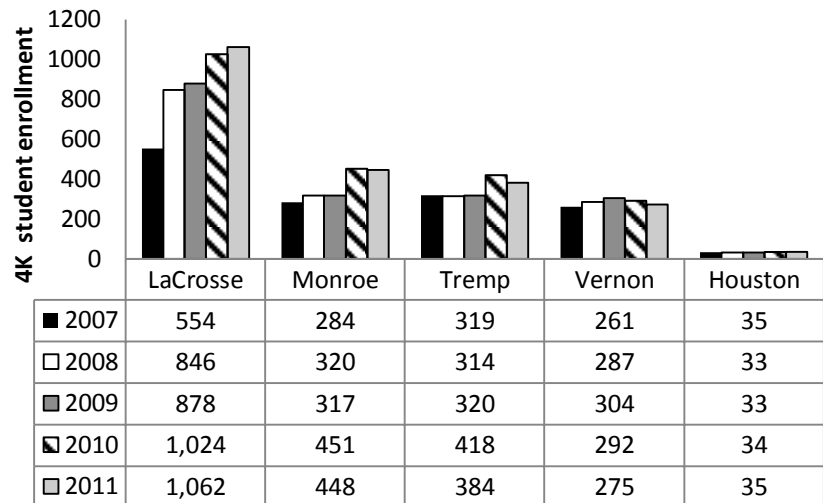
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

<http://dpi.state.wi.us/>

Minnesota Department of Education

<http://education.state.mn.us>

## Public 4K Pre-school



## Implications for Our Community

Participation in high quality early childhood education programs before age 5 can have positive effects on children’s cognitive, language, and social development. Evaluations of pre-kindergarten programs have found that children exposed to high-quality early education were less likely to drop out of school, repeat grades, or need special education.<sup>1</sup> The availability of public preschool programs in the Great Rivers Region has increased over the past 5 years. Today, 100% of school districts in La Crosse, Monroe, Trempealeau, and Vernon counties offer public pre-school education with many programs utilizing an innovative community partnership approach that brings together community businesses, schools, child care providers, Head Start, parents and teachers. The structure of the pre-school programs varies throughout the region with most districts offering a half-day schedule 4-5 days a week and a few districts offering a full-day schedule 2-3 days a week. Spring Grove school district offers a school readiness program that meets monthly from January through May and hosts a three-week kindergarten prep class between May and August. However, not all pre-school aged children in the Great Rivers Region have the same access to pre-school education. Although several pre-school programs are administered in cooperation with Houston County school districts, they charge tuition. Pre-school programs charge from a daily rate of \$10 to a monthly rate of \$170 or more.

## Footnote

<sup>1</sup> The Case for Pre K in Education Reform, A Summary of Program Evaluation Findings. The Pew Center on the States, April 2010.

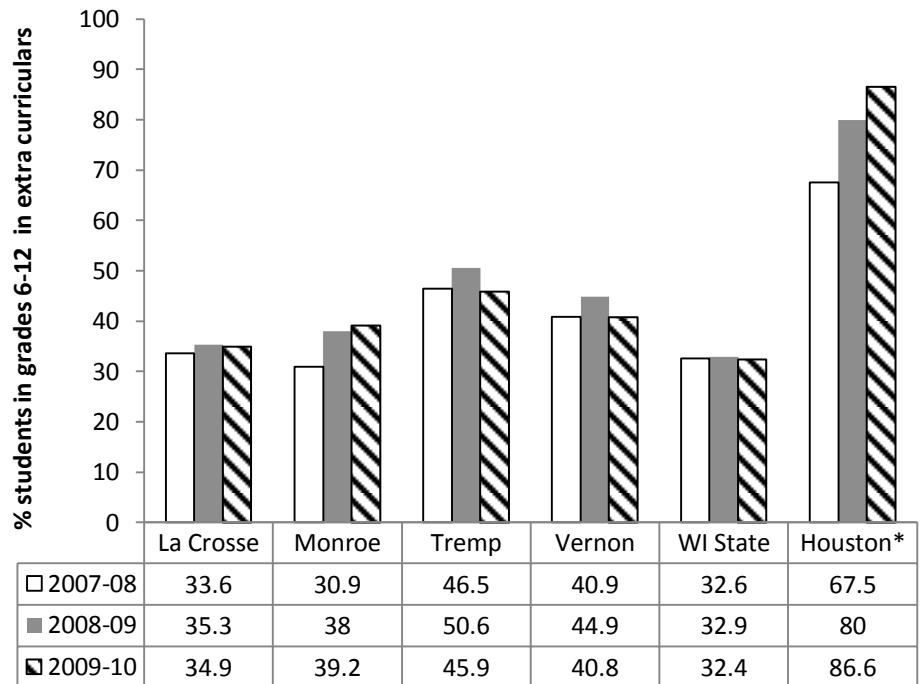


### Data Highlights

Participation rates were highest in athletics in each school district in the region. In 2009-10, the school districts in the Great Rivers Region had higher rates of students participating in athletic extra-curricular activities than the WI state average

In 2009-10, 3 schools in the region had more than half of all students participating in extracurricular music activities. Brookwood (52.1%), Westby (63.2%), and Independence (68.9%)

In 2009-10, Sparta only had 6.3% of students participating in a music extracurricular activities



\*Data reported is for Houston school district only and for grades 7-12.

### Implications for Our Community

Extra and co-curricular activities are school sanctioned activities intended to broaden, develop, and enhance a student's school experience in the areas of academics, athletics, and music. These activities help students connect to their school and develop positive personal and interpersonal skills. Extra-curricular activities offer opportunities for students to learn the values of teamwork, individual and group responsibility, competition, diversity, and a sense of culture and community. Research suggests that participation in extracurricular activities may increase school success.

### Sources

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction  
<http://dpi.state.wi.us/>  
 Minnesota Department of Education  
<http://education.state.mn.us>

# Habitually Truant

# Indicator 9

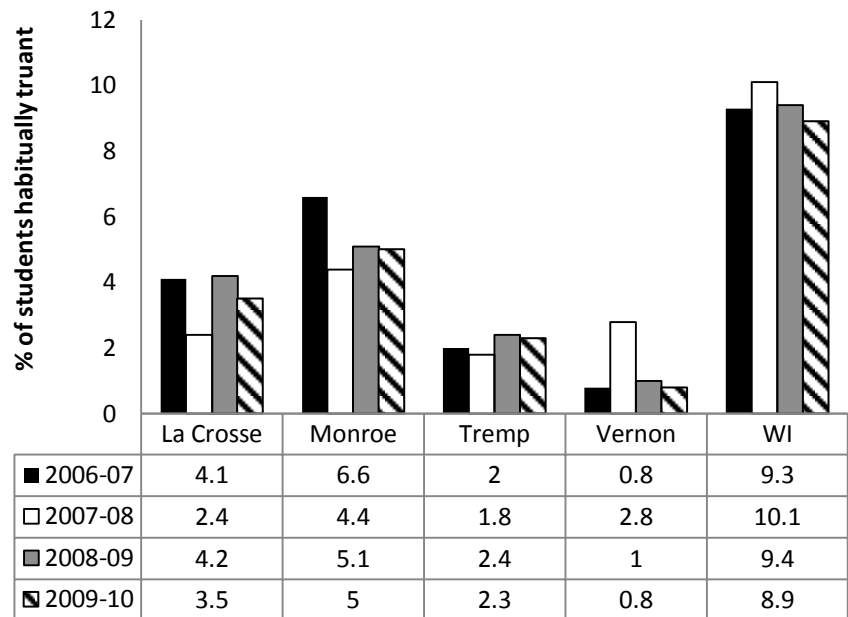
Truancy rates in the region are much lower than the state average

## Data Highlights

In 2009-2010, all schools listed had truancy rates below the Wisconsin average

From 2007-2010, Monroe had the highest rates of truancy

Independence school district in Trempealeau County had truancy rates below 1.0 in all five years



\*Houston County and MN data not available

## Implications for Our Community

A student is considered habitually truant when he or she is absent from school without an adequate excuse for some or all of 5 or more days during a school semester. Appointments and illness confirmed by a doctor are not included in this definition. Parents can only excuse a child's absence for up to five days per semester without truancy. Unexcused absences are determined by each school district, and the truancy rate can vary depending on the level of strictness in each school district.

## Sources

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction  
<http://dpi.state.wi.us/>

<http://dpi.wi.gov/sig/dm-attendbehav.html>

Minnesota Department of Education  
<http://education.state.mn.us>