Achievement Gaps:
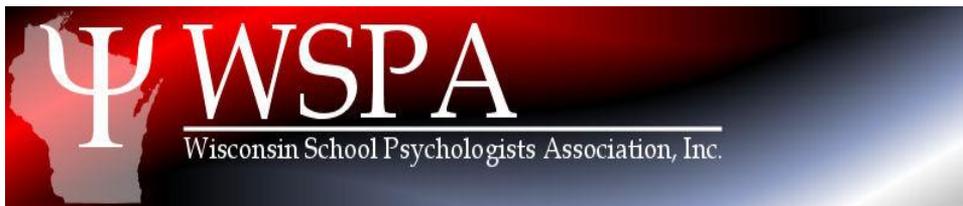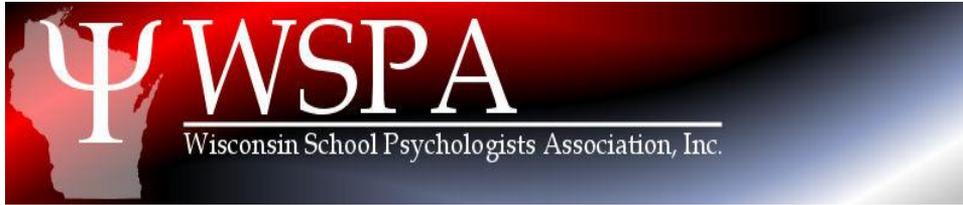# Prevention and Intervention

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WSPA President
For the WI Assembly
Urban Education Task Force
3/2/2016

Agenda for Today

- Introduction and Background
- What are achievement gaps?
- How do gaps become established?
- How can we prevent gaps?
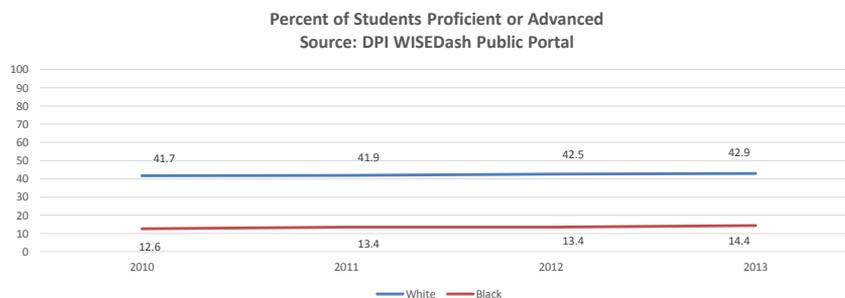- How can we best intervene when gaps occur?

Introduction/Background

- School Psychologists: We don't have couches in our offices!
- We are Scientists in Education
- Training in assessment, learning, and systems
- About 1,000 School Psychologists in WI

What are Achievement Gaps?

Percent of Students Proficient or Advanced
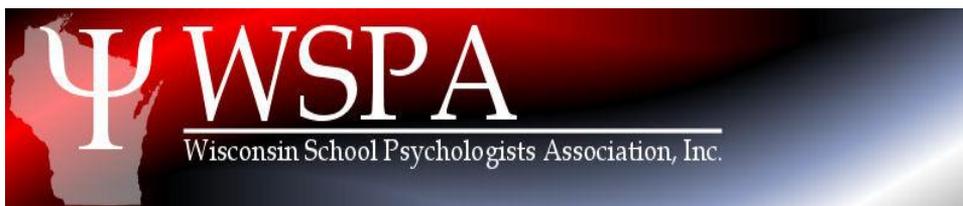**Source: DPI WISEDash Public Portal**
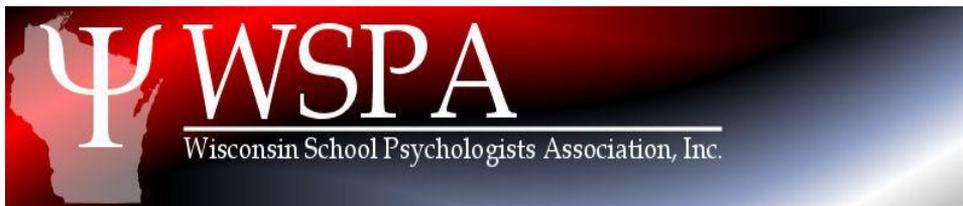
Overall low achievement, with black/white gap of about 25 points.
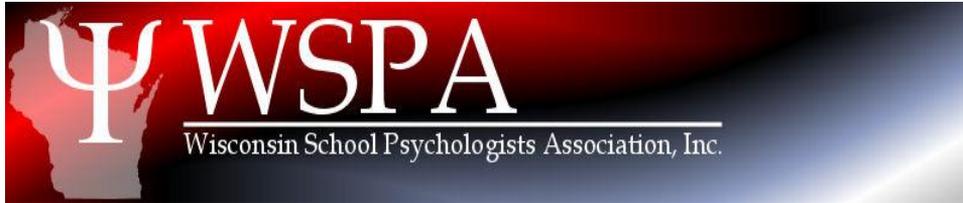
Why do gaps occur?

- Gaps occur when students fail to learn as quickly as their peers. This can happen due to:
  - Dialect
  - Poverty
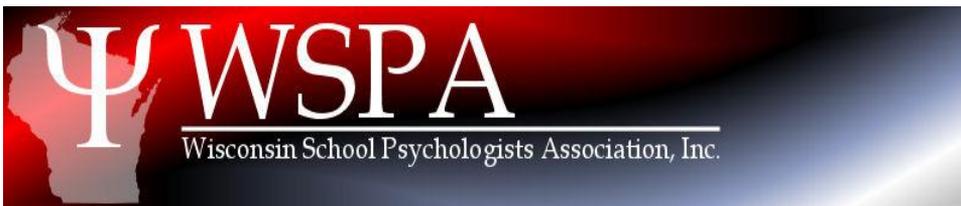 - Trauma
  - Other Causes

Dialect

- School comes with it's own set of expectations and requirements.
- Some Kindergarten vocabulary:
  - Sit "Criss-Cross Applesauce"
  - Earn "Rock Star Tickets"
  - Have a "Morning Meeting"
 - Go to the "Recess Ready" bins if you forgot something
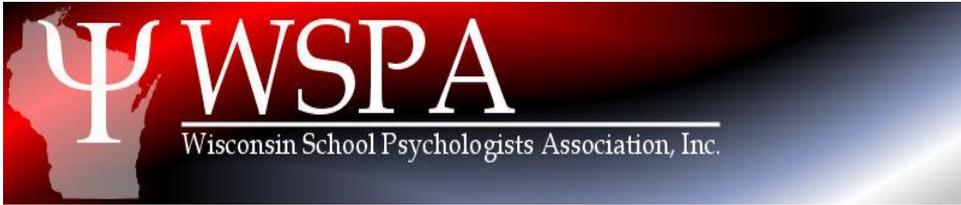
Dialect

- If you don't speak Standard English at home, when you come to school you will need to learn new vocabulary and grammar.
- Children can learn to "Toggle" between dialects, but this takes time, causing gaps.

Dr. Mark Seidenberg, UW-Madison

Poverty

- Children who grow up in low-income households face numerous challenges that can impact learning:
  – Food, shelter, clothing, etc.
  – Their brains don't lack the capacity for learning, but many need extra learning opportunities.
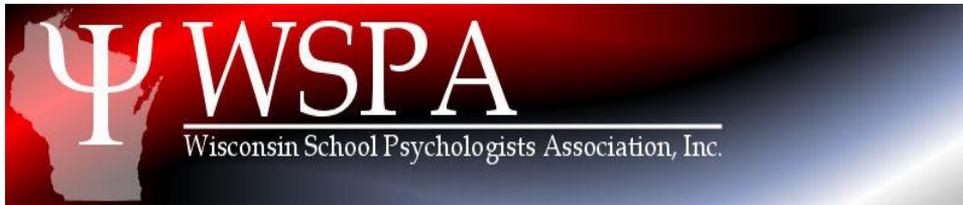
Trauma

- A personal story of trauma:
- Child in my district who witnessed abuse.
- He wants to check doors to be sure they're locked. He's agitated, nervous, often angry.
- I moved my office to that building to be closer.
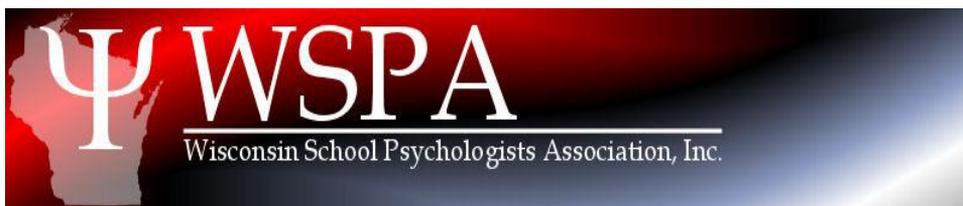
First Step: Prevent Gaps if Possible

- Hattie (2009, 2012) summarized thousands of studies into a "What Works Best" list:
  - Engaging and focused core curricula
  - Valid and reliable formative assessments
  - Differentiated instruction
 - Collaboration among highly-skilled professionals
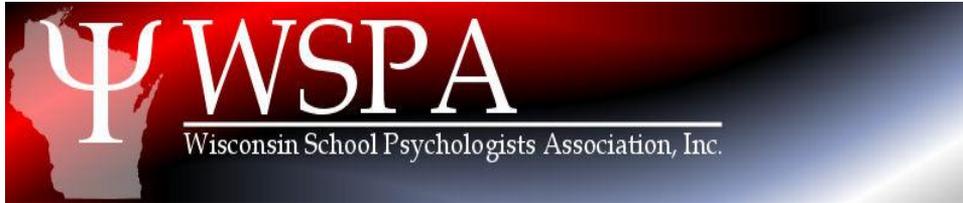
Formative Assessment

- Brief updates that show progress and help teachers identify learning needs
- Important part of assessment system
- In about a minute, can gather reliable and valid data that is usable, not just a number
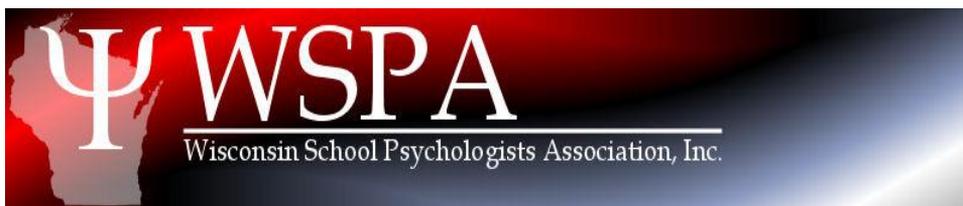
Response to Intervention

- One of the most powerful strategies in education (Hattie, 2012)
- Identify learning needs early
- Intervene strategically
- Monitor progress and fade
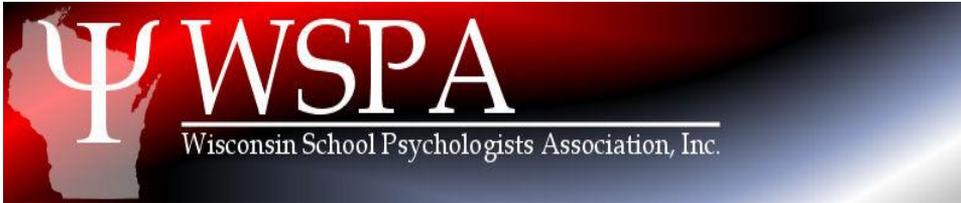
## When Gaps Occur:
Provide Group Intervention

- Explicit instruction in the deficit skill
- Matched to the level of need
- Is *supplemental* to regular instruction; this is where the *extra time* comes in
- Monitor progress closely
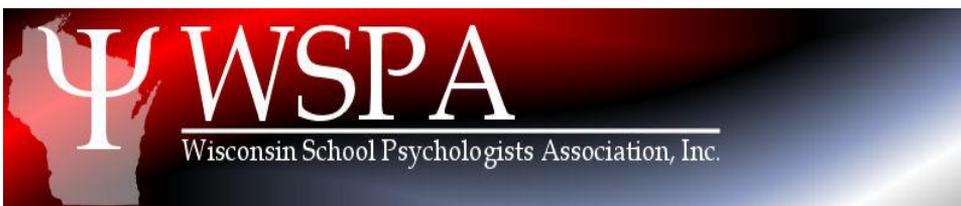
When Groups Don't Work:
## Get More Specific and Intensive

- Most problems will resolve before this stage
- For a small number of students:
  - Get more specific about the needed skill
  - Spend more time
  - Work in smaller groups or individually (AGR)
  - Monitor progress even more closely
  - These interventions are effective in 90% of cases

2/29/2016
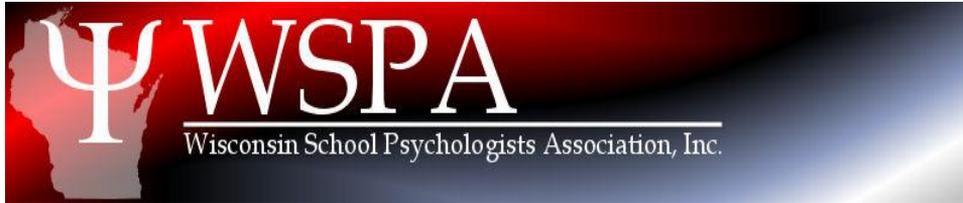
Guiding Principle:
Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

- Culture and language are assets in classrooms
- Make connections and form relationships
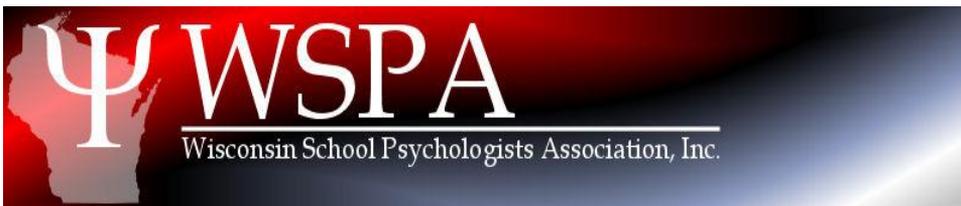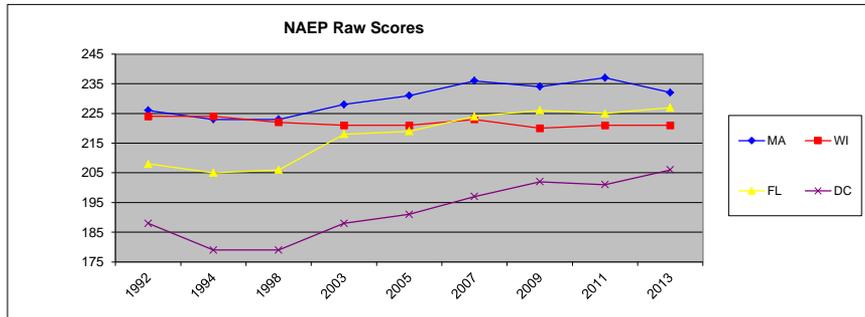- This can't be the only thing we do well: must also have solid instructional practices
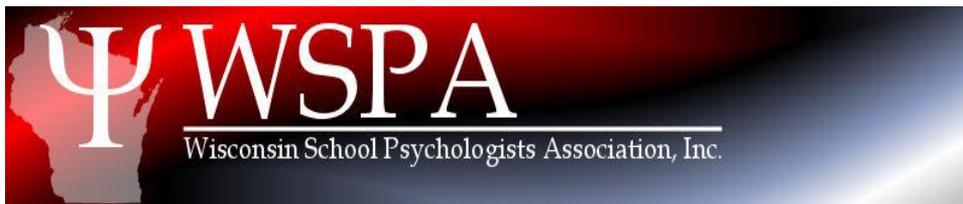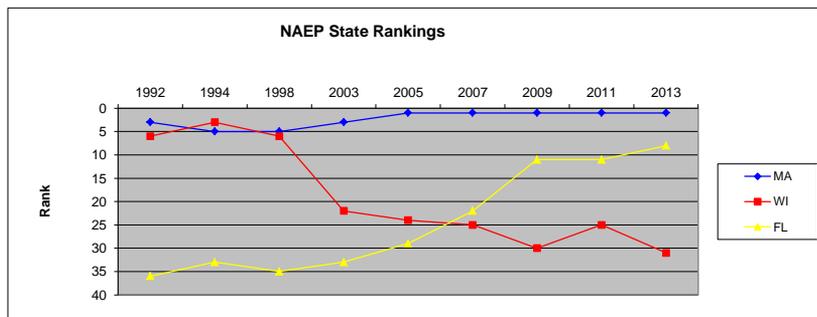

Working Examples

- Florida's RtI System was established beginning around 2000 and has grown quickly
- Since then, reading scores have increased substantially and gaps have been reduced
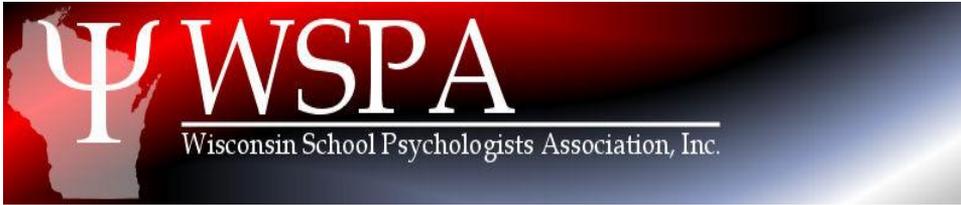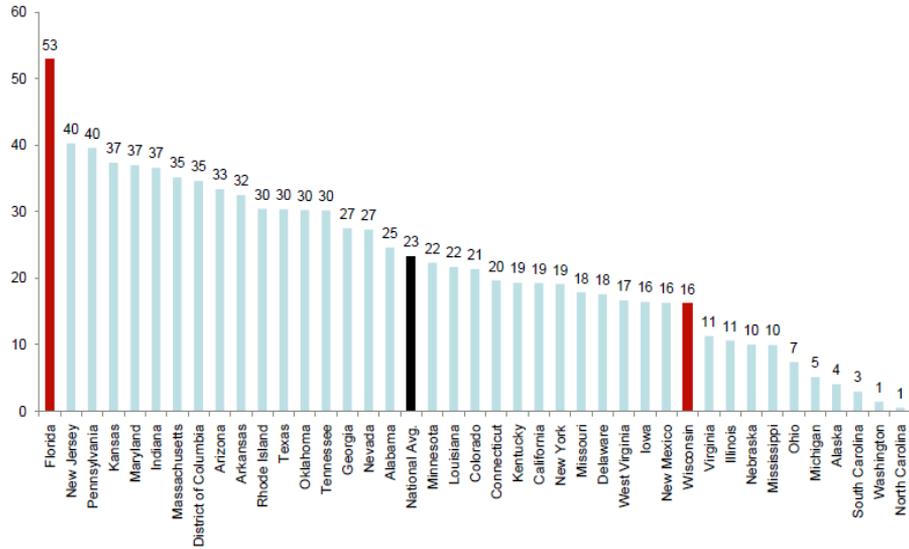
Florida's Results: 4th Grade Reading

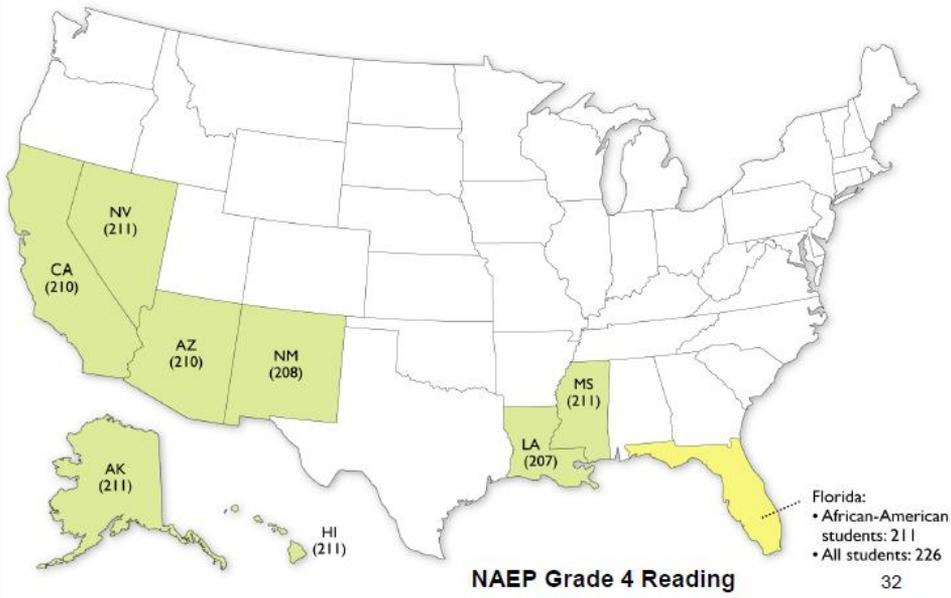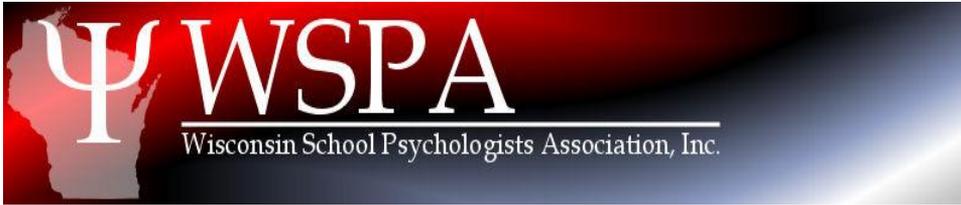
Florida's Results: 4th Grade Reading

Combined NAEP Gains on the Four Major NAEP Tests for Black Students, 2003-2009

## COMPARING STATES TO FLORIDA'S AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS

African-American students in Florida now outscore or tie the statewide reading average of all students in eight states.


NAEP Grade 4 Reading

Other Research

- Large-Scale analyses show significant achievement gains using RtI along with reductions in special education placement to about 2% of the population
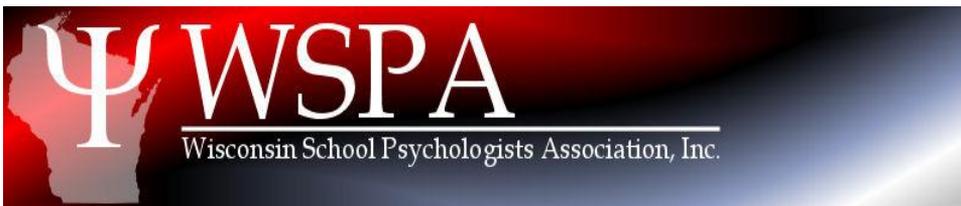
In Conclusion

- We can prevent gaps with high-quality instruction, curriculum, and assessment
- Achievement gaps are caused when kids don't learn as quickly, often due to dialect, poverty, or trauma
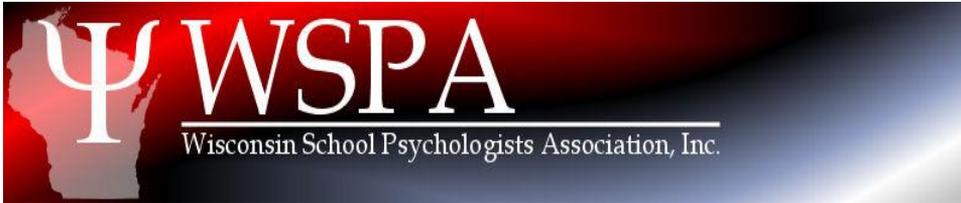
In Conclusion

- When gaps do occur, we can successfully intervene if we:
  - Catch it early by screening
  - Focus interventions on the right skills
  - Monitor progress closely
- In rare cases, we need additional resources
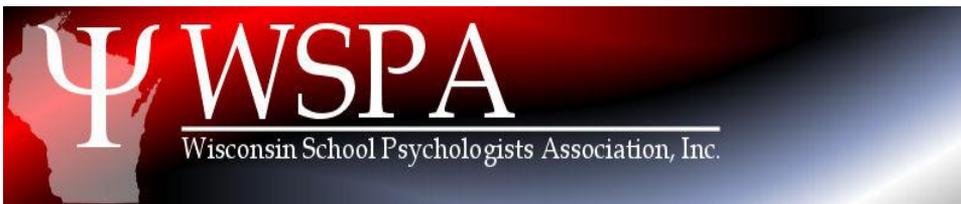
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