

➤ [Hearing Records ... HR](#)

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WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE COMMITTEE HEARING RECORDS

2009-10

(session year)

Assembly

(Assembly, Senate or Joint)

Committee on Education

(AC-Ed)

(FORM UPDATED: 06/28/2010)

COMMITTEE NOTICES ...

➤ [Committee Reports ... CR](#)

**

➤ [Executive Sessions ... ES](#)

**

➤ [Public Hearings ... PH](#)

**

➤ [Record of Comm. Proceedings ... RCP](#)

**

INFORMATION COLLECTED BY COMMITTEE FOR AND AGAINST PROPOSAL ...

➤ [Appointments ... Appt](#)

**

Name:

➤ [Clearinghouse Rules ... CRule](#)

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➤ [Hearing Records ... HR](#) (bills and resolutions)

**

➤ [Miscellaneous ... Misc](#)

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AB
805

PH 3/9/10

AB 201, AB 557, AB 622, AB 805, AB 806, AB 807, AB 808, AB 809

AB 708 & SB 250

Comparison
Bills:







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March 9, 2010

Thank you for holding this hearing today so that for the third year in a row, we can come to the Capitol and tell the Assembly Committee on Education just how desperately schools need a better funding system.

I appreciate that you have tried to do something to help schools, but your efforts could be called mis-directed. This is not meant as an insult, but it is a fact. For example:

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- AB-805 provides more money for consolidation studies, even though the money allocated for consolidation studies is not getting used.
 - AB-806 speeds up the schedule for schools to consolidate. Only one set of districts in the state has consolidated recently and people from there readily admit that it is a short-term solution. Consolidation is very distasteful.
 - AB-807 might be useful. Maybe. Is there ever money left over in the DPI transportation fund to give out more money?
 - AB-808 might be helpful. However, it starts us down the slippery slope. If 18 students is acceptable for a small class, why not 21. It's only 3 more kids.
 - AB-809 will be helpful for MPS, but there are not many private schools in rural areas.

You as a committee have heard over and over the cries of parents, teachers, administrators, even students whose education is suffering because of missing courses, supplies, and opportunities. These students don't even know many of the things that their education is lacking until they become adults who did not have the life-skills classes in high school.

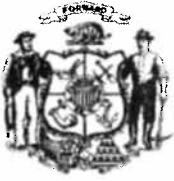
You know what needs to be done. You know, and many of you have said, that the school funding system is broken. Revenue caps are choking our children's education. When revenue caps were imposed, Wisconsin was 9th in the nation for per pupil spending, now we are 19th.

We need more money in the system. A one percent increase in the sales tax for education funding has been proposed and has much support. So why hasn't that been introduced?

You are the people who have the power to change this system and rescue the next generation of students from a mediocre education. We are pleading with you to be courageous and do the right thing. Or give the office up to someone who will.

Jill Gaskell
Wisconsin PTA
State Legislative Chair





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Date?

Public Hearing
Committee on Education
Tuesday, March 9, 2010
10:00 am, Rm. 417N (GAR Hall)

Testimony – AB 805 Efficiency and Consolidation Feasibility Studies Grants

Thank you Chair Pope-Roberts and members of the committee. I testify today in favor of AB-805, relating to efficiency and feasibility study grants for school districts undergoing consolidations.

None of us wants to see schools consolidated, however the current fiscal environment for schools today makes it clear that schools are facing financial crises that will result in more consolidations in the years to come. By restoring funding for the school consolidation feasibility study grant program, this legislation helps provide tools for school districts so they can most effectively plan for the many details associated with consolidation.

Districts undergoing consolidation are faced with a myriad of information, decisions, and strong differences of opinion within their communities. Working through these complex variables without assistance can be challenging for a volunteer school board. School districts need the equivalent of a business plan to effectively prepare for consolidation. Especially for small schools, these plans are often prepared by third parties.

In the 2007-2009 biennium, DPI awarded 11 grants totaling \$110,000 to fund consolidation feasibility studies for pairs or trios of school districts seeking consolidation. AB 805 provides \$50,000 for a one-time allocation to fund that program using the existing guidance.

I want to be clear, it is not our intent to point all arrows at consolidation as the only relief available to struggling schools. So, in addition to consolidation studies, this legislation adds funding for a new component designed to assist schools that want to study measures for improving efficiency. School district efficiency feasibility studies will help provide tools to districts who wish to reduce costs and improve their financial viability by combining operations, without sacrificing educational outcomes.

The bill appropriates \$150,000 for both consolidation feasibility and efficiency studies. Efficiency studies would be subject to a 20% district match. The appropriation will come from unused funds within the transportation categorical aid. Grants are for up to \$10,000 per school district.

Again, it is our hope with this legislation to provide a few new tools for schools while they face unique challenges. I ask for your support for this legislation.