
Wisconsin Legislative Council

ACT MEMO



Prepared by: Rachel E. Snyder, Senior Staff Attorney

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2019 Wisconsin Act 170
[2019 Senate Bill 595]

Online Early Learning Pilot Program

2019 Wisconsin Act 170 creates a three-year online early learning pilot program for low-income children to be administered by a service provider from July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2023.

ONLINE EARLY LEARNING PROGRAM

Under the act, an “online early learning program” is a program that satisfies the following criteria:

- Provides computer-based instruction to children on a home computer connected by the Internet to a centralized file storage facility.
- Is designed to improve a child’s transition to five-year old kindergarten.
- Contains content in reading, math, and science.
- Is aligned with nationally recognized early learning standards.
- Provides, at no cost to the families, access to a computer or Internet service, or both, in the homes of low-income families participating in the program that do not already have a computer or Internet service access.
- Includes a parental engagement and involvement component that includes interaction with a learning coach provided by the program.
- Includes an evaluation component that measures a child’s growth over the course of the program.
- Is being administered by a service provider in at least two other states.

The act defines “service provider” as a nonstock, nonprofit organization described under s. 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code that has successfully conducted an online early learning program, as evidenced by independent and reliable evaluations.

CONTRACT AWARD, PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION, AND FUNDING

The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) must award a contract, using a competitive request-for-proposals process, to a service provider to administer the program in the following school districts:

- A first class city school district (Milwaukee Public Schools).
- The two urban school districts with the largest reading achievement gaps, as defined by DPI.
- Three rural school districts, selected by DPI, that have reading achievement gaps.

The act creates, and provides for the delayed repeal of, a \$500,000 annual appropriation for the program and requires that DPI pay the amount appropriated to the service provider for each school year of the contract. The act also requires the service provider to provide a total of \$500,000 in matching funds during the term of the contract.

REPORTING

Under the act, the service provider must comply with two reporting requirements. First, the service provider must report to DPI the name of each child who participates in the program, whether the child completed the program, and any other information that is necessary to identify the child in the student information system,¹ as requested by DPI.

To the extent possible, DPI must ensure that, for each child who is reported to have participated in the program, the following information is included in the student information system:

- The fact that the child participated in the program.
- Whether or not the child completed the program.

Second, the service provider must submit an annual report to DPI that contains the following information:

- The number of eligible children who applied to participate in the program.
- The number of eligible children who participated in the program.
- The number of low-income families that requested a computer or home Internet service.
- The number of low-income families that were provided a computer or home Internet service.
- The frequency with which children participating in the program used the instructional software provided by the program.
- How children participating in the program performed on prekindergarten and kindergarten readiness assessments selected and administered by the service provider.
- Parental feedback on the program.

By October 15, 2023, DPI must compile and submit the information that it receives from the service provider's annual reports to the Joint Committee on Finance and to the appropriate standing committees of the Legislature.

Effective date: March 5, 2020, except that the repeal of the appropriation takes effect on July 1, 2023.

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¹ In compliance with s. 115.383, Stats., DPI maintains a student information system, under which various pupil data is collected.