



WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ACT MEMO

2015 Wisconsin Act 53
[2015 Senate Bill 32]

**Achievement Gap Reduction
Contracts**

2015 Wisconsin Act 53, originally introduced by the Joint Legislative Council, replaces the Student Achievement Guarantee Program (SAGE) with an Achievement Gap Reduction (AGR) program. The new program is similar to SAGE and incorporates many existing aspects of the program. However, the new program differs from SAGE in certain key aspects, as described below.

PRIOR LAW

SAGE is a state categorical aid program that provides funding to schools for low-income students in primary grades (K-3) if the school maintains small class sizes of 18 students to one classroom teacher or 30 students to two classroom teachers, and also meets other statutory requirements. Under SAGE, participating schools are subject to contracts with the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and receive funding for each eligible, low-income student in a K-3 grade level that meets the 18:1 or 30:2 classroom ratio and other requirements.

2015 WISCONSIN ACT 53

Act 53 creates a new categorical aid program that provides funding to participating schools for each eligible low-income student in a K-3 grade level that meets requirements under a contract with DPI.¹ The AGR program allows a school to meet its obligations under the contract by using one of three strategies, or a combination of these strategies:

1. One-to-one tutoring provided by a licensed teacher;

¹ Act 53 adds a “clawback” provision requiring a school district to return the funds paid for a participating grade for any school year in which the school does not implement the strategies required under an AGR contract.

This memo provides a brief description of the Act. For more detailed information, consult the text of the law and related legislative documents at the Legislature’s Web site at: <http://www.legis.wisconsin.gov>.

2. Instructional coaching for teachers provided by a licensed teacher; or
3. Maintaining 18:1 or 30:2 classroom ratios and providing professional development on small group instruction.

Unlike SAGE, the new program does not condition funding on maintaining an 18:1 or 30:2 ratio in every classroom in all participating grade levels.

The AGR program requires that a school set performance objectives that include reducing the achievement gap for low-income pupils in math and reading, and that the school specify the formative and summative assessments it will use to evaluate success attaining these objectives. Schools participating in AGR must report their objectives and their success in attaining them to the school board each semester. Neither of these requirements existed under the prior SAGE program.

Like SAGE, the AGR program is subject to a required annual evaluation. Act 53 reduces the \$250,000 evaluation appropriation for SAGE to \$125,000 for AGR evaluation. Act 53 requires the evaluation to be sent to each school district participating in the AGR program.

TRANSITION

Both SAGE and AGR contracts are five years long and may be renewed for additional five-year terms. Act 53 allows DPI to provide a one-year extension on existing SAGE contracts set to expire at the end of the 2014-15 school year. Under Act 53, SAGE contracts become nonrenewable, but schools currently participating in SAGE can choose to enter an AGR contract. Act 53 does not authorize any AGR contracts for schools not currently participating in SAGE.

Effective date: July 3, 2015

Prepared by: Jessica Ozalp, Staff Attorney

July 6, 2015

JO:mcm;ksm