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(FORM UPDATED: 08/11/2010)

WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE ...
PUBLIC HEARING - COMMITTEE RECORDS

1997-98

(session year)

Senate

(Assembly, Senate or Joint)

Committee on Education...

COMMITTEE NOTICES ...

- Committee Reports ... **CR**
- Executive Sessions ... **ES**
- Public Hearings ... **PH**

INFORMATION COLLECTED BY COMMITTEE FOR AND AGAINST PROPOSAL

- Appointments ... **Appt** (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
- Clearinghouse Rules ... **CRule** (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
- Hearing Records ... bills and resolutions (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
 - (**ab** = Assembly Bill) (**ar** = Assembly Resolution) (**ajr** = Assembly Joint Resolution)
 - (**sb** = Senate Bill) (**sr** = Senate Resolution) (**sjr** = Senate Joint Resolution)
- Miscellaneous ... **Misc**

* Contents organized for archiving by: Stefanie Rose (LRB) (December 2012)

Senate

Record of Committee Proceedings

Committee on Education

Senate Bill 456

Relating to: evaluating pupil academic standards.

By Senators Darling, Farrow and Panzer; cosponsored by Representatives Duff and Jensen.

February 10, 1998 Referred to committee on Education.

February 25, 1998 **PUBLIC HEARING HELD**

Present: (7) Senators C. Potter, Shibilski, Grobschmidt,
Darling, Huelsman, Roessler and Fitzgerald.
Absent: (1) Senator Jauch.

Appearances for

- (See Committee Slips)

Appearances against

- (See Committee Slips)

Appearances for Information Only

- (See Committee Slips)

Registrations for

- (See Committee Slips)

Registrations against

- (See Committee Slips)

March 26, 1998 **Failed to pass pursuant to Senate Joint Resolution 1.**

Paul Rusk
Committee Clerk

SENATE HEARING SLIP

(Please Print Plainly)

DATE: Feb 26 1998

BILL NO. SB 456

OR
SUBJECT Eliminating the Standards

Janet Kane
(NAME)

1225 Marfield Ct
(Street Address or Route Number)

Madison, WI 53702
(City and Zip Code)

Member Milwaukee Area
(Representing)

Speaking in Favor:

Speaking Against:

Registering in Favor:
but not speaking:

Registering Against:
but not speaking:

Speaking for information
only; Neither for nor against:

Please return this slip to a messenger PROMPTLY.

Senate Sergeant-At-Arms
Room 109-LL One East Main
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882

SENATE HEARING SLIP

(Please Print Plainly)

DATE: 2/25

BILL NO. SB 456

OR
SUBJECT _____

Brian Rybarik
(NAME)

(Street Address or Route Number)

(City and Zip Code)

Senator Panzer
(Representing)

Speaking in Favor:

Speaking Against:

Registering in Favor:
but not speaking:

Registering Against:
but not speaking:

Speaking for information
only; Neither for nor against:

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SENATE HEARING SLIP

(Please Print Plainly)

DATE: 2/25/97

BILL NO. 456

OR
SUBJECT Standards

Jessica Torney for
Leah Vukenor
(NAME)

(Street Address or Route Number)

(City and Zip Code)

(Representing)

Speaking in Favor:

Speaking Against:

Registering in Favor:
but not speaking:

Submitting testimony
Registering Against:
but not speaking:

Speaking for information
only; Neither for nor against:

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Madison, WI 53707-7882

SENATE HEARING SLIP

(Please Print Plainly)

DATE: 2/25/98

BILL NO. SB 456

OR
SUBJECT Academic Standards

Senn Brown

(NAME) 122 West Washington Ave.

(Street Address or Route Number) Madison WI 53703

(City and Zip Code) WI Assoc of School Boards

(Representing)

Speaking in Favor:

Speaking Against:

Registering in Favor:

but not speaking:

Registering Against:

but not speaking:

Speaking for information only; Neither for nor against:

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SENATE HEARING SLIP

(Please Print Plainly)

DATE: 2-25-98

BILL NO. SB 456

OR
SUBJECT _____

Steven Dold

(NAME) 125 S. Webster

(Street Address or Route Number) Madison

(City and Zip Code) DPI

(Representing)

Speaking in Favor:

Speaking Against:

Registering in Favor:

but not speaking:

Registering Against:

but not speaking:

Speaking for information only; Neither for nor against:

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SENATE HEARING SLIP

(Please Print Plainly)

DATE: 2/25/98

BILL NO. SB 456

OR
SUBJECT Academic

Standards

(NAME) Katie Schultz Stout

(Street Address or Route Number) Box 8003

(City and Zip Code) Madison VT 53708

(Representing) WFAC & WFT

Speaking in Favor:

Speaking Against:

Registering in Favor:

but not speaking:

Registering Against:

but not speaking:

Speaking for information only; Neither for nor against:

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Madison, WI 53707-7882



Alberta Darling

Wisconsin State Senator

November 23, 1997

Lt. Governor Scott McCallum
State Superintendent John Benson
Model Academic Standards Council

Co-Chairmen McCallum and Benson and Council Members,

I commend the Council for its efforts to create Model Academic Standards for our children to better compete in an increasingly global economy. It was diligent in its efforts to create standards, from a variety of national, state and local resources, which are "clear, rigorous and measurable." I believe the final Standards draft, however, falls short of meeting the mission criteria.

For example, I am not convinced that all the Standards are content and performance specific. The Department of Public Instruction's (DPI) definition of content standards is "what students should know and be able to do." It defines the performance standard as telling "how students will show they are meeting these standards." However, the Minority Report for the English Language Arts Task Force says the Standards do not always define a minimally acceptable level of achievement. The Minority report suggests that meaningful educational standards must "name an area of knowledge or skill, state how it is to be assessed and set a minimal acceptable level of achievement." ACHIEVE's review also concludes that the Standards do not yet define "how good is good enough when it comes to student performance."

Another weakness of the Standards is the absence of literature sections. This weakness was also noted by ACHIEVE and the English Language Task Force Minority Report. By providing examples of literature, local districts would have a clear understanding of the level of difficulty expected of children at each benchmark level. This does not have to be an exhaustive list, but rather a sampling of books that merit reading by teachers at various levels. This opinion was raised at the final Council meeting, and a literature list may already be in progress.

Also, I am concerned that the Standards are not consistent across all core areas. In some instances, the attention to detail is almost excessive. In other areas, the language is too broad to understand what it is a child will be expected to know. For example, a Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory and Development Center (McREL) review of the Standards suggests many concepts need to be broken down "to allow for more precise articulation of content at the benchmark (performance standard) level." In other areas McREL suggests a need to "unpack" information so that specific content can be identified, taught and assessed. ACHIEVE agrees and says there are "differences in the quality of the expectations" which need to be addressed. If the document is difficult for teachers and parents to understand, it will not be a useful tool for student learning.

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Alberta Darling

Wisconsin State Senator

This attention to improving clarity will ensure that standards are “objectively measurable” and which focus on “material that is observable.” These are two important goals outlined in the Council’s original mission. Legitimate questions and concerns have been raised by McREL, ACHIEVE, the English Language Task Force Minority Report and others, however, which convince me that the Standards are not uniformly measurable. Even the response analysis from forms returned from the public engagement process show an average of more than 25% who believe the Standards do not contain “material appropriate for assessment.”

When adopted, the Model Academic Standards will form the basis for statewide assessment for grades four and eight and the assessment that students must pass in order to graduate from high school. The Council’s mission says “everything in the state assessments will be in the Standards.” And, according to CTB/McGrawHill (the testing service use by DPI), standards are to be completed before assessment. Yet DPI says the examinations just completed by our children are already aligned to the Model Academic Standards. I disagree that the Standards could truly be aligned to the assessment before the reviews of the Standards are completed. This is especially true in light of the fact that the assessment was originally designed as a norm-referenced test. Can a norm-referenced test specifically designed to spread student scores over a normal curve be used to designate achievement proficiency levels?

Given the fact that standards and assessment are inextricably linked, I believe the Council or the Governor still has concerns to address. Before the Standards are adopted, I recommend:

- Dissenting or differing opinions should be looked at more closely.
- The Standards should be reviewed for consistency and uniform measurability by a clearinghouse agency like McREL.
- DPI should produce a representative sample of objectively measurable questions as a way to illustrate how the test will be aligned to the Standards.

Again, The Council should be commended for the work it completed, especially under strict time and money constraints. Now, the Governor or the Council should complete the job by addressing minority opinions and making sure the Standards are uniformly measurable.

We all agree that our children deserve a world-class education and that Model Academic Standards are a tool to help ensure this. But if these Standards are the basis for statewide assessment as well as the exam that determines whether or not our children will graduate, then they must truly be clear, content specific and measurable before they are adopted.

Sincerely,


Alberta Darling

cc: Governor Tommy Thompson

Capitol Office:

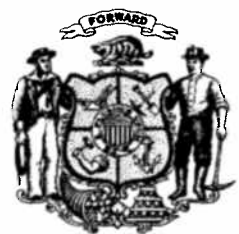
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WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE



Minority Report of the English Language Arts Task Force of the Governor's Council on Model Academic Standards

Wisconsin is on the brink of an historic moment in public education. The development of state model academic standards in the disciplines of language, math, science, history, and geography is critical to the improvement of education for all the children in our state. In the words of Governor Tommy G. Thompson:

"We can no longer tolerate a situation where too many students are leaving schools without having learned the core set of skills and knowledge they will need to be successful. We can no longer tolerate a situation where the skills and knowledge of U.S. students fall far below those of students in countries that are our international competitors. The first most important step to correct this situation and improve the performance of students is to agree on clear standards for what students ought to know and be able to do in a core set of subject areas." (*Standards and Education: A Roadmap for State Policymakers* [Denver, CO.:Education Commission of the States, March 1996] p.1)

We agree with Governor Thompson, but we find that the final draft of the English Language Arts standards suffers from two basic faults making it incapable of fulfilling the governor's laudable goals. Its two basic faults are these:

1. Rather than being articulated on a year by year basis from kindergarten through grade 12, the proposed standards refer only to expectations for "benchmark" years, i.e., the fourth, eighth, and twelfth grades;
2. The terms, "content standards" and "performance standards" are defined and used in an unusual way that defeats the goals of clarity and specificity.

I. Grade-Specific Standards

There is a growing body of research supporting grade-specific standards. They are the norms in the European countries with which we compete in the global marketplace. Grade-specific standards are gaining the support of many teachers and parents as evidenced by the popularity of E.D. Hirsch's series of books entitled, "What Your First Through Sixth Grader Should Know," as well as by a marked increase in the number of Hirsch Core Knowledge schools developing throughout the country. Grade-specific standards are essential for the following reasons:

1. They ensure continuity across school and district boundaries. Year-by-year standards would prevent major discontinuities in the education of students who move from one community to another. Student mobility is a fact of life, especially in lower income households. For this reason, grade-specific standards are of special benefit to disadvantaged children, as is borne out by the research of the international Association for the Evaluation of Education Achievement. (E.D. Hirsch, Jr., *The Schools We Need and Why We Don't Have Them*. [New York: Doubleday, 1996] p.33)
2. They assure students who remain within single districts of logical progression in their studies. Currently, there are far too many examples of children re-learning the same subject matter over the course of several years within the same school district.
3. They establish a foundation for accountability within the school system. Teachers often report frustration over the number of ill-prepared children who enter their classrooms. Grade-specific standards help ensure

that students have mastered necessary material before they proceed to the next level. This is particularly important in view of the current movement towards a high-stakes graduation exam. If standards remain benchmarked at grades 4, 8, and 12, unfair pressure will be placed on teachers at those grade levels, especially the twelfth, to prepare students who may have substantial gaps in learning from previous years. A set of clearly defined, grade-specific standards would alleviate this problem and reduce the likelihood and merit of lawsuits which could arise when students fail a high school graduation exam.

4. The goal of developing clear, assessable standards cannot be achieved when each standard must encompass four years of education. Grade four standards, for example, cannot communicate adequately the expectations that students must have met in grades K through 3 to be prepared to acquire the content reflected in grade four standards. Most important, Wisconsin's grade four standards fail to meet the criterion of "... specific enough to assure the development of a common core curriculum," one of the criteria for judging the quality and usefulness of student achievement standards established by the American Federation of Teachers. In the absence of a common core curriculum, many students will not acquire a base of foundation knowledge that is essential to the acquisition of advanced knowledge, high order thinking, and complex problem solving. If, and only if, children acquire a firm foundation in the early grades, will the achievement of excellence and equity in later grades begin to be possible.

II. The Definition of Content and Performance Standards

Executive Order #302, creating the Governor's Council on Model Academic Standards, refers in its first paragraph to the fact that Wisconsin does not now possess "educational content and performance standards." In section three of its conclusion it instructs the council to develop a set of standards to establish what students "should know and be able to do" in various subject areas. In context, the words in the second section cited seem intended to clarify the terminology of the first, viz., a "content" standard establishes what a student should *know* while a "performance" standard establishes what a student should *be able to do*. This interpretation corresponds to common usage and yields a clear mandate to produce standards that fall into one of the two indicated categories.

The standards proposed by the majority of the Language Arts Working group follow other drafts composed by the Department of Public Instruction in adhering to unusual definitions of content and performance standards. An appendix to the second draft of the DPI's standards provides the operative definitions. "Content standards" refer to "what students should know *and* be able to do," (emphasis added) whereas performance standards "tell how students will show that they are meeting the standards." Applied literally, these definitions would lead to great redundancy, but they are not so applied in the DPI drafts. There "content standards" become very broad areas in which some type of achievement is expected, while "performance standards" describe more specific areas. There is no difference other than level of specificity between the two kinds of standards.

Content and performance standards are supplemented by "proficiency standards," which state "how well students must perform." The draft contains a complete array of content and performance standards in the area of the English Language Arts but only one sample proficiency standard, a twelfth grade writing test.

What is wrong with this approach? A meaningful educational standard must include all the features divided among content, performance, and proficiency standards in the DPI documents, i.e., it must name an area of knowledge or a skill, state (if necessary) how it is to be assessed, and set a minimal acceptable level of achievement. In effect, the DPI document has fractured the concept of a standard into thirds and produced a document giving a long list of incomplete standards. These incomplete standards are statements of areas of knowledge or skills in which *some* level of educational achievement should be required. Missing, however, is the most critical part of a standard, that defining a minimally acceptable level of

achievement.

Although there are exceptions, most of the DPI "standards" involve some tasks that even very poorly trained students could perform with some degree of success or an area of knowledge that is shared to some extent by virtually everyone. These "standards" simply state that students will perform the task or exhibit some unspecified part of the knowledge. Depending entirely on how they are interpreted, such "standards" could be passed by poorly trained first-graders or failed by college professors. For example, standards for fourth grade students state that they will "develop an awareness and appreciation of an author's and/or illustrator's style" and "relate what they hear to prior knowledge."

★
(We maintain that meaningful standards referring to skills must include more specific indications of what students need to do to pass them and that standards referring to knowledge should define specific topics to be mastered.) In the early grades, performance standards should dominate. They should list tasks whose performance can be assessed unambiguously as either correct or incorrect according to well-established standards. A draft of "foundation standards" proposed by the signatories of this report contains many examples of meaningful performance standards. They state, for example, that first grade students should "demonstrate automatic application of the silent 'e' rule by reading word lists containing silent 'e' and minimally different words (e.g., at, ate; bit, bite; rob, robe) rapidly and accurately." Fourth grade students must "read aloud at an appropriate rate with a appropriate error limit (i.e., approximately 150 wpm with no more than three errors per 100 words)."

In the upper grades in the area of the English language arts, we recommend that standards shift emphasis to acquiring knowledge of specific topics. Very salutary in this respect would be lists of vocabulary words to be mastered by certain grades and literary works to have been read with comprehension. In both areas, the majority of the DPI standards team is committed to an approach that we think is flawed. Regarding vocabulary, the standards repeat the statement at each level that "students will increase their vocabulary as a means of achieving greater flexibility and versatility in communication," but they give no indication of minimally acceptable achievement in this area. Once again, the "standard" could be passed or failed by virtually any conceivable student depending upon how it is interpreted.

With regard to reading, the proposed standards provide a list of bibliographies for young readers. Just one of the lists cited includes "more than 1000 titles published between 1988 and 1990." Clearly, such a bibliography sets no real standard in the level of difficulty or the merit of the readings to be assigned. We would recommend that starting with grade eight teachers be urged to include one or two classics, specified by name, in the year's reading and to test students on their knowledge of the texts of the works. Classics suitable for younger readers should be selected in consultation with experienced teachers, but would certainly include such works as the *Odyssey*, *Julius Caesar*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Tale of Two Cities*, *Wuthering Heights*, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, etc. The selection of the classics to be assigned would necessarily be somewhat arbitrary, but the benefits would greatly outweigh this unavoidable criticism. Not only would students have the benefits of having read some classics, those transferring to different schools within the state would have a common frame of reference with their new classmates and teachers.

In conclusion, we believe that the two basic issues that we have raised in this report, the desirability of year-by-year standards and the nature of genuine standards, must be considered more carefully in order to produce world-class academic standards.

Respectfully submitted on June 27, 1997 by:

Sara G. Tarver, Professor, UW-Madison, Co-chair, English Language Arts Work Group

Ann Blamey, Parent, Teacher

Kellie Kreienkamp, Parent, Co-founder of Verona Core Knowledge Charter School

Valerie Linton, Parent, Business Professional

Terrie McCormick, Chairman and CEO of Education Services., President, Wisconsin Charter School Association

David Mulroy, Associate Professor, UW-Milwaukee

Kathleen Schaeffer, President, Association for Direct Instruction - Wisconsin Chapter

Leah Vukmir, President of Parents Raising Educational Standards in Schools



Memo

To: Steven B. Dold
From: John Fortier
CC: Faye Stark, Gina Frank-Reece
Date: 02/22/98
Re: Testimony on SB 456

The agency is testifying in opposition to SB 456, not because we are opposed to its contents, but rather because we believe that its provisions have been done, are being done, or will be done under existing plans.

The first provision of the bill, calling for an external review of the model academic standards for clarity, rigor, and measurability is unnecessary because various national entities have either completed or are in the process of completing such reviews. During the development of the standards, drafts were sent to Modern Red Schoolhouse, an agency of the Hudson Institute under a contract between the State of Wisconsin and Hudson Institute. The purpose was to edit and recommend changes in the documents based upon criteria defined by the Governor's Council on Model Academic Standards. This review was done under the Direction of Dr. Findley McQuade. The product of this review was used in producing the final draft of the standards.

Again during the development process, reviews were done by the American Federation of Teachers under the direction of Matt Gandal. The Agency also contracted with the New Standards Project to review and make suggestions on the standards in mathematics, English language arts, and science. Social Studies was not included in this review because the New Standards Project, an entity consisting of fifteen states and six large, urban school districts, did not develop standards in that discipline. The Council for Basic Education has completed a review of the English language arts and mathematics standards from the various states for rigor. They are working on a similar review in social studies and science. This review for Wisconsin is based upon our completed work. In both subjects the Wisconsin standards ranked in the highest category for rigor. Reviews have also been or will be conducted by the Thomas Fordham Foundation and the Achieve Group. It is therefore possible to get reviews from independent, national entities without having to commission such a study.

It should be noted that, while outside reviews are desirable and provide a helpful resource in doing standards development work, the final product of the work must reflect the philosophy of the state producing the standards rather than that of the reviewing agency. An example is the review released this week by the Thomas Fordham Foundation of the history and geography standards. Its grade of "F" given to Wisconsin and to a number of other states usually regarded as at the forefront of education (Minnesota, Maine, Connecticut, North and South Dakota) reflects two major differences in philosophy between the Governor's Council and the reviewers from the foundation.

The first is closely related to a phenomenon existing within the social studies education community. One group of University professors believes that history should be the organizing element of social studies and the other subjects within the field, with the possible exception of geography, should be subsumed under it. They have formed one professional organization. A second group believes that each of the social studies is important, and that the broad field of social studies should include, as equal partners, economics, political science, psychology, sociology, anthropology as well as history and geography. They have formed a second organization. The Governor's Council on Model Academic standards chose an approach somewhere between the two, choosing to have standards for history, geography, political science, economics, and behavioral sciences. In so doing, it incurred the displeasure of the Thomas Fordham Foundation.

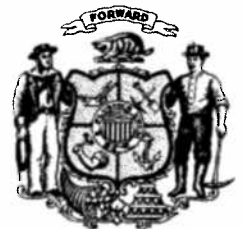
The second relates to the degree of specificity that standards should entail. After considerable discussion the council decided that the standards should be benchmarked at grades four, eight, and twelve, and that the development of curriculum around those standards was an issue of local control, an educational philosophy highly prized by Wisconsin citizens. The foundation would prefer to specify exact content rather than leaving such decisions to the local community. Not all national reviewers share the foundation's positions, as evidenced by support from the National Council for Social Studies for the Wisconsin position.

The second provision of SB 456 calls for an alignment between the existing WSAS fourth, eighth, and tenth grade tests (Terra Nova, CTB/McGraw-Hill) and the recently adopted standards. Again, we believe that provision to be unnecessary. Shortly after the ultimate draft of the standards was completed, subject matter consultants conducted a preliminary alignment. They concluded that at least 90 percent of the items on the Terra Nova tests were reflected in the standards as they then existed. After release of the standards by Governor Thompson in December, CTB/McGraw-Hill conducted a domain to domain alignment of the thread of the test with the standards. Desiring a more thorough alignment, the department is currently arranging with the vendor for a much more extensive alignment that would utilize Wisconsin educators and educational stakeholders in a detailed alignment under the direction of testing experts. This alignment should be completed in May.

It is safe to say that the agency supports the intentions of this proposed legislation, but believes that the expense it entails is unnecessary owing to work already completed or scheduled.



WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE





Testimony on Senate Bill 456
February 25, 1998
Written by Leah Vukmir, President
Parents Raising Educational Standards in Schools (PRESS)

As a representative of PRESS, and as a minority member of the Wisconsin English-Language Arts Task Force, I am writing in support of Senate Bill 456. Serious questions remain as to the quality of Wisconsin's current draft of academic standards which necessitates further evaluation by an independent national organization. They are as follows:

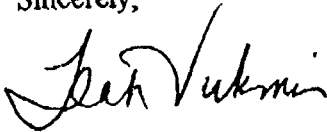
1. Minority reports to the final draft have been filed by members of the Modern Academic Standards Council, as well as by eight members of the English-Language Arts Task Force. These reports address a variety of reservations and concerns regarding the standards in their current form.
2. Recent critiques of state standards further highlight existing flaws in Wisconsin's draft standards:
 - a. In a national study released this week, the Fordham Foundation gave Wisconsin's history and geography standards a grade of "F". Interestingly, the states of Virginia, California, Massachusetts and Texas received grades of A's and B's, the latter three states having drawn heavily from Virginia's standards during their standards writing process. PRESS has been outspoken in its support of the Virginia standards as a model of truly rigorous academic standards.
 - b. In a report released on January 8, 1998 by *Education Week* and the Pew Charitable Trust, Wisconsin's final draft of standards in *all four* academic disciplines ranked in the bottom one-third of all 50 states. Again, it is interesting to note that, in this report, the Virginia standards rank number one in the country.
3. The standards writing process was rushed. In an effort to meet deadlines, task force members were given a very short timeline in which to develop a final draft document. My own experience on the English-Language Arts Task Force left me personally questioning the validity of the entire process as our members hurriedly developed a set of standards in one eight hour session. If indeed, the Wisconsin standards are to be a model for districts across the state, then more time, effort and attention must be given to ensure the development of world class standards for our children.

4. High-stakes examinations will be based on the current draft of Wisconsin standards. This important accountability measure will likely be wrought with controversy, particularly if the standards from which they are based do not clearly and explicitly state expectations for children at each grade level. In order to decrease the likelihood of lawsuits, questions surrounding the weaknesses of the Wisconsin standards must be addressed at this time.

In conclusion, based on the above outlined concerns, it is my hope that you will support SB 456. It is also our recommendation that a truly independent national organization, one not currently affiliated with the Department of Public Instruction, be chosen to conduct the evaluation of Wisconsin's standards. This organization could be chosen by members of the Wisconsin State Legislature.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony.

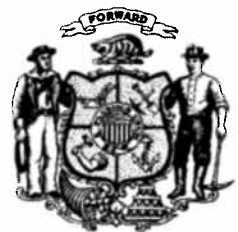
Sincerely,



Leah Vukmir



WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE





Alberta Darling

Wisconsin State Senator

TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF SB 456

Chairperson Potter, members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify on SB456, the bill to review Wisconsin's academic standards.

As a member of the Model academic Council, I, along with Senator Potter, saw the path the standards took until they were signed by the governor as an executive order. The process moved so quickly, that many of these differing opinions didn't get adequate public input. In late November, I issued a directive to the governor, in the form of a minority report. My message was clear: right now, we're in the fourth quarter, and we're in the biggest play of the game. If these standards are going to be a winner, we can't fumble now.

I suggested that before the standards were adopted:

- Dissenting or differing opinions be looked a more closely.
- Review them for consistency and measurability by a clearinghouse agency like McRel.
- DPI should produce a representative sample of objectively measurable questions as a way to illustrate how the test will be aligned to the standards.

And today, my message is the same. I think we need to adequately review the document before we tie it to the high stakes testing, such as the graduation rate. Now, with the governor's directive to end social promotion, the need to review the standards is even more clear. Will we wait until the first 4th grader fails and the first lawsuit begins? The lawsuit will say that the test is bad, or the standards are not clear. Can Wisconsin afford to have these lawsuits?

As you know, there are a series of minority or differing opinions on our standards. Education Week's Quality Counts 98 report listed us in the lower third of all states, Council for Basic Education (CBE) listed us in the top 20 percent and yesterday, the Fordham foundation gave our history standards an F.

I realize that there will always be differing opinions. But I think Wisconsin should do more. Wisconsin should set the bar higher. We said we wanted to have world class standards, not ones that compares to the rest of the states.

We should send out standards for a specific review. Not one that compares us to other states, but one that looks at how clear, rigorous and measurable they are.

I know DPI is concerned about these standards, and has taken steps to have the alignment process begin. I commend them for their efforts. But the standards need to go to a clearinghouse agency like McRel for a review specific to Wisconsin.

I believe this review can only help local districts as they proceed to review their curriculums. Already, at least 10 school districts have spent over \$10,000 each to have their curriculum lined up to the state's standards.

If high stakes tests are the way we're going to measure our standards, then the standards must be world class. Simply put: We're in the fourth quarter, and I want to win.

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Standards lacking in many states

Private study finds few pass muster

By Glenn O'Neal
USA TODAY

A private foundation gives high grades to only a handful of states on their standards for teaching history and geography to schoolchildren.

The Fordham Foundation released two studies Monday in Washington, D.C., that graded states on the clarity and organization of their standards as well as content. The studies, about a year and a half in the making, did not look at student achievement or what teachers were doing.

"I'm fairly dismayed by what we are seeing here," says Chester Finn Jr., president of the Thomas F. Fordham Foundation and former education official in President Reagan's administration. "The good news is that a few of them did it well, which proves it can be done well."

Virginia was the only state to receive an "A" in state history standards, with California, Texas and Massachusetts each receiving a "B." Fifteen states and the District of Columbia received "Cs" or "Ds," 19 received an "F." The group found no standards in 13 states.

Colorado, Indiana and Texas all received "As" in state geography standards, and Michigan, New Hampshire and West Virginia received "Bs." The Fordham Foundation gave "Cs" or "Ds" to 14 states and the District of Columbia, flunked another 18 states while handing out incomplete grades to 12 more states.

The geography study found that over-

all, states did not have standards that clearly stated what students must learn.

Penn State education professor David Saxe, author of the history study, took states to task for standards that stressed themes rather than a chronological study of history. He also complained of what he views as "presentism," judging the past with today's standards.

Brenda Welburn, executive director of the National Association of State Boards of Education in Alexandria, Va., hasn't seen the report but is already critical. "To assume there is only one way to teach a history story is very arrogant," she says. Events in history, like the Vietnam War, are undisputable, but perspectives of an event are not, she says.

Using a chronological approach to teaching history doesn't necessarily mean the class will be boring, says Elaine Reed, executive director of the National Council for History Education in Cleveland, Ohio. A chronological approach gives students background and allows them to see an event's consequences, she says.

The Fordham Foundation study is a follow-up to the 1989 education summit in Charlottesville, Va., where the governors vowed all students would "demonstrate competency" in core subjects, including history and geography, by the year 2000.

"Today, we're still miles from that goal — and not likely to reach it until every state sets high standards," Finn says.

Contributing: Gannett News Service

Geography and history report card

About a third of the states with history and geography standards flunk evaluations by panels of historians and geographers. States not evaluated lacked complete standards.

History standards scores by state (Maximum score = 60)		Geography standards scores by state (Maximum score = 90)	
State (by rank)	Score	State (by rank)	Score
Virginia	59	Colorado	85.0
California	55	Indiana	85.0
Texas	53	Texas	85.0
Massachusetts	49	Michigan	79.0
Alabama	34	New Hampshire	78.0
Indiana	32	West Virginia	72.0
District of Columbia	32	Louisiana	71.5
West Virginia	30	Missouri	67.0
Florida	28	Utah	65.0
Louisiana	27	Alabama	65.0
New Hampshire	27	Florida	65.0
Connecticut	26	North Carolina	65.0
Utah	26	Arkansas	62.5
Georgia	24	Idaho	62.5
Colorado	21	Idaho	62.5
Oklahoma	21	Virginia	59.0
Tennessee	21	Ohio	54.0
Maine	19	California	50.5
Ohio	18	Connecticut	49.0
Illinois	16	Delaware	49.2
Wisconsin	16	New York	49.0
Michigan	15	New York	40.0
Delaware	14	Tennessee	37.0
New York	14	New Jersey	37.0
Washington	14	Oklahoma	35.5
Maryland	8	Georgia	35.5
Kansas	8	Wisconsin	31.0
Vermont	8	Minnesota	27.0
Alaska	6	Maryland	27.0
Kentucky	4	Kentucky	23.0
North Carolina	4	Arkansas	23.0
Minnesota	4	Nebraska	22.0
Arkansas	2	New Jersey	22.0
Missouri	2	Pennsylvania	22.0
New Mexico	2		
Nebraska	0		
New Jersey	0		
Pennsylvania	0		

Source: Thomas B. Fordham Foundation

Financial aid sought for learning over the Net

By Mary Beth Marklein
USA TODAY



ommendations for the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.

► Students who attend de-

commute to school. The proposal would broaden their aid package to include allowances for cost of living and cost of education.

education to more than 700,000 students in 1995, and growth has occurred rapidly since then, says Patrick Portway, director of the U.S. Distance Education Center.

Fighting predictably lasting

By Karen S. Peterson
USA TODAY

In the middle of a fight, who can really switch gears and be an "active listener," following the rules for fighting fair that marital therapists favor? As it turns out, even happily married couples can't, says an eight-year study of 130 pairs of newlyweds. Even contented couples can't remember to take a timeout to paraphrase a spouse, summarize feelings or listen with empathy.

"Asking that of couples is like requiring emotional gymnastics," says John Gottman, a University of Washington psychologist who has researched marriages and families for more than 25 years.

Those rules aren't the secret to a happy marriage anyway, although much marital therapy is based on them, Gottman says. "Being a compassionate listener doesn't predict when a marriage will end up."

So what does make a difference? A husband's unwillingness to accept influence from his wife is a key predictor of divorce, Gottman says. A husband influences a wife in many ways. But it is she who "brings marital issues to the table for discussion." The wife also suggests solutions for problems. If he must listen to her, she has her own burden in the marital mix. She must start an argument "softly," he says. When she is able to bring a subject without attacking, he is more able to respond. "Gee, I need to be that way."



State's history standards get an F

■ A conservative group also criticizes Wisconsin's standards for geography.

By Phil Brinkman
Education reporter

Wisconsin's history standards are so lacking in rigor and clarity that they're useless, a national study asserts.

"The standards are vague, lacking in specific content and impossible to measure," according to the

report by the conservative Fordham Foundation, which gave the state an F for its standards in history and geography.

The only good news, according to the report, is that Wisconsin is hardly alone. More than a third of the states flunked the review, which judged state academic standards on the basis of clarity, organization, historical soundness, specific historic content and absence of political bias.

Standards like, "Identify and describe important events and famous people in Wisconsin and

United States history," ostensibly to be mastered by fourth-graders, contributed to the state's low rating, the report said.

But a state official who helped craft the standards, released in December, said the standards are intentionally broad.

"On the face of it, it is vague, and it needs to be specified," said John Fortier, assistant superintendent for instructional services with the state Department of Public Instruction. "But it needs to be specified at the local school district level."

Fortier said the real impact of the standards won't be known until they are translated into state tests beginning next year. Districts will then be under pressure to find their own ways to ensure that students are prepared to pass those tests, which he said will be very rigorous.

Others, including the National Council of Social Studies, have praised the standards for their rigor and comprehensiveness, Fortier said.

Fortier said the state also steered clear of spelling out a spe-

cific curriculum to avoid the pitfalls that have beset other states, divided over which figures and events are most representative of an era or place.

The state earned similarly low marks for its geography standards, which the foundation said were piecemeal, jumbled and too broad to be measurable.

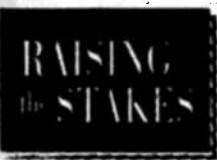
Only California, Massachusetts, Texas and Virginia received As and Bs for their history standards, while Colorado, Indiana, Michigan, New Hampshire, Texas and West Virginia earned honors for their geography standards.

The Push for Accountability Gathers Steam

First in an occasional series.

By Lynn Olson

For the past five years, Ron K. Freeman has enjoyed the enviable position of being the principal of one of the highest-scoring middle schools in all of Kentucky. Invariably, J. Graham Brown Middle School shows up near the top of the list



when the scores come out for the state tests.

Yet in 1996, state officials declared that the Louisville school was "in crisis" because its scores declined on the statewide accountability index. Suddenly, Mr. Freeman found himself in the awkward position of informing parents that, by law, they could transfer their children to a "successful" school someplace else.

"The thing of it is," he said recently, "the 'successful' schools all scored lower than we scored. It's kind of a weird situation."

But the kind of situation more and more

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educators are facing as states and districts rush to hold schools, principals, teachers, and students more accountable for their performance. Through test scores, performance evaluations, "endorsed" diplomas, and a host of systems that reward success and punish failure, policymakers



are demanding results as they seek to assure parents and taxpayers that their children are getting a good education and their money isn't being wasted.

At least 32 states and 34 big-city districts now have accountability systems based, in part, on test scores. And the numbers are climbing fast.

"We have been, frankly, inundated with calls from states that are looking at their accountability laws and want to strengthen them," said Christine Johnson, who works on accountability issues for the Education Commission of the States.

But as policymakers wade into the thicket, many are finding that it's filled with thorns.

"I don't know of a single accountability plan implemented in a district or state that I would say is well thought through," said Anthony L. Bryk, a professor of education and sociology at the University of Chicago.

In part, that's because states like Kentucky must tangle with such prickly technical and political issues as: Should they hold schools to an absolute standard, or adjust their expectations to account for differences in income or existing achievement levels among the student population?

How fast should scores improve? What if too many students fail? Can states fulfill the policing and helping roles simultaneously? How can states and districts avoid trampling each other as they rush to adopt get-tough policies?

Accountability efforts also are encountering fierce resistance, sometimes from unexpected quarters. Parents in one of Michigan's most affluent districts re-

belled last year against a new high school proficiency test. Many refused to let their children take it, saying it offered no benefits—only the possibility of embarrassment—for college-bound students.

A 'Minefield'

"The fact is, accountability and performance are easy to talk about, but they're very, very difficult to implement," Gov. George V. Voinovich of Ohio said at a recent meeting on accountability sponsored by the ECS. "When you start setting standards, and you start giving tests, it's not easy stuff. It's like going through a minefield."

Critics of what are known as high-stakes tests warn that they can distort and narrow instruction, encouraging teachers to focus solely on what is tested and obscuring richer ways of judging schools. They say there is only limited evidence that such systems will actually raise achievement in the long run.

As the stakes rise, so does the likelihood of litigation. Fourteen parents have sued the Johnston County, N.C., district on behalf of children who were held back a grade for low scores on the state's math and reading tests. The plaintiffs argue that tests intended to rate districts and schools are not valid for measuring the performance of individual students.

Texas officials also face legal challenges to their state's high school exit examination, based on the different passing rates of minority and nonminority teenagers.

'Getting Their Money's Worth'

Accountability is the third side of an education triangle that also includes standards and assessments. Now that many states have adopted high standards and tests to measure students' progress toward those benchmarks, they have turned their attention to making sure that performance matters.

"To have standards and a test without a system of accountability makes no sense," said Kerry Mazzoni, a California Democratic

assemblywoman who chairs education committee in the legislature's lower house.

At the same time, lawmakers, business leaders, and the pu

"The fact is, accountability and performance are easy to talk about, but they're very, very difficult to implement."



Gov. George V. Voinovich
Republican of Ohio

have placed a strong emphasis the bottom line—most often measured by test scores.

"Policymakers have put a lot of money into education reform," said George Madaus, a professor of education and public policy at Boston College. "So they want to tie results—outcomes—to doling out their money's worth."

Easier said than done, cautions Frank Newman, the president of the Denver-based ECS.

"It is a huge change to move from a system where we assume that good things are happening to a system where we insist that good things are happening," said Newman. "The reason the change is so great is because we want accountability in a system that has been socialized the other way."

In Many States, the Road to Accountability Is a Rocky One

a stake in their performance.

But basing promotion or graduation decisions on a single test score may not hold up in court, experts caution.

Others see the renewed emphasis on high stakes for students as a way for educators to duck their own responsibilities.

"There's been a very subtle shifting of this debate from consequences for adults and their organizations to consequences for kids," observed Ted Kolderie, a senior associate at the Center for Policy Studies in St. Paul, Minn. "You don't have to be around this debate very long for some teacher to tell you, 'I am not responsible for what the students learn,' because they believe that deeply."

Consumer Choice

Mr. Kolderie argues that one of the best ways to increase accountability in education is through charter schools.

Such schools, he says, are accountable in two directions: upward to the agencies that grant them their charters and outward to the parents and students who choose the publicly funded but largely deregulated schools. Parental and student choice would also be the dominant form of accountability in voucher programs that provide public money for students to attend private schools, proponents argue.

"Outside of education, that's the main form of accountability in a free society," said Chester E. Finn Jr., the president of the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation in Washington. "Does anybody go to your movie, or eat at your restaurant, or go to your store?"

"I think it's worth considering in education whether we want to use just a bureaucratic system, or a marketplace system, or some mixture of the two."

He advocates the use of clear and simple measures. But even then, he adds, policymakers shouldn't base rewards and penalties solely on data: "You have to use human judgments."

Mr. Freeman will learn in the fall whether Brown Middle School can come off the crisis list. Though the experience has been harrowing, the principal said, it hasn't been all bad. "I guess what we have to do is look at our core content that we're going to be assessed on ... and we have to make sure that teachers are teaching those concepts."

Cost Factors

As they struggle to hold schools accountable, policymakers also are learning that such efforts come at a price.

"One thing that I'm absolutely sure of is that sanctions are not cheap," said Susan H. Fuhrman, the co-director of the Philadelphia-based Consortium for Policy Research in Education, a federally funded research group.

Kentucky spends about \$110,000 a year to assign experienced educators to work closely with schools that are designated "in crisis." And, like many other states and districts, administrators there wound up with a lot more of those schools than they expected.

The reward program, too, has been costly. Since March 1995, Kentucky has distributed more than \$54 million directly to teachers and administrators in schools that qualified for rewards based on their performance.

Most states and districts have focused less on rewards and more on sanctions, in part because there's little research to show whether rewards motivate educators to produce more.

Complex Formulas

Many policymakers elsewhere have tried to address such concerns.

In their efforts to make accountability systems fairer, states and districts have resorted to complicated formulas that try to account for differences in student demographics or judge each school's progress against a baseline.

But in doing so, they risk making the systems so complex that parents and teachers cannot easily understand them.

Kentucky sets biennial targets for each school. Schools that show at least a one-point improvement over their expected threshold receive substantial financial rewards.

Those that score below the expected threshold but above the baseline must write improvement plans. And those that score below the baseline, like Louisville's Brown Middle School, are designated "in crisis" and receive extra assistance from the state.

But Mr. Freeman, the principal at Brown, said it is hard for top-performing schools to maintain their scores and show improvement, especially since the scores are based on testing different youngsters instead of following the same students over time.

"A lot of people are still thinking that if you could just find the right adjustment factors, then you could hold schools accountable directly on the numbers," said Paul T. Hill, the director of the Center on Reinventing Public Education at the University of Washington.

"But that's a snare and a delusion. People who've tried to do that have found that the numbers are uninterpretable except by the experts, and therefore you can't act on them."

An Imperfect Match

Indeed, while everyone wants accountability, it's not always clear who should be accountable for what and to whom, how they should be judged, and who should make such decisions.

Many new get-tough measures have been added to those already in place, and in many cases states and districts have not coordinated their efforts. The resulting overlap is creating conflict and confusion for educators, students, and parents.

Last June, DuSable High School in Chicago was targeted for "restitution" by Paul G. Vallas, the district's chief executive officer. The decision to overhaul the school was based on a history of dismal test scores and high dropout rates. Employees had to reapply for their jobs and the principal was told he could be replaced.

In September, the Illinois education department also placed the 1,000-student school on its "academic early-warning list," based on scores from a different set of tests.

"I feel a lot of pressure," said Charles E. Mingo, DuSable's principal. But, he added, "you tend to pay attention to those people who pay you. The state is down the line. Vallas is right here."

Though he says he supports high standards, the embattled principal questioned whether his high-poverty school should be compared with others around the state, as if they were all on a level playing field.

"If I'm the poorest school in the nation, then compare me with like schools," Mr. Mingo argued in a recent interview. "Don't compare me with schools that have selective admissions and higher socioeconomic status."

A study last year by the Southern Regional Education Board found that only three of its 15 member states did not have sanctions on the books. But only six of the 15 provided financial rewards either to schools or individual teachers.

"I think the issue of whether or not financial rewards create change in the classroom is a very interesting one," said Ms. Mazzoni, the California lawmaker. "I'm not convinced that they do."

A Shift in the Debate?

Politicians appear more enthusiastic about cracking down on students who fail to perform.

At least 16 states now require students to demonstrate that they have met academic standards in order to graduate or proceed to the next grade.

In 1996, President Clinton joined the chorus of governors and superintendents calling for an end to so-called social promotion. Last summer, Chicago required more than 40,000 students with low test scores—about one in 10 of its total enrollment of 424,000—to attend summer school.

More than 11,000 students were forced to repeat a grade after failing a retest at summer's end, and 15,000 8th graders were assigned to "transition centers" for intensive tutoring.

Other big-city districts, including Boston and Philadelphia, are considering such measures.

Advocates of such approaches argue that educators do students no favors when they promote them without the necessary skills. And they say it's unfair to penalize schools unless students also have