

### Fiscal Estimate - 2019 Session

Original       Updated       Corrected       Supplemental

LRB Number **19-4065/1**      Introduction Number **AB-0459**

**Description**  
 incorporating cursive writing into the state model English language arts standards and requiring cursive writing in elementary grades

**Fiscal Effect**

**State:**

- No State Fiscal Effect
- Indeterminate
  - Increase Existing Appropriations
  - Decrease Existing Appropriations
  - Create New Appropriations
- Increase Existing Revenues
- Decrease Existing Revenues
- Increase Costs - May be possible to absorb within agency's budget
  - Yes       No
- Decrease Costs

**Local:**

- No Local Government Costs
- Indeterminate
- 1.  Increase Costs
  - Permissive  Mandatory
- 2.  Decrease Costs
  - Permissive  Mandatory
- 3.  Increase Revenue
  - Permissive  Mandatory
- 4.  Decrease Revenue
  - Permissive  Mandatory
- 5. Types of Local Government Units Affected
  - Towns       Village       Cities
  - Counties       Others
  - School Districts       WTCS Districts

**Fund Sources Affected**      **Affected Ch. 20 Appropriations**  
 GPR    FED    PRO    PRS    SEG    SEGS

Agency/Prepared By	Authorized Signature	Date
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## Fiscal Estimate Narratives

DPI 3/26/2020

LRB Number	<b>19-4065/1</b>	Introduction Number	<b>AB-0459</b>	Estimate Type	<b>Updated</b>
<b>Description</b> incorporating cursive writing into the state model English language arts standards and requiring cursive writing in elementary grades					

### Assumptions Used in Arriving at Fiscal Estimate

This bill requires the state superintendent of public instruction to incorporate cursive writing into the model academic standards for English language arts. This bill also requires a school board, and the governing board/entity for independent charter schools (ICS) and private schools participating in a parental choice program ("private choice schools"), to include cursive writing in the respective curriculum for the elementary grades. Specifically, each elementary school curriculum must include the objective that pupils be able to write legibly in cursive by the end of fifth grade.

The department has identified potential costs associated with requiring instruction in cursive in schools:

Handwriting without Tears (producer of widely used workbooks for students and teacher's guides) offers disposable (used for one year) cursive materials for \$10 per child.

McGraw Hill offers a cursive writing program that is \$159.51 for a "teacher presentation book".

CursiveLogic offers workbooks (\$34.95 for a Level 1 workbook) and professional learning webinars for educators (\$25.00 per participant).

The prices noted for these vendors' products do not reflect any volume-discount pricing that the vendor makes available to customers. For example, the vendor CursiveLogic provides a discounts of 25%, 40%, and 45%, depending on the number of items purchased. Other vendors may also offer volume discounts, but the department does not have that information.

A per-student cost is estimated at \$10 to \$35, annually; and a per-teacher cost is estimated at \$25 to \$160, annually (does not reflect volume discounts).

In the 2018-19 school year, there were 297,172 students enrolled in grades one through five in Wisconsin public schools (school districts and independent charter schools). Assuming that cursive would be taught through three grade levels (e.g., second through fourth, or third through fifth grade), the number of public school and ICS students impacted, based on 2018-19 enrollments, would have been approximately 177,600 to 182,200 students, respectively. This includes all students enrolled; however, it is possible that some students would not be subject to the cursive writing requirement, for example, by virtue of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a 504 (accommodations) plan. For purposes of this fiscal estimate, the subset of pupils subject to the cursive writing requirement is estimated to be 170,000 annually in public schools (districts and ICS).

Compliance with the requirements in the bill could result in costs of \$1.70 million to \$5.95 million, across public schools (411 school districts and 18 ICS that have grades one through five), annually, for costs of pupil materials.

In 2018-19, there were a total of 20,967 individual teachers teaching elementary school in public schools (DPI staff data collections, for teachers coded as "Elementary – All Subjects"). Assuming that public schools would incur costs for a teacher materials cursive writing curriculum for roughly one-half of this total (10,000 teachers), the estimated cost of compliance with the bill could result in costs of \$250,000 to \$1.6 million (across all public schools), at least in the first year of cursive writing instruction. Costs related to teacher training may not occur on an annual basis.

However, the department does not have information as to the number of public school districts and ICS that

currently teach cursive writing in elementary schools, and thus would not incur any additional costs as a result of the bill. The estimated cost of compliance here represents a projected maximum additional cost if no public schools currently teach cursive writing in elementary grades (and therefore, cost estimate may be overstated). Additionally, vendors may offer volume-discount pricing, which would likely reduce the costs significantly.

The bill also requires a private school participating a parental choice program (Milwaukee, Racine, or Wisconsin) to also include cursive writing in the curriculum for the elementary grades, with the objective that pupils be able to write legibly in cursive by the end of fifth grade. The bill does not restrict the cursive writing instruction to just those pupils participating in a parental choice program; thus, this estimate assumes all students in the applicable grades would receive the cursive writing instruction.

In 2018-19, the total enrollment in private choice schools for grades one through five was 28,311 pupils, with approximately 16,800 pupils enrolled in second through fourth, and 17,100 in third through fifth grade. Assuming most students in a three-grade subset are subject to the cursive writing requirements (17,000 annually), estimated costs of pupil materials would be \$170,000 to \$595,000.

Using a similar student to teacher ratio as for public schools (17 pupils/teacher, thus ~1,000 teachers) to estimate cost associated with materials for teachers, the potential costs could be \$25,000 to \$160,000, at least in the first year. Again, because the department has no data regarding instruction in cursive writing in private choice schools, this estimate is intended to reflect maximum costs of compliance with the bill, if no private choice schools currently teach cursive writing, and absent any volume-discount pricing (and therefore, cost estimate may be overstated).

Local: Increased Costs.

School districts, independent charter schools, and private schools participating in a parental choice program, would incur added costs to add cursive to their sequential curriculum plan. Those cost could include selecting and purchasing a curriculum, purchasing materials (which could be an annual cost for any disposal materials like practice books), and teaching educators to use the curriculum (including training new educators each year).

The projected maximum cost of compliance associated with the bill for public schools (districts and ICS) ranges, from \$1.70 to \$5.95 million annually for purchase of pupil materials, and from \$250,000 to \$1.6 million for teacher training/materials (at least in the first year of instruction). For private choice schools, the projected maximum cost of compliance range from \$170,000 to \$595,000 annually for pupil materials, and from \$25,000 to \$160,000 for teacher training/materials (at least in the first year of instruction). These estimates do not reflect potential volume-discount pricing; actual cost to comply may be significantly lower.

The bill does not provide additional resources to public or private schools to offset the costs incurred to comply with the requirements included in the bill.

State: None.

The department would notify school districts, ICS, and private choice schools of the change in state law and make the appropriate consultant(s) available for questions from districts.

### **Long-Range Fiscal Implications**