

Fiscal Estimate Narratives

DPI 12/5/2019

LRB Number	19-4879/1	Introduction Number	SB-578	Estimate Type	Original
Description assessments to evaluate reading readiness					

Assumptions Used in Arriving at Fiscal Estimate

This bill updates the requirements of the annual reading readiness assessment of all students in four-year-old kindergarten (4K) through second grade.

Under current law, each school board and operator of an independent charter school must annually assess the reading readiness of students in 4K through second grade using an assessment selected by the school board or operator of the independent charter school. The Department of Public Instruction reimburses school boards and operators of independent charter schools the per pupil cost of the selected assessment.

Current law requires that the reading readiness assessment selected by the school district or operator of the independent charter school must evaluate whether a student possesses 1) phonemic awareness and 2) letter sound knowledge.

Under this bill, beginning in the 2020-21 school year, the selected assessment must evaluate whether a student possesses age-appropriate skills in 1) phonological and phonemic awareness, 2) rapid automatized naming, 3) letter-word reading, and 4) picture-naming vocabulary. A voluntary questionnaire about reading difficulties in a student's family history further gauges reading difficulties.

Last year, school districts claimed just over \$1.7 million of the \$2,151,000 annual appropriation for assessments of reading readiness, s. 20.255 (1) (f). This amount was the highest observed since the state started reimbursing school districts for their reading readiness assessment expenses. Reimbursements will be prorated if claimed expenses ever exceed the appropriation. Most reading assessments for 4K to second grade students cost around \$7 per pupil per year.

Local effect: Indeterminate

The fiscal effect on school districts is indeterminate because while assessments have a similar cost, the expanded requirements outlined in this bill may force school districts to administer a different assessment. Such a change would probably need to be accompanied by professional development, which would likely increase costs in (at least) the first year of administering the new assessment. Only some professional development expenses related to reading readiness assessment (e.g., bringing in an expert to provide training on conducting the assessment) are eligible for reimbursement under current law. Salaries and travel expenses to send teachers to training, IT staff salaries, and computer costs have not been reimbursed in the past.

Furthermore, assessments vary in the amount of individual versus simultaneous assessment. Schools typically bring in a substitute or an aide to oversee the class while a teacher is occupied with individual assessment. Switching to an assessment with less one-on-one interaction could free up a teacher's time. Conversely, switching to a solely or predominantly one-on-one assessment could necessitate greater staffing needs. Such costs are indeterminate.

Long-Range Fiscal Implications