



122 W. Washington Avenue, Madison, WI 53703
Phone: 608-257-2622 · Fax: 608-257-8386

John H. Ashley, Executive Director

TO: Members of the Senate Committee on Education
FROM: Dan Rossmiller, Government Relations Director
RE: Testimony on Assembly Bills 195 & 196 relating to the student achievement guarantee in education (SAGE) program.
DATE: May 7, 2015

Mr. Chairman and members, my name is Dan Rossmiller, and I am the government relations director for the Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB). Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Assembly Bills 195 and 196.

The WASB Delegate Assembly meets annually at the state Education Convention to consider resolutions that direct our association's positions on various issues. This year, delegates representing school boards from throughout the state approved Resolution 15-15, which states: "The WASB supports legislation to shift the emphasis of the Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) Program from class-size reduction to achievement-gap reduction." This is our position.

Wisconsin's challenges surrounding achievement gaps between student subgroups have been well documented. Student poverty certainly impacts achievement gaps. Because of the magnitude of this issue, providing funding for achievement gap reduction efforts is appropriate.

We also appreciate that this proposal provides to school boards flexibility in utilizing SAGE/AGR funds. We feel it is important to note that these funds can still be used for class size reduction if a school board wants to continue doing that. In addition to preserving the small class size option, the bill would allow schools the option to use these state funds to implement either of two research-based interventions to help improve student achievement —providing instructional coaches for English language arts and math, or providing one-to-one tutoring.

A school is allowed to choose the option that best fits its needs and then create performance goals for and report on the progress its students in the program are making. School boards will receive valuable information about the efficacy of the approach or approaches selected because the bill requires that a participating school report to its school board at the end of every semester contract regarding both the strategies being implemented and progress toward performance objectives. This provides a level of accountability to the public and lawmakers for the public dollars invested in the program. It is also important to note is that there are no sanctions or penalties attached to these reported results, which will allow districts to experiment with the interventions they think will work best for them.

**Assembly Committee on Education
May 7, 2015**

**Department of Public Instruction Testimony
on 2015 Assembly Bills 195 & 196**

I want to thank Chairman Thiesfeldt and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Jennifer Kammerud and I serve as a Policy Advisor at the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). I am here today to testify in opposition to Assembly Bill 195 (AB 195) and Assembly Bill 196 (AB 196) as these bills raise technical concerns, and more importantly, change the focus of the SAGE program so significantly that it essentially ends a program that is popular among parents, effective, and employed in school districts across Wisconsin, and replaces it with something entirely different.

SAGE was created in 1996-97 as a class size reduction pilot program based on the concentration of low-income students in the school. The program quickly became so popular that the eligibility was expanded through successive legislative sessions and now includes 205 school districts, 423 schools, and over 83,000 students in grades K-3 who benefit from this program. Parents across the state know what SAGE is and support the program.

First, I'd like to address AB 195. AB 195 would extend current SAGE contracts for one year. This is an effort to address the current SAGE contract renewal process where 83 percent¹ of our contracts are up this year for a five year renewal. AB 195 would thus allow any legislative changes enacted in AB 196 to occur in the vast majority of current SAGE schools. The department, however, is concerned about the patchwork system of solutions created if either of these bills pass on their own. Schools need certainty in the contract process which the current five year SAGE contracts provide. Moreover, if AB 195 passes on its own it will not allow us to renew any of these contracts again at the conclusion of the one year extension. This means that 83 percent of schools in the program will no longer be able to participate.

I would like to turn to AB 196. AB 196 seeks to rebrand SAGE to create an achievement gap reduction program. We agree that the achievement gap is a critical need in our state. We have the largest achievement gap in the country between African-American and Caucasian students. Something needs to be done. This is one of the State Superintendent's top priorities. He convened a task force that recommended strategies and best practices to be used in the classroom. He has directed departmental efforts on this and made several proposals in this area, particularly around closing graduation gaps, supporting English learners, and improving workforce outcomes for students with disabilities

Eliminating SAGE, and replacing it with an achievement gap reduction program, will not target

¹ 353/423 schools have contracts that expire at the end of the year.

the achievement gap effectively. The list of schools and districts that constitute our largest achievement gaps are not the same as those who are current participants in the SAGE program. The department would instead recommend keeping SAGE and discussing with us alternative proposals to address the achievement gap. Additionally, AB 196 does not allow new schools to join the new program, regardless of the achievement gap in those buildings. The legacy of the old SAGE program would limit which schools could participate from the outset, while changing the program so substantively that it could impact a school's decision about whether they will participate in programs like this in the future.

The strategies proposed in this bill would allow districts to choose among a number of sound educational strategies. While this additional flexibility can be valuable, it will dilute what the program means to people and make program evaluation extremely difficult from a state perspective. Additionally, the new practices described in the bill, instructional coaching and tutoring, are widely in place in schools, which would limit the bill's impact.

The Senate recently passed an amended version of SB 32, in anticipation of the Assembly concurring with the amended version of the Senate bill; I would like to relay the following concerns that exist within that amendment.

Class Size Requirements

Current SAGE law states "Satisfy the class size limitation by reducing each class size in each school covered by the contract". That means that each class must have a ratio of 18:1 or 30:2.

The language in the amended version Senate Bill 32 states "reduce the class size in one or more classes in one or more participating grades" to the same ratios of 18:1 or 30:2. Depending on how is this implemented, it could mean that if a school has five first grade classes, and reduced the class size to 18:1 in one of those classes, the school would be able to claim SAGE aid for all low-income students in all five first grade classes. Additionally, the language included in the amendment states "in one or more participating grades." This could mean that the school can claim aid for all classrooms in grades K, 2, and 3 if they only reduce class size in one first grade classroom. Additional clarification around the intent of this language would be needed for the department to know how to distribute funds to school districts.

Evaluation

Senate Amendment 1 to Senate Bill 32 makes changes to the annual SAGE evaluation, which raises additional questions and concerns:

- The amendment ends the current evaluation in the 2014–15 school year. Since the data used for evaluation is always a year delayed, the evaluation of the 2014-15 school year will take place in the 2015-16 school year.
- The amendment also requires an evaluation beginning in the 2017–18 school year. This timeframe does not allow for any baseline evaluation, which may make the evaluation beginning in 2017-18 more difficult.

These bills, in concert, lead to a patchwork of programming and efforts that will be difficult to evaluate, undermine stability critical to the success of our schools, and reduce clarity about what the program means.

The department would be happy to work with the legislature to craft a program to address achievement gap reduction, but the department does not believe the popular SAGE program should be eliminated. If you have any questions, we would be happy to answer them at this time.



State of Wisconsin
2015 - 2016 LEGISLATURE

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**ASSEMBLY AMENDMENT 1,
TO ASSEMBLY BILL 196**

May 4, 2015 - Offered by Representative CZAJA.

1 At the locations indicated, amend the bill as follows:

2 **1.** Page 2, line 2: delete the material beginning with “~~The amounts~~” and ending
3 with “sufficient for” on line 3 and substitute “The amounts in the schedule for”.

4 **2.** Page 3, line 4: after that line insert:

5 “**SECTION 2b.** 118.43 (2) (f) of the statutes is created to read:

6 118.43 (2) (f) The department and a school board may agree to extend an
7 achievement guarantee contract entered into or renewed in the 2010–11 school year
8 for one year under existing contract terms.

9 **SECTION 2d.** 118.43 (6) (b) 10. of the statutes is amended to read:

10 118.43 (6) (b) 10. ~~In Beginning in~~ the 2010–11 school year and ~~any subsequent~~
11 ~~school year~~ ending in the 2015–16 school year, \$2,250 multiplied by the number of
12 low-income pupils enrolled in a grade eligible for funding, and in a class in which the
13 class size has been reduced in the manner required under sub. (3) (a), (am), (ar), or

1 (at) or permitted under sub. (3m), in each school in the school district covered by
2 contracts under sub. (3) (at) and (av) and by renewals of contracts under sub. (2) (g).

3 **SECTION 2f.** 118.43 (6) (b) 11. of the statutes is created to read:

4 118.43 (6) (b) 11. For the 2016-17 school year and any subsequent school year,
5 the amount determined under s. 118.44 (6) multiplied by the number of low-income
6 pupils enrolled in a grade eligible for funding, and in a class in which the class size
7 has been reduced in the manner required under sub. (3) (a), (am), (ar), or (at) or
8 permitted under sub. (3m), in each school in the school district covered by renewals
9 of contracts under sub. (2) (g).

10 **SECTION 2m.** 118.43 (7) of the statutes is amended to read:

11 118.43 (7) EVALUATION. Beginning in the 1996-97 school year and ending in the
12 2014-15 school year, the department shall arrange for an evaluation of the program
13 under this section and shall allocate from the appropriation under s. 20.255 (2) (cu)
14 \$250,000 for that purpose.”.

15 **3.** Page 7, line 2: delete “\$250,000” and substitute “\$125,000”.

16 **4.** Page 7, line 3: delete lines 3 to 6 and substitute:

17 “(bm) From the appropriation under s. 20.255 (2) (cu), for each low-income
18 pupil enrolled in a participating grade, the department shall pay to a school district
19 that has entered into a contract with the department under this section an amount
20 determined annually by the department as follows:

21 1. Determine the total number of low-income pupils enrolled in participating
22 grades in all school districts that have entered into a contract with the department
23 under this section and for which the department is required to make a payment
24 under this subsection.

State of Wisconsin
JOINT LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Co-Chairs
MARY LAZICH
Senate President

JOAN BALLWEG
Representative



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL STAFF
Terry C. Anderson
Director

TO: MEMBERS OF THE ASSMEBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
FROM: Terry C. Anderson, Director *TCA*
RE: Hearing on 2015 Assembly Bills 195 and 196
DATE: May 5, 2015

The following recommendations of the Study Committee on the Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) Program have been referred to your committee:

- **2015 Assembly Bill 195**, relating to a one-year extension of student achievement guarantee in education program contracts.
- **2015 Assembly Bill 196**, relating to achievement gap reduction contracts requiring participating schools to implement strategies for improving academic performance of low-income pupils in reading and mathematics, granting rule-making authority, and making an appropriation.

These bills are scheduled to be considered by your committee at its meeting which will be held on **Thursday, May 7, 2015, beginning at 10:01 a.m., in Room 417 North (G.A.R. Room), State Capitol.**

You have already received a copy of the Joint Legislative Council's Report of the Study Committee on the Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) Program, JLCR 2015-01, dated February 18, 2015 (revised May 4, 2015), which describes the bills.

If you have any questions relating to the above report or bills, please feel free to contact Katie Bender-Olson or Jessica Ozalp, Staff Attorneys, at this office.

TCA:ksm

State of Wisconsin
JOINT LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Co-Chairs

MARY LAZICH
Senate President

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Representative



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL STAFF
Terry C. Anderson
Director

TO: MEMBERS OF THE STUDY COMMITTEE ON THE STUDENT
ACHIEVEMENT GUARANTEE IN EDUCATION (SAGE) PROGRAM

FROM: Terry C. Anderson, Director

DATE: May 5, 2015

For your information, a public hearing on the following bills will be held on **Thursday, May 7, 2015, in Room 417 North (the G.A.R. Room), State Capitol, Madison**, by the Assembly Committee on Education. The hearing begins at 10:01 a.m.

- **2015 Assembly Bill 195**, relating to a one-year extension of student achievement guarantee in education program contracts.
- **2015 Assembly Bill 196**, relating to achievement gap reduction contracts requiring participating schools to implement strategies for improving academic performance of low-income pupils in reading and mathematics, granting rule-making authority, and making an appropriation.

Assembly Bills 195 and 196 are companion bills to Senate Bills 31 and 32, meaning they have identical content but were introduced separately in each house of the Legislature. Senate Bills 31 and 32 were introduced in February and received a public hearing in the Senate Committee on Education in March. Assembly Bills 195 and 196 were just recently introduced.

You are welcome and encouraged to attend this hearing and to present testimony on the bills, which were recommended by the Study Committee. However, you should note that the Joint Legislative Council will not be able to reimburse public member expenses for attending a hearing, since it is not a meeting of the Study Committee. Written testimony is also appropriate. It may be sent to Representative Jeremy Thiesfeldt, Assembly Committee on Education, Room 16 West, P.O. Box 8953, State Capitol, Madison, WI 53708.

You have already received a copy of the Joint Legislative Council's Report of the Study Committee on the Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE)

JOINT LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Program, JLCR 2015-01, dated February 18, 2015, which describes the bills. The report was revised on May 4, 2015, and can be accessed on the Study Committee's website at: <http://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/misc/lc/study/2014/1194>.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Katie Bender-Olson or Jessica Ozalp, Staff Attorneys, at this office.

TCA:ksm

MEMBERS OF THE STUDY COMMITTEE ON THE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT QUARTILE IN EDUCATION (SACQ) PROGRAM

FROM: Terry L. Anderson, Director

DATE: May 2, 2015

For your information, a public hearing on the following bills will be held on Thursday, May 7, 2015, in Room 417 North (the G.A.R. Room), State Capitol, Madison, by the Assembly Committee on Education. The hearing begins at 10:00 a.m.

- 2015 Assembly Bill 102, relating to a one-year pilot program in achievement assistance in a selected program district.
- 2015 Assembly Bill 103, relating to achievement gap reduction programs, regular professional growth to improve student performance in reading and mathematics, granting job-making authority, and making an appropriation.

Assembly Bills 102 and 103 are companion bills to Senate Bills 31 and 32, relating to the same subject matter, which were introduced separately in each house of the Legislature. Senate Bills 31 and 32 were introduced in February and received a public hearing in the Senate Committee on Education in March. Assembly Bills 102 and 103 were introduced in the Assembly in March.

For any questions and to attend the hearing, please contact the staff attorneys. If you have any questions, please contact the staff attorneys. However, you should note that the Joint Legislative Council will not be able to convene until the member expires for attending a hearing. It may be held in a public hearing in the Assembly Committee on Education, Room 417 North, State Capitol, Madison, WI 53708.

You have already received a copy of the Joint Legislative Council's Report of the Study Committee on the Student Achievement Quartile in Education (SACQ) Program.

**Assembly Committee on Education
May 7, 2015**

**Department of Public Instruction Testimony
on 2015 Assembly Bills 195 & 196**

I want to thank Chairman Thiesfeldt and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Jennifer Kammerud and I serve as a Policy Advisor at the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). I am here today to testify in opposition to Assembly Bill 195 (AB 195) and Assembly Bill 196 (AB 196) as these bills raise technical concerns, and more importantly, change the focus of the SAGE program so significantly that it essentially ends a program that is popular among parents, effective, and employed in school districts across Wisconsin, and replaces it with something entirely different.

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