



## **School Administrators Alliance**

*Representing the Interests of Wisconsin School Children*

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**TO:** Senate Committee on Education Reform  
**FROM:** John Forester, Director of Government Relations  
**DATE:** April 2, 2015  
**RE:** Senate Bill 59 – UW System Remedial Courses

The School Administrators Alliance (SAA) is testifying for information only on Senate Bill 59, relating to UW System reporting on students taking remedial courses in English and Mathematics.

This bill, if adopted, would require the UW System to submit a report to the legislature by September 1 of each year that identifies the high schools of students who, based on placement test performance in the preceding 12 months, are required to take remedial courses in English or Mathematics. In addition, Senate Substitute Amendment 1 to SB 59 would also require UW System to send the report to the State Superintendent and, in turn, require the State Superintendent to send the report to each school board.

We believe this bill provides a great opportunity for Wisconsin to improve in the area of school district and higher education collaboration and data sharing. But, in order to do so, the bill must be improved and strengthened.

Currently, school districts can send a data file of their graduates to the UW placement exam office and eventually get a report on placement exam results. This is not the primary mission of this office, so there is a time delay in getting the report. I'm not sure how many school districts are aware of and request this report. There are two other limitations of the current report. First, school districts don't receive any individual student data that is actionable and the report is a system-wide report on placement test results, not actual student placements at the various UW campuses.

It is our understanding that the technical colleges send school districts a report on actual placements and include student level data. In addition, a Dane County school administrator shared with me that they receive a data file with individual student information from Madison College. The key here is that districts receive detailed information and Madison College does this with all of its school districts on a regular basis. They even hold workshops to engage school administrators on the topic.

If it is required that the UW System provide the legislature this report by high school, there should also be a requirement that UW System send each school

district an annual report that includes placement exam results, actual course placements, and student level data to support school district continuous improvement efforts. We need to seize this opportunity to provide school districts with better data to analyze what course sequences and other factors contribute to college readiness as opposed to remediation. Otherwise the legislature simply receives a report that presents some schools in a good light and some schools in a bad light without schools receiving useful data to guide improvement efforts.

Mr. Chairman, I have reached out to the author of the bill, but we haven't had an opportunity to discuss our ideas. We would be happy to work with the author and with the Committee on improving the bill. We all agree that making sure all our students who enroll at UW System campuses are ready for the challenge is important. We need better information sharing to help make that happen.

Thank you for your consideration of our views. If you should have any questions regarding the SAA's thoughts on SB 59, please call me at (608) 242-1370.

To: Senate Committee on Education and Government Reform

From: Dee Pettack, Legislative Liaison, DPI

Date: April 2, 2015

**Re: Statement on Senate Bill 59**

The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) offers the following statement for information on Senate Bill 59 (SB 59).

Earning a high school diploma demonstrates that a graduate is ready to be successful in the next steps of life. As such, reducing the need for college remediation and improving readiness of high school students are priorities shared by both DPI and the UW System. Both agencies are currently collaborating to address remediation issues and overall readiness for students who attend any UW System school.

Several years ago DPI overhauled Wisconsin's English Language Arts and Math Standards. Leaders from business, commerce, workforce, and higher education were convened to tell us what they expected from Wisconsin's high school graduates. As a result, Wisconsin's new academic standards for mathematics and English language arts are higher and more rigorous than the previous standards. We heard from faculty at public and private colleges and universities throughout the state who support Wisconsin's higher standards and that their implementation will help to reverse a trend of too many incoming students needing remedial education in mathematics.

The Department has the following concerns with the bill as drafted:

1. The bill does not provide a provision related to non-traditional students who may have exited high school years ago and are now returning to finish their degree.
2. SB 59 requires UW campuses to track high school students and create a report specifically for the legislature. Sharing that report with the schools, school boards, and parents, who may have more information about non-reported factors, opposed to or in addition to sharing it with the legislature, may be useful.
3. It is unclear what methods will be used to delineate between the variance in tests and proficiency scores used to determine math and English remediation at UW System schools and how that will be reflected in the reported data.
4. The proposal is unclear as to the protections it will provide to maintain student privacy under the new reporting requirement.

Senate Substitute Amendment 1, offered by Senator Roth, addresses most of these issues and would improve on the original bill. It does not, however, address item three.

DPI will continue to work with our educational partners around the state on college readiness. We want to make sure that all our students are on the path to success in the next stage of their academic career.