



MICHAEL SCHRAA

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 53RD ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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Assembly Bill 1069

Thank you, Chairman Kitchens and Members of the Assembly Committee on Education for the opportunity to testify in favor of Assembly Bill 1069.

First of all, thank you for your work on 2023 Act 20, which requires educators to be trained in science-based literacy instruction. This will certainly have a significant effect on increasing skills of our students across the state.

This bill is a minor adjustment to Act 20, at the request of our local Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA). As you are aware, CESAs across the state provide resources to local schools, including professional development opportunities. I attend almost all of the CESA 6 meetings. It's a valuable opportunity to stay connected with school officials as well as the work of the CESA.

As it stands, Act 20 requires that kindergarten through third grade educators are trained by an approved program with 5 years of experience in this specific area of professional development.

This bill would make CESAs eligible to provide this training. The bill only requires that the CESA have 2 years' experience in this literacy training. Of course, they would meet the same statutory criteria as current providers.

In closing, I appreciate the painstaking work you did in passing this legislation and hope that this bill will make it even more effective.



Learning Today...
Leading Tomorrow

February 5, 2024

Dear Education Committee Members,

We are contacting you in regards to the implementation of Act 20, specifically the training and financial concerns we have for our district. As the Director of Learning & Business Manager, we are concerned with the training options we currently have for ACT 20. We are asking you to approve CESA 6 to train our staff face to face. Training teachers face to face will be much more effective for our teachers, allowing our teachers to ask questions and participate in dialogue with their peers. The relationship and trust that our teachers have with CESA 6 will also promote success and open-mindedness for our staff. These training sessions would happen during our PD days and not "be another thing" we need to add to our teachers' plates. If these trainings do not get approved, it will cost our district approximately \$82,000 to train the same teachers as CESA 6 would train for us. This cost includes the price per teacher training and the 36 hours that staff would need to do outside of school - as we would not want staff to train on a computer for 8 hours a day during our PD days. Allowing CESA 6 to train our teachers for Act 20 will 1). provide engaging professional development for our staff and 2). save our district tens of thousands of dollars.

Sincerely,

Peg Mischler
Director of Learning

Monika Knapp
Business Manager



February 5, 2024

Dear Education Committee Members:

I am writing on behalf of the Appleton Area School District (AASD) to offer my full support of the proposed amendment which would allow the CESA 6 Teacher Institute to meet the training requirements within ACT 20. Continuing to work with CESA 6 through the implementation of ACT 20 is critical for our district's success in implementing the necessary instructional shifts in early literacy for a number of reasons. First, there are significant financial challenges associated with providing cost-effective professional development necessary to build staff capacity within a large district such as the AASD. Since Title IIa dollars cannot be used for supporting the implementation of a state mandate, districts that are already stretched financially must find the means for building additional professional development into their budgets. **CESA 6 continues to be a leader in providing high-quality professional development at a reasonable cost.**

Secondly, as the AASD started its work in shifting from balanced literacy to science of reading based instruction, a partnership has already been well established for providing our administrators and staff with professional development. Specifically, we have been fortunate to be working with CESA 6 staff members Dianna Kresovic and Sarah Doerr for the past two school years in implementing the action steps established through our ELA program evaluation. Throughout this process, we have continued to receive very positive feedback from both administrators and educators in the professional development that CESA 6 has been providing our district. **Shifting to a new source of professional development outside of CESA 6 at this time would be a significant disruption to the capacity building that has been taking place.**

Knowing the many challenges associated with implementing complex change such as ACT 20, I strongly recommend that the CESA 6 Teacher Institute be approved for meeting the requirement of educator staff development so that districts are put into the best position possible for moving forward with fidelity.

Sincerely,

Steve J. Harrison, Ph.D.

Assistant Superintendent - Assessment, Curriculum & Instruction



All Learners Thriving, Contributing & Belonging

Mark Schwartz
Director Curriculum & Instruction
608-882-3382
schwartzm@evansville.k12.wi.us
www.ecsdnet.org

Dear Education Committee Members,

I am writing to advocate for your support of the Act 20 amendment naming the CESA 6 *Teacher Institute* as meeting the teacher training requirement in the law.

Having been through *Leader Training* at CESA 6, focusing on best instructional practice in the Science of Reading, the literacy leaders in the Evansville Community School District (ECSD) have gained great knowledge in a very collaborative and supportive environment. This has led to great follow up sessions as our literacy leaders have brought back their learnings to all teachers of literacy in the ECSD. Having the opportunity for all teachers of literacy in grades K-5 to be a part of collaborative, interactive and engaging *Teacher Training* would truly set our students and staff up for success with best practices in literacy instruction noted in Act 20.

The manner in which CESA 6 structures their literacy trainings is what sets them apart from other online and less learner-centered trainings. Allowing teachers to obtain new information, process together and ultimately place the focus of putting new learnings into practice is the mindset behind CESA 6's planning for their literacy trainings. This is a much more authentic approach than individual teacher trainings that take place through screens.

Feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns. I would be happy to share my input on the importance of your committee's decision around supporting the CESA 6 *Teacher Institute* in the amendment to Act 20.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Schwartz", written over a light blue background.

Mark Schwartz

Director of Curriculum and Instruction

Evansville Community School District



Date: February 4, 2024

Dear Education Committee Members:

We are writing in support of an amendment, which would allow the Cesa 6 Teacher Institute to meet the teacher training requirement in the law for Act 20. It is critical to our plan that the Cesa 6 Teacher Institute is identified as an approved program. For the past several months our district team has been researching the programs on the approved list and have found that the options would be extremely difficult to implement given the size of our district as well as what we know to be best practice for training and professional development for our staff.

For a large district facing significant financial challenges, these programs include high price tags. With ESSR funding phasing out, we are hard pressed to find the financial resources to cover the components of these trainings, such as individual licenses for online training. Moreover, with some of the programs, the more support the district needs for facilitating the training, the higher the cost. For a district that is trying *not* to reduce personnel and programs, most of the programs on the approved list present large burdens on both time and finances. Cesa 6 has proposed an affordable Teacher Institute that would allow us to complete the training in one year. With CESA 6 providing high-quality training for all staff, our district literacy leadership will be able to focus on learning alongside staff while creating sustainable plans for implementation and adjustments to our practice.

Another challenge is the actual professional development. Based on previous experience, we feel an in-person model where teachers and leaders can learn together, engage in collaborative conversation, and apply learning through the lens of their schools would be most impactful. Cesa 6 has created an affordable model to provide in-person professional learning on a large scale while also being cost effective.

Cesa 6 has long been respected for the professional learning they provide. We have personally attended many offerings and always felt they were of high quality and immediately transferable to our day to day work. That is what teachers need! They must feel that the commitment of time for learning is worthwhile.

As district leaders, and reading specialists, we are in favor of the training that is required in Act 20; however, there must be considerations and flexibility in the options for delivery in order to accommodate all districts. We embrace this opportunity to build the capacity of our teachers through collective study of early literacy skills. With the CESA 6 model, our teachers and leaders will come together to commit to learning and growing our



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efficacy as literacy teachers. It is the commitment to student learning outcome that we seek to grow, rather than simple compliance to a mandate. For that reason, we urge you to consider this amendment, which will help so many districts not only meet the requirements of the law, but allow them to take advantage of this opportunity in a meaningful way.

Sincerely,

Julie Housaman, Chief Academic Officer

Mary L. Hoover, Coordinator of Reading and Social Studies K-5



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3600 52nd St., Kenosha, WI 53144

February 4th, 2024

Dear education committee members,

My name is John Flannery and I have the privilege of serving the Oconomowoc Area School District as the Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning. We are appreciative of your committee's efforts to improve literacy outcomes for students across Wisconsin and continue to align our District's improvement efforts to WI ACT 20.

On behalf of our District's board, administration, and educational staff, I am writing to express our support of CESA 6's Early Literacy Academy as an approved training to meet the requirements outlined in WI ACT 20. In 2021, our District began investing time evaluating the Science of Reading body of research. From that evaluation, we recognized a gap in our explicit teaching of phonological awareness and phonics. As we studied evidenced-based professional development models for our teachers, we entered into a partnership with CESA 6 in the fall of 2022 to train our administrators, literacy coaches, and a group of teacher leaders in essential practices outlined in the science of reading research: Those strategies include, but are not limited to:

- Phonological Awareness, Explicit Phonics Instruction, Orthographic Mapping, Decoding and Encoding, & The Alphabetic Principle

Following the 2022-2023 leadership training, we felt strongly that all educators in our system would benefit from this learning. We decided to extend our contract with CESA 6. All primary teachers, special educators, literacy paraprofessionals, and speech/language pathologists have participated in this multi-day training, beginning in early June and continuing through this school year. I can speak for our principals when I explain to this committee that we have not had a more impactful series of professional development in my ten-year tenure in this role.

CESA 6's multi-day training provides the very best of what professional development in the science of reading should look like. Sessions are established to bring educators into the key elements of foundational literacy as outlined in WI ACT 20, but also extend that learning to the construction of classroom look-fors. These strategy look-fors ensure that teachers and administrators develop classroom routines aligned to the learning. We all know that in order for professional development to have an impact, the learning needs to be applied immediately. CESA 6's academy not only ensures teacher practices in areas outlined in WI ACT 20 are prominent, their training embeds the follow-through necessary to experience systems-change.

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Nondiscrimination: The Oconomowoc Area School District provides assurance that no student is discriminated against because of the student's sex, race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, creed, pregnancy, marital or parental status, sexual orientation, or physical, mental, emotional, or learning disability.

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As mentioned previously, Oconomowoc supports the focus on foundational skills instruction outlined in WI ACT 20. Our challenge centered on the timing of the approved bill in relation to our professional development needs. As outlined above, we felt we'd be doing our students a disservice if we waited any longer to improve foundational skills instruction across our system. As we now study the professional development requirements in Section 27 of WI ACT 20, we feel very strongly that the CESA 6 Early Literacy Academy meets or exceeds all requirements. If the CESA 6 model is not approved, Oconomowoc will be forced to choose another online-based training to meet the requirements. That will cost precious resources, yet will only mirror the evidence-based learning we've already conducted within our system.

We strongly urge this committee to approve the CESA 6 Early Literacy Academy as a WI ACT 20 training model.

Respectfully,



John Flannery
Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning

Declaracion de Traducccion: Estamos trabajando diligentemente para traducir nuestros documentos al español. Por favor comuníquese con la escuela de su hijo para aclaración. Si todavía necesitas aclaración, por favor comuníquese con Translate@oasd.org.

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"Inspiring learners, engaging community, enriching the world."

February 5, 2024

Dear Education Committee Members:

This letter is being written to ask you to support the ACT 20 amendment that would allow for the Cesa 6 Teacher Institute to meet the teacher training requirement in the law.

CESA 6 has proven to be an invaluable resource as the Ripon Area School District makes its shift to science aligned literacy instruction. What began as a curriculum audit to review instructional practices and resources has evolved into a partnership of learning about the research and best practices of literacy development and the science of reading. We have benefited immensely from the various literacy academies that our CESA 6 partners have provided over the past couple of years. The combination of in-person learning and coaching support has given us the tools we need to provide professional learning to our elementary staff around literacy and the alignment to the science of reading. CESA's personalized and ongoing support to ensure practice changes are being implemented has been vital to our leadership team.

We have already invested in CESA 6 for the leadership training component of ACT 20 through the Early Literacy K-3 Academy. This has been an impactful and highly cost-effective way to build our leadership capacity to guide our staff through the various shifts in early literacy. We are continuing our learning at the intermediate level by participating in the Intermediate Literacy 3-5 Academy as well the Structured Literacy Intervention Academy.

As we plan for the required teacher training as outlined in ACT 20, we urge you to accept that the CESA 6 Teacher Institute be added as a viable option for in-person training of our staff. The Ripon Area School District has already benefited from the personal connections and cost-effective model that the CESA 6 Literacy Center has provided. This trusted partnership provides districts like ours the greatest leverage for literacy success. Thank you for your consideration.

Your Partner in Education,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Christine Damm".

Christine Damm
Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
dammc@ripon.k12.wi.us

February 5, 2024

Dear members of the Wisconsin State Education Committee,

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Kristi Brooks, Assistant Superintendent for the Slinger School District, and I am writing to express my concern and request your support for the critical matter of providing districts in Wisconsin with the ability to coordinate ACT 20 Reading Training for their teachers through CESA 6.

As you are undoubtedly aware, effective teacher training is paramount to the success of our education system. The ability to enhance educators' skills, particularly in the realm of reading instruction, is crucial for the overall academic development of our students. Therefore, I urge your committee to consider the following reasons for enabling districts to avail themselves of ACT 20 Reading Training through CESA 6:

Cost Efficiency and Responsible Tax Spending: Coordinating training through CESA 6 provides a cost-effective solution for districts. By leveraging existing resources and infrastructure, we can ensure responsible tax spending, maximizing the impact of allocated funds on teacher development. Please note: The alternative training options named in ACT 20 will cost our school district over \$100,000 more than working directly with CESA-6 due to the number of teachers needing this training in our district.

Flexibility within Contracted Hours: Districts need the flexibility to integrate professional development opportunities into teachers' contracted hours, and if we cannot accomplish this, providing additional stipends will only increase the cost to implement the unfunded, mandated training. By working with CESA 6, districts can design training schedules that align with teachers' existing commitments, fostering a more productive, positive, and efficient learning environment.

On-Site and In-Person Training Options: Recognizing the diverse needs of districts, it is imperative to provide options for on-site and in-person training. This ensures that teachers have access to hands-on, interactive learning experiences that may not be as effectively delivered through virtual or asynchronous methods.

Ensuring Quality and Personalized Learning: In-person training facilitates real-time interaction, personalized feedback, and collaborative learning experiences. These aspects are essential for teachers to grasp the nuances of ACT 20 Reading Training and implement effective strategies in their classrooms.

I sincerely believe that by supporting the coordination of ACT 20 Reading Training through CESA 6, we can make a substantial impact on the professional development of our teachers and, consequently, the academic success of our students. I kindly request your advocacy and support for this important initiative.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and dedication to the improvement of our education system in Wisconsin. I am hopeful that, together, we can make a positive difference in the lives of our students.

Sincerely,



Kristi Brooks

Assistant Superintendent, Slinger School District

WAUPUN AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Education Service Center 950 Wilcox Street Waupun, WI 53963
Phone: (920) 324.9341 Fax: (920) 324.2630 www.waupun.k12.wi.us



February 4, 2024

Dear Education Committee Members:

This letter is a testimony to bring your attention to the importance of allowing CESA 6 Literacy Center the opportunity to train our Wisconsin teachers in the Science of Reading to help improve reading education in our state. As an advocate for strong literacy instruction, I am reaching out to request your support for an amendment to Act 20 Wisconsin Reading Law.

I would like to draw your attention to the outstanding work and invaluable contributions made by the CESA 6 Literacy Center. This institution has demonstrated exceptional knowledge and unwavering commitment to providing science of reading training, making them the ideal partner for enhancing the literacy capabilities of educators in our districts.

The Waupun Area School District has experienced firsthand the positive impact of the CESA 6 Literacy Center's expertise in the science of reading. A small team of administrators, instructional coaches and teachers participated in the comprehensive two-year training program offered by the center. We benefited from face-to-face science of reading training along with on-site coaching based on our district's needs. The immediate face-to-face training and on-site coaching provided by the CESA 6 Literacy Center has proven to be instrumental in the successful implementation of evidence-based reading practices. Their personalized coaching, aligned with the practices of the science of reading, has enabled our educators to bridge the gap between theory and practice, fostering a deeper understanding of the science of reading within our district.

This training has played a pivotal role in empowering our educators to align our curriculum with the science of reading principles and has placed us in a great position that already aligns with Act 20. Our students are benefiting from this training and we have seen tremendous growth already this year. I am confident that after all our teachers receive the training next year, more of our students will be positively impacted because our teachers will have a strong capacity to implement the principles of the science of reading.

In light of these accomplishments, I kindly request that you consider an amendment to Act 20 of the Wisconsin Reading Law, specifically recognizing and authorizing the CESA 6 Literacy Center to provide necessary reading training to Wisconsin school districts. This amendment would formalize their role as a key partner in building the capacity of teachers across the state to deliver high-quality reading instruction.

I am confident that such an amendment would not only strengthen our commitment to evidence-based reading practices but also contribute to the overall improvement of literacy outcomes for the students in Wisconsin.

Thank you for your time and consideration of the urgent and important matter. I am more than willing to provide any additional information or answer any questions you may have regarding the proposed amendment.

Your partner in education,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tara Jaeger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tara" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Jaeger".

Tara Jaeger

Director of Teaching and Learning
Waupun Area School District

tjaeger@waupun.k12.wi.us

920-324-9341



SHEBOYGAN AREA

SCHOOL DISTRICT

February 6, 2024

Dear Education Committee Members,

Our CESA's play a significant role in the school district improvement process, especially in our K-5 literacy model, including:

- Regional networking opportunities with other districts
- Access to conferences featuring national experts in the Science of Reading
- In-person training with CESA specialists and educators from other districts
- Virtual options that provide personnel collaborative opportunities with other districts.

These opportunities allow our district to provide professional development targeted to individual needs as well as professional development focused on district initiatives.

This school year, the Sheboygan Area School District participated in the Impactful Early Literacy Practices Academy through CESA 6. This professional development included our elementary principals and their building leadership teams and allowed the leadership teams to design targeted professional development for their colleagues in their building. The cornerstone of the academy is a focus on high leverage instructional practices as a means to initiate whole scale change.

Looking forward, we will need to provide professional development for up to 200 classroom, special education and multilingual learner teachers in the science of reading to meet the requirements of Act 20. As a result, we have switched our district professional development model from a weekly, two-hour early release to one full professional development day a month. The in-person training option offered by the Impactful Early Literacy Academy will allow us to maximize that time by delivering professional development on the designated days and not requiring additional hours outside of teacher contracted time.

Our experience with the Academy has been overwhelmingly positive. The training is grounded in relevant research while offering practical tools for applying the learning in the classroom. Our principal's participation in the academy qualifies as meeting the requirements of Act 20 for leaders. This will allow teams of principals and educators that have already met the requirements of the act through other training to focus on opportunities to support and implement the high leverage practices teachers will learn in the academy.

Department of Student and Instructional Services

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www.sheboygan.k12.wi.us



SHEBOYGAN AREA

There are a number of advantages to choosing the CESA's as the provider of professional development. First, we will be able to have all teachers trained in the science of reading in conjunction with the adoption of a new instructional resource recommended by the Early Literacy Council. Second, our educators will be able to receive high quality training that translates directly to their classroom instruction. Finally, we will be able to utilize this cost savings from the in-person training to support implementation and sustainability of this initiative.

Sincerely,

James Renzelmann
Sheboygan Area School District
Coordinator of Student and Instructional Services

Department of Student and Instructional Services

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February 7, 2024

To: Members of the Assembly Committee on Education

From: Faith M. VanderHorst, Executive Director, Southeastern Wisconsin Schools Alliance (SWSA)

Re: AB1069- relating to Mandatory Early Literacy professional development

Chairman Kitchens and Members of the Assembly Education Committee,

Thank you for holding a hearing today on AB1069. My name is Faith VanderHorst. I am the Executive Director for the Southeastern Wisconsin Schools Alliance (SWSA). The **Southeastern Wisconsin Schools Alliance (SWSA)** provides school leaders with objective, non-partisan information and training they need to be strong advocates for educational excellence. SWSA serves 27 urban and suburban public school districts with a combined enrollment of more than 200,000 students (approximately 25% of Wisconsin's public school students).

We appreciate the work and collaboration it took to enact 2023 ACT 20. And, we are grateful for the State funding the screener. I am here today to respectfully request an amendment to AB1069 to provide for a longer runway for implementation of Act 20. This will allow districts time to install the screener and train staff. It will also provide districts adequate time to upload all data into the screener software and ensure accuracy. (Several of our members have indicated that this process could take up to a month.) It will allow districts to implement the statewide universal screener with fidelity and accuracy and provide a strong foundation for a positive impact on literacy outcomes for every child. We request an extension at this time as the following screener procurement timeline has been shared, by DPI, with SWSA, WiRSA, and WASB:

- February 5, 2024: RFB clears internal process at DPI, submitted to DOA for RFB process
- February, 2024: RFBs solicited from vendors, 90-day window begins for submission
- May, 2024: Vendor recommended to DPI for approval, DPI negotiates contract with vendor
- July, 2024: Vendor contract approved- DPI acquisition and distribution work can begin
- August 2024: Vendor materials available for training-professional development can begin for schools

We ask that the technical amendment strike the first screening cycle (45 days after the start of the school year) and allow all districts to begin use of the screener mid-year (approximately January/ February 2025). This provides districts the opportunity to establish a mid year baseline for each student and then follow up with the screener 45 days prior to the end of the school year.

Thank you so much for extending us the courtesy to request this extension during the Assembly Education Hearing on February 1. We recognize it was a bit unorthodox to request the extension to AB1017. We do feel however that the amendment is appropriate for AB1069 because AB1069 addresses ACT 20 training and implementation. In support of this request I have included another copy of the letter written by SWSA, SAA, WASB and WiRSA, representing all districts and school boards in Wisconsin. The desire to implement the new screener with fidelity and accuracy is so critical to our districts that we felt a joint letter was necessary.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to share our request with you. We do appreciate your deep concern for Literacy, the funding provided for the screener and pro rata funding for the new curriculum. We respectfully request adding an amendment to AB1069 to strike the first screening cycle and allow all districts to begin use of the screener mid-year (January 2025). This will give districts the opportunity to establish a mid year baseline for each student and then follow up with the screener 45 days prior to the end of the school year.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

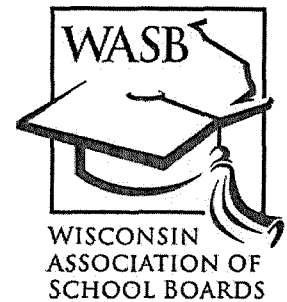
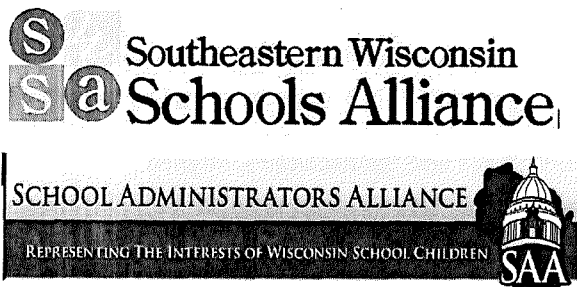
If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Faith M. VanderHorst". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Faith" being the most prominent.

Faith M. VanderHorst
SWSA Executive Director
262-853-8838
swsaexecdirector4@gmail.com

www.schoolsalliance.com



January 26, 2024

Honorable Dr. Jill Underly
State Superintendent of Public Instruction
P.O. Box 7841
Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7841

Dear Dr. Underly,

We write to you today after hearing from many of our members. Together we, SWSA (Southeastern Wisconsin Schools Alliance), SAA (School Administrators Alliance), WASB (Wisconsin Association of School Boards) and WRSAA (Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance) represent the interests of all 421 public school districts in Wisconsin.

As a collective group of public education leaders we understand the importance of 2023 Act 20, and the importance of ensuring that all students, across the state of Wisconsin, are reading at grade level by the time they reach third grade. Act 20 provides a clear definition of the components of strong, evidence-based reading instruction. The work all school districts in the state will be engaging in over the course of the next several years, as the result of ACT 20, has the potential to result in deep, lasting transformational change in every school district which will positively impact literacy outcomes for every child.

There is, however, a deep concern with the specified timelines in the law and what can be realistically implemented in schools and districts. There is a significant need to introduce a trailer bill to adjust the implementation timelines of the requirements of Act 20. Without this trailer bill, school districts across the state will be scrambling to comply with the unrealistic timelines currently outlined, which will result in surface-level implementation, wasting precious resources of time, talent, and budget money, and limit the opportunities for critically important training and professional learning around evidence-based literacy instruction.

By December 1, 2023, the Literacy Council was to provide a list of recommended early literacy curricula to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. It is currently January 22, 2024 and the Literacy Council is still reviewing the submitted curricula. It is likely that the Council will not have this work completed until after the first of February, at which time they will submit their list to the Department. This timeline puts school districts in a difficult position. The delay of recommended curricula provides school districts with very little time to vet and pilot curriculum resources off of the recommended list for potential adoption for the 2024-25 school year. Many school districts are waiting to see if their current literacy resources will be on the recommended list or not and that list will then guide and inform their next steps with an early literacy curriculum. While the work of the Literacy Council is behind schedule, we are not advocating for them to rush through the process. The reviewing of primary curriculum resources is a critically important first step and needs to be completed in a thorough and vigilant manner. It would make sense for a trailer bill to identify a realistic and practical timeline to ensure all submitted curriculum materials have been thoroughly vetted to guarantee alignment with the state's definition of evidence-based early literacy instruction.

Secondly, school districts are significantly concerned about the timeline regarding the statewide universal early literacy screener. The law states that all school districts must utilize the statewide literacy screener beginning with the 2024-25 school year. Currently, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction is working on finalizing the Request for Bid for the statewide literacy screener and putting it out for bid. When information regarding the statewide screener was initially shared with districts, it was shared that districts would know what the screener would be by March of 2024. Over the last few weeks, districts have now been informed that August of 2024 is a more realistic timeline. To expect school districts across the state to set-up and integrate a new screening tool within their existing technology, ensure that it works efficiently and effectively, provide training and professional learning for their administrators and professional educators, as well as successfully launch a new school year is completely unrealistic. By this time in the current school year, the vast majority of school districts have already solidified their plans for 2024-25 initiatives and the necessary, aligned professional learning. Adding the implementation of a universal screener and the associated training and professional learning in August with no ability for districts to plan and adjust prior to that date puts meaningful implementation of Act 20 in jeopardy across the state.

Due to the fact that school districts are already required to have a universal screening tool for literacy, and they likely also use that tool for screening in mathematics as well, an August announcement date for the statewide screener does not provide school districts the opportunity to break their contracts with their current providers for the 2024-25 school year. This reality will not only result in a duplication of efforts as districts will potentially have two screening tools for 2024-25, but it is also a significant waste of time, money, and human resources as it doesn't provide the time or the ability to shift those resources to other key initiatives in the district.

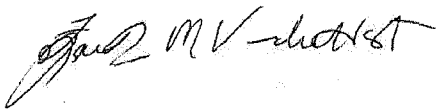
Finally, research indicates that the most influential school-based factor on student success is the professional educator in the classroom. The current timeline for implementation and the reality of when teachers will have the tools they need for the implementation of Act 20 will not only put them at a disadvantage to start the 2024-25 school year, but it will also create a situation where teachers will see this as "one more thing to do" with little additional resources and support. Successful implementation of Act 20 in school districts across the state requires teacher ownership in improving student literacy outcomes and this can only be accomplished by supporting their learning, providing time to collaborate with their peers, and to ask meaningful questions. Due to the significant impact teachers have on their students, the mindset of teachers has to be at the forefront of all we do. Without a reasonable implementation timeline for Act 20, we run the risk of it negatively impacting school culture and teacher morale to start the new school year. The mindset of our professional educators has to be the number one priority if we desire positive outcomes for students.

Our request is simple trailer legislation to require districts, during the 2024-25 school year, to begin to transition away from their current screener to the statewide required screener, with the expectation of full implementation of the statewide screener to begin the 2025-26 school year. This is a timeline that positions school districts to purposefully and confidently implement the requirements of 2023 Act 20.

We appreciate the work and collaboration it took to enact 2023 ACT 20. And, we are grateful for the State funding the screener. We respectfully request that a trailer Bill be enacted to extend the implementation time for 2023 ACT 20 to September 2025. This will allow districts time to acquire and train staff on the new screener. It will also allow districts to pilot and acquire new curriculum after the late spring 2024 Curriculum List announcement.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



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cc: The Honorable Governor Tony Evers
The Honorable Senator Duey Stroebel
The Honorable Representative Joel Kitchens
The Honorable Senator John Jagler

End of January 26, 2024 letter



February 7, 2024

Assembly Committee on Education

**Department of Public Instruction Testimony
2023 Assembly Bill 1069**

Thank you, Chairman Kitchens and members of the committee, for the opportunity to testify in support of Assembly Bill 1069 (AB 1069) and request an additional change be added to this proposal that delays the first administration of the universal screener required under 2023 Act 20.

The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) appreciates the partnership of members of this committee in our shared efforts to improve early reading for Wisconsin students. As we progress through implementation of 2023 Act 20, there are two main issues we are asking the legislature to address: additional opportunities for educators to gain high-quality training in science-based early reading, and additional time to adapt to the universal screening requirement.

2023 Act 20 requires all teachers and principals serving children in grades kindergarten through third grade, as well as all reading specialists, to receive professional development aligned with science-based early reading. The act further defines who can provide the training, replicating language found in Motion 57 as passed by the Joint Finance Committee (JFC). SB 1069 allows Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESAs) with at least two years of experience providing training in science-based early reading (as defined in 118.015 (1c) (b)) to be included in the entities qualified to provide training to teachers, principals, and reading specialists.

DPI believes this change is consistent with the intent of the policymakers and stakeholders who advocated for 2023 Act 20. As schools have worked to bring staff into compliance and states around the country pass similar legislation, opportunities to find training have become scarce. CESAs have worked to bring on staff who are trained in science-based reading and have dedicated resources to having existing staff trained to support this need. Legislators previously provided federal funding to CESAs through Motion 57 to build the capacity of CESAs to provide science-based early literacy training. Many of our CESAs have done so and have already provided such training to hundreds of Wisconsin educators and administrators. We ask that legislators honor the work that has already occurred to position those CESAs that accepted the Motion 57 funds and provided accredited training. The department anticipates that a handful of CESAs will meet this requirement and add to the options districts can leverage to comply with the law.

Additionally, DPI is asking the committee to consider an amendment to SB 1069 that would remove the first screening date (as specified in 118.016(3)(a)1.) for the 2024-25 school year to allow schools time to prepare for the change required by 2023 Act 20. Moving to a universal screener will provide great benefit to Wisconsin learners. It will also require a change for many of our districts. Currently, districts are allowed to select their own early literacy screeners and are only required to administer the screener once a year. The department anticipates meeting its legal deadline to select the universal screener by July 1, 2024.

Given contract timing, training on the reading screener would not be able to occur until August. Schools will also be working to implement science-based early literacy instruction and new reading intervention systems and structures at the same time. DPI wants to ensure that the first administration of the screener is successful. Successful administration requires educators and schools to have adequate time for training. We believe that giving districts additional time to train staff on the use of the screener and on how to use the screener to create personal reading plans, will amount to better service and support for our learners. That is the goal we all share.

If you have questions or want additional information, please contact Kevyn Radcliffe, Legislative Liaison, at kevyn.radcliffe@dpi.wi.gov or (608) 264-6716.

**SB 990, Motion 57, and Approved ACT 20 teacher training options:
The case for CESA 9 and Academy of Foundational Literacy/ Excellence in Teaching
Reading Teacher 316 program**

CESA 9 can offer these high-quality professional learning opportunities due to the training and expertise of our lead facilitator and Reading Specialist, Amy McGovern. In 2020, Amy was explicitly hired to build more offerings directly tied to the science of reading in response to the requests of our districts. Amy has a master's degree in reading, is LETRS-trained, and is a LETRS local facilitator. She also has over 25 years of experience with direct instruction programs and instructional techniques.

The CESA 9 Academy of Foundational Literacy was identified and supported through Motion 57c with a \$75,000 grant. The 5-day training encompasses evidence-based practice in literacy instruction based on the science of reading, including the following:

- Oral language
- Language comprehension/Interactive Read Alouds
- Vocabulary
- Background knowledge
- Phonological and Phonemic Awareness
- Phonics and Spelling
- Advanced Word Study and Morphology
- Fluency
- Reading comprehension
- Literacy Assessment

CESA 9 has positively impacted 19 of our 22 school districts through the Academy of Foundational Literacy and Excellence in Teaching's Reading Teacher 316 program(DPI approved, and accredited). Many of the teachers who attend the academy also continue to receive ongoing support in their districts through coaching, custom learning experiences, and within professional learning communities.

Since the state has already identified CESA 9 as a leader in evidence-aligned reading instruction, we are asking for consideration to be included as a viable option on the list of approved vendors for districts to choose as part of ACT 20's professional learning requirements in our region. The SB 990 bill would allow this to happen.

CESA 9's Reading Teacher 316 program is a logical extension for us. The 5-day Academy of Foundational Literacy meets the basic criterion and prepares teachers with the basic readiness knowledge to engage in the 18-month 316 program that includes expanded content and a practicum to deepen and extend a teacher's skill set. The Academy content is included and expanded upon in our DPI-approved 316 program.

Thank you for your consideration,
Sincerely,
Amy McGovern

Testimony on behalf of CESA 9's Foundational of Academy Literacy, Approved by Motion 57 as a viable option for teacher training as required by ACT 20

And the significantly more in-depth Reading Teacher 316 program offered through CESA 9, designed and instructed by Amy McGovern:

Dr. Cari Guden
District Administrator
School District of Edgar

The CESA 9/ Excellence in Teaching Reading 316 licensure program is a crucial initiative, offering a Reading Teacher 316 license tailored for existing Wisconsin educators. Grounded in the science of literacy acquisition, the research-informed content and practices enhance teachers' expertise, enabling them to adeptly address diverse literacy needs and contribute significantly to the educational landscape. Supporting this program is an investment in elevating the proficiency and impact of Wisconsin educators in fostering effective reading instruction. Furthermore, supporting the Reading Teacher 316 Certification Program equips our educators with the latest research-backed methodologies to effectively address diverse reading needs among students, ultimately fostering stronger literacy outcomes across the state.

We advocate for this program to fulfill the ACT 20 teacher training requirement. Our commitment to excellence in education is evident, and incorporating this program would undoubtedly elevate the professional development standards for educators. By recognizing the value and efficacy of this training, we can ensure that teachers receive comprehensive support and resources to excel in their roles, ultimately benefiting both students and the education system as a whole.

From:
Melissa Gehrke
District Reading Specialist, Merrill WI

It is inspiring to witness the positive impact the Academy of Foundational Literacy has had on your K-3 teachers' foundational knowledge and practice skills. The transformation is apparent not only in the engaging conversations within Professional Learning Communities, but also in the enhanced educational experience for students in the classroom and in collaborative efforts across grade levels. It is evident that this academy is making a difference in empowering teachers to be highly impactful in teaching reading.

The information gleaned from the Academy of Reading played an integral part in how many of our teachers planned their instruction and added in essential phonological awareness pieces for our students. We have noticed the difference in many of our students. The basis of what was learned has spurred more teachers to do their own research and look into more Science of Reading activities, curriculum, and professional development. All of the teachers that were fortunate enough to attend the Academy would recommend it to anyone.

Tara Abel
Title-One Reading Specialist
District Assessment Coordinator

The CESA 316 Academy has allowed teachers to have a local, personalized educational experience surrounding instructional practices based upon the Science of Reading. Utilizing the expertise of the CESA professional staff, teachers will not only receive high quality training throughout their academy experience, but will also have opportunities to attend ongoing professional development within their CESA that are aligned to the Academy standards
Amy Johnson, Reading Specialist, Three Lakes School District