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## WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

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### MEETING MINUTES

### STUDY COMMITTEE ON IDENTIFICATION AND MANAGEMENT OF DYSLEXIA

Room 411 South  
State Capitol  
Madison, WI

July 9, 2018  
10:30 a.m. – 4:45 p.m.

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#### Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Kulp called the meeting to order. A quorum was present.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Bob Kulp; Vice Chair Patty Schachtner; Reps. Mike Rohrkaste and Amanda Stuck; Sen. Tom Tiffany; and Public Members Nancy Dressel, Steven Dykstra, Donna Hejtmanek, Ann Malone, Brenda Warren, and Michael Weber.

COUNCIL STAFF PRESENT: Terry C. Anderson, Director; Jessica Karls-Ruplinger, Deputy Director; Rachel Letzing, Principal Attorney; Jessica Ozalp, Senior Staff Attorney; Julia Norsetter, Staff Attorney; and Tracey Young, Senior Administrative Assistant.

APPEARANCES: Terry C. Anderson, Director, Legislative Council Staff; Representative Robert Brooks, Co-Chair, Joint Legislative Council; Dr. Julie Gocey, Pediatrician, UW School of Medicine and Public Health, and Dr. Daniel Gustafson, Clinical Neuro-Psychologist, SSM Health Care; Kurt Eley, Director of Student Services, Waunakee Community School District; Debra Zarling, Literacy Coordinator, Oshkosh Area School District; and Mark Seidenberg, Vilas Research Professor and Donald O. Hebb Professor, Department of Psychology, UW-Madison.

## **Opening Remarks by the Joint Legislative Council**

**Terry C. Anderson, Director, Legislative Council Staff; Representative Robert Brooks, Co-Chair, Joint Legislative Council**

Director Anderson and Representative Brooks welcomed committee members and thanked them for their service on the Study Committee. Director Anderson commented on the Legislative Council Study Committee process and identified Legislative Council staff members available to assist members through the study committee process. Representative Brooks discussed the input he had received regarding the study committee and emphasized its important role in education.

## **Introduction by Committee Members**

Following the opening remarks, Chair Kulp introduced himself and allowed all members to do the same. Chair Kulp discussed the scope of the study committee and expressed his gratitude and interest in serving on a study committee tasked with such an important subject.

## **Presentation by Legislative Council Committee Staff**

Jessica Ozalp, Senior Staff Attorney, presented information relating to Wisconsin laws that address reading difficulties, including legislation that modified literacy screening requirements. Ms. Ozalp also discussed current state law on reading interventions and special education laws. Julia Norsetter, Staff Attorney, discussed laws relating to education and dyslexia in other states. Ms. Norsetter discussed the varying prescriptiveness of other states' legislation.

## **Presentations by Invited Speakers**

**Dr. Julie Gocey, Pediatrician, UW School of Medicine and Public Health; and Dr. Daniel Gustafson, Clinical Neuro-Psychologist, SSM Health Care**

Dr. Gocey and Dr. Gustafson presented the committee with statistics regarding Wisconsin students' performance on national reading examinations and discussed the problems that can ensue throughout a child's life when the child struggles with reading. The presenters then discussed how research relating to components of effective reading instruction can best inform curriculum for teaching all students to read, including struggling readers and students with dyslexia. The presenters emphasized the importance of screening tests for early identification of dyslexia, explaining that the earlier interventions are used, the more effective they are on a child's ability to read. The presenters also discussed examples of evidence-based instruction and interventions that could be implemented in schools.

Dr. Gocey and Dr. Gustafson advised the committee that educators should use evidence-based interventions to implement in schools, to ensure screening results in effective remediation of reading difficulties. The presenters also suggested that educators may benefit from continuing education requirements to ensure they are continually trained on proper intervention methods. In addition, the presenters suggested that school district reports could contain percentiles when reporting on reading scores, since percentiles may be easier for parents to comprehend than current reporting methods.

**Kurt Eley, Director of Student Services, Waunakee Community School District**

Mr. Eley discussed the current processes for identifying students with reading difficulty and students needing special education services. He also discussed challenges for school districts in implementing reading interventions, including time for interventions, professional development, financial limitations, and staffing positions. Mr. Eley shared with committee members the intervention model used in the Waunakee Community School District, which includes a formal document with a reading plan specifying different interventions based on the degree to which a child is struggling with reading. He then shared data on the district's monitoring of improvements in reading assessment scores.

Mr. Eley stressed the importance of identifying children in need of services earlier, before they experience levels of frustration that can cause disengagement. He recommended improving coordination between medical practitioners and school administrators when a learning disability diagnosis is being made. In addition, he explained that teacher training and ongoing professional development is crucial for successfully implementing interventions and for evaluating the relative effectiveness of the interventions.

**Debra Zarling, Literacy Coordinator, Oshkosh Area School District**

Ms. Zarling provided an overview of research on reading theories, including the 1997 National Reading Panel Report and the 2008 report on Developing Early Literacy by the National Early Literacy Panel. She discussed the importance of teacher expertise as the key component of effective reading instruction, rather than one prescriptive approach or program for building reading comprehension and literacy attainment. Ms. Zarling advised the committee that teachers utilize their experience to meet individual students' unique and complex needs, including learning disabilities such as dyslexia. She described the Reading Recovery program, the RTI (Response to Interventions) model, and the remedial reading intervention requirements in the school district standards law, known as "Standard C." [s. 121.02 (1) (c), Stats.]

Ms. Zarling outlined ways in which limited funding impedes schools' ability to fully meet existing requirements such as Standard C. She described difficult decisions schools make on how to meet competing student needs given constraints of staffing and time available. She encouraged the allocation of funds to train and hire more reading specialists and to provide ongoing professional development for educators. She described the impact of current state law requirements and cautioned against adding new mandates without providing additional resources to implement them.

**Mark Seidenberg, Vilas Research Professor, Department of Psychology, UW-Madison**

Professor Seidenberg discussed his research on the acquisition of reading skills and the neurological causes of reading difficulties in young children. He provided information regarding disagreements among scientists and educators as to effective reading instruction practices. He explained the importance of early identification of children who need reading interventions, and stressed that multiple factors such as lack of socioeconomic resources can cause or exacerbate reading struggles. He encouraged the use of screening assessments that identify a broader scope of difficulties so more children will get reading interventions, since over-identification is not harmful while under-identification can be. Professor Seidenberg

described dyslexia as a biologically based condition that develops over time, with a continuum of severity. He advised that exposing children to more spoken language in their early pre-school years can help address such conditions before they develop into reading difficulties.

Professor Seidenberg advised the committee to ensure teachers have access to training on updated information regarding the nature of dyslexia and its identification. He emphasized that teacher training on developmental theory is crucial for successfully implementing interventions, offering Mississippi as a positive example of a state dyslexia program.

### **Plans for Future Meetings**

The committee plans to next meet on **Wednesday, August 29, 2018, at 10:00 a.m., Room 411 South, State Capitol**. The chair encouraged committee members to begin considering legislative options before the August 29 meeting.

### **Other Business**

There was no other business brought before the committee.

### **Adjournment**

The committee adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

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[The preceding is a summary of the July 9, 2018 meeting of the Study Committee on Identification and Management of Dyslexia, which was recorded by WisconsinEye. The video recording is available in the WisconsinEye archives at <http://www.wiseye.org/Video-Archive>.]