S U M M A R Y

Wisconsin Act 20 – Early Literacy Instruction, Curriculum & Assessments 2023

1. Office of Literacy aka “Wisconsin Reading Center”

* Housed within the Department of Public Instruction
* Director nominated by State Superintendent in consultation with Council of Early Literacy
* Nomination subject to Senate confirmation
* Director serves at the pleasure of the State Superintendent
* Sunset date for office is July 1, 2028

1. Council on Early Literacy Curricula

* Council on Early Literacy housed within the *Wisconsin Reading Center*
* Council consists of nine members who “have knowledge or experience with science-based early literacy instruction and literacy curricula for students in kindergarten to third grade”
* Speaker of the Assembly, Senate Majority Leader, and the State Superintendent each appoint three council members to serve in staggered three-year terms
* Council members to be appointed in 45 days (note: this did not happen, as of Thursday August 17, 2023 DPI does not have the application for Council appointees available on its website)
* Act 20 requires Council to annually recommend to DPI science-based literacy curricula and instructional materials for use in grades K-3
* Curricula recommendation begins in the 2023-24 school year
* DPI required to submit curricula and instructional material recommendations to JCF for “passive” review

1. Literacy Coaching

* Literacy coaching program housed within the DPI Office of Literacy
* DPI must contract with up to 64 full-time literacy coaches who demonstrate knowledge and expertise in science-based early literacy instruction and have K-12 experience
* Coaches are prohibited from using three-cuing instructional model
* DPI must assign one-half of the coaches to schools with low student reading proficiency and the largest gaps in student reading scores; two must be choice schools
* DPI must assign the other half of literacy coaches to schools requesting early literacy support and must allocate these coaches evenly across CESA regions
* Regardless of scores or school requests DPI can assign no more than 10 literacy coaches to Milwaukee Public Schools and no more than four to any other school district
* A minimum of three coaches must be assigned to schools within each CESA region

1. Reading Assessments

* Effective July 1, 2024 Act 20 requires traditional public schools and independent charter schools to administer fundamental skills screening assessments to 4K students, administer universal screening assessments and diagnostic assessments to 5K thru third grade students
* Parents must be notified of assessment results
* Reporting to DPI is required for students identified as at-risk (scoring below the 25th percentile)
* This assessment requirement does not apply to choice schools

1. K4

* Each 4K student will be required to complete a fundamental skills screening assessment selected and provided by DPI
* The selected and administered assessment must evaluate whether a student possesses phonemic awareness and letter sound knowledge
* Schools must assess 4K students twice a year; once in the first 45 days and once in the last 45 days of the academic year

1. K-Third

* Each K-third grade student will be required to complete a universal screening assessment selected and provided by DPI
* The selected and administered assessment must evaluate: 1) phonemic awareness; 2) decoding skills; 3) alphabet knowledge; 4) letter sound knowledge; and 5) oral vocabulary
* Schools must assess K-third grade students three times per year; once in the first 45 days of school, once mid semester, and once in the last 45 days of school

1. K-Third Grade Students Identified as “At Risk”

* A diagnostic assessment must be administered for each student student scoring below the 25th percentile on a universal screening assessment or to students for whom a teacher or parents requests a diagnostic assess
* The diagnostic assessment must evaluate: 1) phonemic awareness; 2) decoding skills, 3) alphabet knowledge, 4) letter sound knowledge, 5) oral vocabulary, 6) rapid naming, 7) phonological awareness, 8) word recognition, 9) spelling, 10) vocabulary, 11) listening comprehension, 12) oral reading fluency and reading comprehension when developmentally appropriate

1. Reading Intervention

* Students identified as at risk are required to have a personal reading plan in place which must include: 1) the students specified early literacy skill deficiencies, 2) goals, benchmarks for progress, 3) interventions and instructional services the student will receive, 4) progress monitoring, 5) resources the student’s teacher will use, and 6) strategies the parent is encouraged to use at home
* Progress must be monitored weekly
* Parents must sign the reading plan
* Schools are required to report to parents after 10 weeks of intervention

1. Complaint Process

* Act 20 creates a complaint process enabling parents for 4K-third grade students to file a complaint with DPI alleging the traditional public school or independent charter school is not complying with reading assessment and intervention requirements
* DPI must notify a school that is not in compliance and specify actions necessary to come into compliance
* If a school continues violate ACT 20 the parent may file a circuit court action asking for injunctive relief or a writ of mandamus ordering the school to comply

1. Promotion from Third to Fourth Grade

* Act 20 requires DPI to adopt a model policy for promotion to fourth grade that requires a school to provide the following to students with a person reading plan in the third grade but have not completed the plan: 1) intensive instructional services, 2) progress monitoring, 3) supports to remediate identified areas of deficiencies, 4) intensive summer reading every summer until the student scores at grade level
* Act 20 requires all public schools and independent charter schools to adopt their own policies for promoting students from third to fourth grades that includes, at minimum all the components of the DPI model policy
* Promotion policies must be in place beginning on September 1, 2027

1. Teacher Licensing, Preparation & Professional Development

* Act 20 requires license applicants to receive instruction to teach reading and language arts using science-based literacy instruction
* This instruction cannot include three-curing as a method for teaching reading and language arts for licenses issued on or after July 1, 2026
* Act 20 requires all of the following individuals to receive specific professional development training in science-based reading instruction: 1) educators who teach grades K-3, 2) principals of schools that offer grades K-3; 3) reading specialists, 4) University of Wisconsin faculty and academic staff members who teach a course that incudes curriculum in reading instruction designed for educators

1. Reading Curriculum Grant

* Act 20 creates grants covering up to 50% reimbursement to public schools, independent charter schools, and private schools participating in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, the Racine Parental Choice Program, and the Wisconsin Parental Choice Program if they adopt a recommended curriculum after January 1, 2024
* Grants may be prorated depending on the number of applicants