

January 14, 2015

To: Rep. Jeremy Thiesfeldt, Chair Assembly Committee on Education
Members, Assembly Committee on Education

From: Disability Rights Wisconsin – Lisa Pugh, Public Policy Director

Re: [AB-001](#) School Review System: Disability Rights Wisconsin Does Not Support Bill as Drafted

Thank you to Members of the Assembly Committee on Education for hosting a hearing on this important school accountability bill and to Chairman Thiesfeldt for meeting with our organization to hear concerns and recommendations prior to bill introduction. We appreciate your interest in developing a strong accountability system that includes and supports the achievement of students with disabilities.

Disability Rights Wisconsin is the state's Protection and Advocacy agency, charged with ensuring the rights of individuals with disabilities, including students and their parents. We often support parents to achieve a quality education for their children and challenge districts and the state to change or update policies. This testimony represents our experiences with parents of children with disabilities statewide.

There are several main elements of an accountability proposal that are important to families of children with disabilities:

- An accountability system that is built upon an “apples to apples” comparison of children with disabilities. Students should be taking the same assessments, with the same accommodations availability to allow parents to adequately compare scores across different types of schools.
- Students with disabilities should be identified with a common definition across all schools.
- Robust multiple measures of accountability must include growth, gap closure and achievement disaggregated specifically to identify the performance of the subgroup of students with disabilities.
- The system should incorporate all schools that receive public funds.
- The system must include and specifically reference all students, including those with significant cognitive disabilities taking the alternate reading and mathematics examinations administered under s. 118.30.
- Accountability measures should address measures of college and workforce readiness and information related to high school graduates entering the workforce.
- Accountability measures should include information on the number of pupils who are suspended or expelled.
- Transparent reporting of school performance should include a required posting on a school's website to allow parents easy access to information on the performance of students with disabilities.

AB 1 addresses some, but not all of these important elements of accountability. We thank you specifically for ensuring that data about growth and achievement is disaggregated by disability status. We support the discussion of appropriate testing accommodations for students with disabilities and the inclusion of students with the most significant disabilities within the system. We also believe provisions that provide

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incentives to schools that are seeing good student outcomes are promising. We have concerns about other sections of the bill and we provide line by line recommendations for improvement below.

In summary, we believe the bill requires:

- Addition of a common definition of disability under state and federal statutes.
- Addition of college and career readiness measurements.
- Inclusion of suspension and expulsion rates in areas of measurement.
- Elimination of the section that allows rating schools that serve predominately students with disabilities under a separate system, thus eliminating them from accountability.
- Stronger discussion and review prior to expanding a charter school system when data shows charters in Wisconsin are currently not serving students with disabilities well.
- Addition to the board of at least one person with knowledge specifically related to disability and addition of a parent.
- Use of a uniform test so that allows parents to compare schools appropriately.
- Inclusion of all publicly funded schools, including county children with disabilities education boards.
- Parent notification requirements when a school will be reformed or will no longer accept payments or students.

We suggest the following specific language changes:

Academic Review Board

Pg. 6-7 add the following:

- Superintendent of a public school district
- One principal of a public, charter and private school
- One individual with training and experience to work with and experience working with pupils with disabilities nominated by the state superintendent.
- One special education director nominated by the state superintendent.
- One parent nominated by the state superintendent.

Educational Options

Pg. 8 line 11 change to read after 18 years old...or a student who is in school from ages 18-21 years old who reside in the school district.

Alternative Tests

Pg. 8 line 16-17 Delete Alternatives Tests (and additional bill references to the use of alternative tests)

Definitions

Pg. 9 add before line 1 "Child with a disability" as defined in a. 115.76 (5) (a-f) for whom an individualized education program or a service plan is in effect.

Pg. 9 line 13 – add a county children with disabilities education board under s. 121.135.

Review System; Evaluation and Grades

Pg. 10 add after line 2 Career and College Readiness for high school pupils and tracking for career and college readiness for pupil in elementary grades.

Pg. 10 add after line 7 Rates of suspension and expulsion.

Pg. 10 delete from line 4 “when available”

Pg. 10 line 5 - show rates of attendance and high school graduation in separate lines.

Pg. 10 lines 20-24 Add in language to explain the grades A- Significantly exceeds expectations, B- exceed expectation, C- meet expectations, D- meets few expectations, F- fails to meet expectations.

Pg. 12 Line 18 Add (disability status) as defined under Wis. 115.76 (5) (a-f)

Pg. 14 Lines 8-25 Delete this entire section as it eliminates schools that serves predominately disaggregated groups to be measured under an entirely different system.

Sanctions

Pg. 15 – Include in this section required parent notifications when schools are under sanction or will no longer accept students or payments.

Pg. 19 Line 7 delete language (and additional bill references) that relates to converting a public school to a charter school.