


Memorandum

Date: March 12, 2015
To: Members, Joint Committee on Finance
From: Tony Evers, State Superintendent 
Subject: DPI Supports Funding Increase for Wisconsin Literacy, Inc.

Since the 2005-07 budget there has been a line item for Adult Literacy Grants in the department's budget [s. 20.255(3)(b)] which is continued in the Governor's 2015-17 biennial budget request. This annual funding (\$82,400 GPR) is administered through DPI's Division for Libraries and Technology and supports the state literacy office, Wisconsin Literacy, Inc. and four regional centers that each serve between 15-25 member agencies (74 total).

Wisconsin Literacy, Inc. is requesting an increase in this line item of \$41,600 annually. This would bring the total appropriation for the 2015-17 biennial budget to \$124,200 each year.

DPI has a valuable and increasingly collaborative relationship with Wisconsin Literacy, Inc. Wisconsin Literacy, Inc. supports 74 member literacy councils statewide serving over 17,500 adults currently enrolled in literacy-based programs. The new funds, divided between Wisconsin Literacy, Inc. and four regional partners, will be used to help these member programs focus on computer skills, math and job skill readiness for adult learners in preparation for the new GED, and in collaborative workforce training and statewide family literacy efforts.

The reach of Wisconsin Literacy, Inc. to help adults with more than 3,300 professionally trained volunteer tutors and mentors is a highly cost-effective method that saves on instruction costs while preparing more adults to successfully enter and succeed in the technical colleges. A recent examination of studies on student support services showed that students given individual tutors or mentors for two semesters or more were more likely to remain in college and finish. Wisconsin Literacy, Inc. provides significant value to the adult and family literacy landscape in Wisconsin and uses research-based strategies to ensure effective practices statewide. While Wisconsin Literacy, Inc. continues to grow online training opportunities that decrease travel costs for member agencies, this funding increase will have an inversely large impact on the capacity of Wisconsin Literacy, Inc. to provide valuable resources and services to member councils, and allow them to partner with other literacy organizations to maximize impact to ensure all Wisconsin citizens are literate.

I support this funding increase and ask members of the Joint Committee on Finance to fund this request in the DPI budget, or through a combination of funding options, to ensure that those who do the good work of literacy development have the resources they need to maximize statewide impact.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. If you have questions, please contact Emilie Amundson, Director, Literacy and Mathematics Team (emilie.amundson@dpi.wi.gov or 267-3726), at the department.

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