



## Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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December 5, 2023

TO: Members  
Joint Committee on Finance

FROM: Bob Lang, Director

SUBJECT: Public Instruction: Section 13.10 Request for Release of Funding for Office of Literacy  
Director Position and Council on Early Literacy Curricula -- Agenda Item I

### REQUEST

On November 22, 2023, the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) submitted a request to the Joint Committee on Finance for the creation of 1.0 general program revenue (GPR) unclassified position for the Director of the Office of Literacy and the transfer of \$111,000 GPR in 2023-24 and \$225,400 GPR in 2024-25 from the \$50 million in the Joint Committee on Finance's GPR supplemental appropriation to the DPI appropriation for general program operations to support the position and to provide stipends for members of the Council on Early Literacy Curricula.

### BACKGROUND

Under 2023 Act 19 (the 2023-25 budget act), \$50,000,000 GPR was reserved in the Joint Finance Committee's supplemental appropriation [s. 20.865(4)(a)] for a literacy program under the Department of Public Instruction. Subsequent legislation was passed as 2023 Act 20 to implement the literacy program. Act 20 creates an Office of Literacy within DPI, known as the "Wisconsin Reading Center," and requires the State Superintendent to nominate a director for the office in consultation with the Council on Early Literacy Curricula, which is also created by Act 20. The position would serve at the pleasure of the State Superintendent with the advice and consent of the Senate. Under the Act, the Office of Literacy ceases to exist on July 1, 2028.

The Council on Early Literacy Curricula consists of nine members who have knowledge or expertise with science-based early literacy instruction and literacy curricula for pupils in grades kindergarten to three. The Speaker of the Assembly, the Senate Majority Leader, and the State Superintendent each appoint three members to serve on the Council for staggered, three-year terms. The Council is required to annually recommend to DPI a science-based literacy curriculum and instructional materials for use in the following school year in grades kindergarten through three, and

is required to submit to DPI the recommendations for use in the 2024-25 school year by no later than December 1, 2023. Within 30 days after receiving the recommended curriculum and instructional materials from the Council, DPI is required to submit the recommendations to the Joint Committee on Finance for a 14-day passive review.

Act 20 requires DPI to contract with up to 64 literacy coaches, under the supervision of the Office of Literacy, to work with school districts, independent charter schools, and private schools participating in a choice program throughout the state. Act 20 creates a new grant program to reimburse school districts, independent charter schools, and private schools participating in a choice program that adopt a literacy curriculum from the recommendations of the Council after January 1, 2024. Grants shall equal 50 percent of the costs of purchasing the curriculum and instructional materials, and DPI shall prorate grant awards if funding is insufficient to pay the full amount to all recipients. Act 20 also includes provisions related to reading and literacy instruction, training, and professional development for educator preparation programs and educator licensure, and expanded requirements for reading readiness assessments and interventions.

## **ANALYSIS**

The request would create 1.0 FTE unclassified position to serve as the Director of the Office of Literacy and provide additional budget authority of \$106,500 GPR in 2023-24 and \$220,900 GPR in 2024-25 for the full costs of the position, including salary, fringe benefits, fixed costs, IT support, and work-related travel.

The Department indicates that this position would play a leading role in implementing Act 20 and would advise the State Superintendent on early reading initiatives within the Department. Specifically, the position would be responsible for supervising the contracted literacy coaches, ensuring that the literacy coaches demonstrate knowledge and expertise in science-based early literacy instruction and instructional practices, ensuring that the literacy coaches have instructional experience in grades K-12, providing ongoing training to the literacy coaches, and prohibiting the literacy coaches from using or promoting instruction that includes "3-cueing," which is defined as any model of teaching a pupil to read based on meaning, structure and syntax, and visual cues or memory.

The request would also provide annual stipends of \$500 to each member of the Council on Early Literacy Curricula, or a total of \$4,500 in each year of the biennium. The Department indicates that the stipends would be provided in recognition of the subject matter expertise and time commitment that the members would contribute to the Council.

The following table shows the requested budget for the Office of Literacy director position and Council on Early Literacy Curricula member stipends. The Department indicates that the fixed costs for the director position include overhead, or the costs of doing business, that are allocated across all positions and include items such as insurance, including liability, property, and worker's compensation, and office supplies and services, including telephone, fleet, rent, and STAR document processing.

**Summary of Requested Budget for Office of Literacy Director and  
Council on Early Literacy Curricula**

	<u>2023-24</u>	<u>2024-25</u>
Salary	\$62,400	\$135,200
Fringe	26,200	56,700
Fixed Costs	7,900	17,000
IT/Desktop Support	8,000	8,000
Travel/Events	<u>2,000</u>	<u>4,000</u>
Subtotal	\$106,500	\$220,900
Council Stipends	4,500	4,500
Total	\$111,000	\$225,400

If the Committee wishes, the Department's request for 1.0 GPR unclassified position for the Director of the Office of Literacy and associated funding for the position and to provide stipends for members of the Council on Early Literacy Curricula could be approved in order to support the literacy program created under 2023 Act 20. [Alternative 1] Alternatively, if the Committee denies the request, the Department would continue to administer the program without additional resources, and funding would remain in the Committee's supplemental appropriation for potential release at a later time in the 2023-25 biennium. [Alternative 2]

**ALTERNATIVES**

1. Approve the request to create 1.0 GPR unclassified position and transfer \$111,000 GPR in 2023-24 and \$225,400 GPR in 2024-25 from the Joint Committee on Finance's supplemental appropriation under s. 20.865(4)(a) to the Department of Public Instruction's appropriation under 20.255(1)(a) for general program operations, to support the position and to provide stipends for members of the Council on Early Literacy Curricula.
  
2. Deny the request.

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