



Tony Evers

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

November 5, 2021

TO THE HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE SENATE:

I am vetoing Senate Bill 454 in its entirety.

The bill would mandate school boards and independent charter schools to assess the early literacy skill of pupils in four-year-old kindergarten to second grade using repeated screening assessments throughout the year and to create a personal reading plan for each pupil in five-year-old kindergarten to second grade who is identified as at-risk. It would also mandate the Department of Public Instruction establish and maintain lists of approved fundamental skills screening assessments, universal screening assessments, and diagnostic assessments on its Internet site based on alignment with model academic standards in reading and language arts, and a mandatory minimum sensitivity rate and specificity rate. Further, this bill would mandate a school board, for each school and the district, or operator of an independent charter, to annually submit a report to the Department regarding the number of pupils identified as at-risk, the names of reading assessments used, and the number of pupils five-year-old kindergarten to second grade who receive literacy interventions, all information which the Department would have to then annually compile and report to the Legislature. The bill provides no additional funding to implement its new mandates for additional testing or to address staffing or other resource needs necessary for implementation.

Due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, the prior two years have been especially challenging for our kids, parents, and schools. We must work—and quickly—to address reading proficiency and increase literacy success for every kid in our classrooms. I have advocated for some time, including during my time on the Read to Lead Task Force, for increased efforts at the state level to support our kids and our schools so we can ensure every student's success. This dialogue, however, must be based on proven, evidence-based practices, and cannot be independent from discussions about the state's obligation to provide meaningful, sustainable support for our classrooms and our schools.

I am vetoing this bill in its entirety because I object to fundamentally overhauling Wisconsin literacy instruction and intervention without evidence that more statewide, mandatory testing is the best approach for our students, and without providing the funding needed for implementation. This bill ultimately reduces valuable instruction time while asking schools to strain their existing resources, instead of providing necessary funding to support the work educators, administrators, and staff are currently doing to support reading and literacy for our students.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Evers".

Tony Evers
Governor