



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #741

Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (DPI -- Categorical Aids)

[LFB 2001-03 Budget Summary: Page 537, #4 and Page 538, #6]

CURRENT LAW

A total of \$58,754,600 GPR is provided in 2000-01 for the student achievement guarantee in education (SAGE) program. The SAGE program awards five-year grants to eligible school districts for the purpose of lowering class sizes in grades kindergarten to third. Since its creation, three rounds of contracts have been authorized.

The original SAGE contracts, which apply to school years 1996-97 through 2000-01, covered kindergarten and first grade in 1996-97, with the addition of grade two in 1997-98 and grade three in 1998-99. These contracts expire on June 30, 2001. Under 1997 Act 27 (the 1997-99 state budget), a second round of contracts was permitted for additional schools and school districts, to cover school years 1998-99 through 2002-03 with kindergarten and first grade in 1998-99 and the addition of grade two in 1999-00 and grade three in 2000-01. These contracts expire on June 30, 2003.

To be eligible for funding under the first or second round of contracts, school districts had to have at least one school with an enrollment made up of at least 50% low-income pupils in the previous school year. Eligible school districts could then enter into a contract with the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) on behalf of one school in the district if in the previous school year, the school had an enrollment that was made up of at least 30% low-income pupils, and the school board was not receiving a preschool through grade five (P-5) grant on behalf of the school.

School districts must do all of the following in each SAGE school: (a) reduce each class size in the applicable grades to 15 pupils; (b) keep the school open every day for extended hours and collaborate with community organizations to make educational and recreational opportunities as well as community and social services available in the school to all district

residents; (c) provide rigorous academic curriculum designed to improve academic achievement; and (d) create staff development and accountability programs that provide training for new staff members, encourage employee collaboration, and require professional development plans and performance evaluations.

Under the provisions of 1999 Act 9, a third round of five-year contracts are created, which will apply to school years 2000-01 through 2004-05 and cover kindergarten and first grade in 2000-01, with the addition of grade two in 2001-02 and grade three in 2002-03. These contracts expire on June 30, 2005.

Under the third round of contracts, all school districts are eligible to apply for funding, regardless of the district or school's poverty rate, except: (a) schools participating in the P-5 program; (b) schools that were eligible but declined to participate in the program under the first two rounds of contracts; and (c) current participating SAGE schools. Actual participation in the program, however, is limited to available funding.

DPI is required to fund contracts at \$2,000 per low-income pupil. If after funding schools with existing contracts at \$2,000 per pupil, there is insufficient funding remaining in the SAGE appropriations to fund all of the districts that apply under the third round of contracts, DPI is required to prioritize funding for new applicants and fund only those schools with the highest poverty rates to the extent funding is available.

Additionally, DPI is required to arrange for an evaluation of the SAGE program and must allocate \$250,000 annually for this purpose. The Department has contracted with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) for this evaluation.

In order to continue to receive funding under the SAGE program, school districts must pass an annual review. At the end of each school year, a committee consisting of the State Superintendent, the Chairpersons of the Education Committees in the Senate and Assembly and the head of the UWM evaluation team must review the progress of each SAGE school and may recommend that DPI terminate a contract if a school has made insufficient progress or has violated the requirements of SAGE. The Department may terminate the contract if it agrees with the committee's recommendation.

GOVERNOR

Provide \$6,588,000 GPR in 2001-02 and \$15,551,000 GPR in 2002-03 for the SAGE program to fund schools that began contracts in 1996-97, 1998-99, and 2000-01, with the following modifications.

Delete the sunset provision that prohibits DPI from entering into SAGE contracts after June 30, 2001, as well as the provision prohibiting the encumbrance of funds from the SAGE supplement appropriation after June 30, 2003, and from the primary SAGE appropriation after June 30, 2005.

Allow DPI to enter into renewal contracts for one or more terms of five school years for any current SAGE school. As a condition of receiving payments under a renewal of a SAGE contract, a school board would be required to maintain the reduction of class size achieved for the specified grades during the last school year of the original SAGE contract.

For SAGE contracts that begin in 2000-01 on behalf of schools whose low-income pupil enrollment is less than 50% in 2000-01, the current requirement that class size be reduced for second and then third grade, and the aid associated with those low-income pupils, would be eliminated. Instead, the reduced class size achieved during 2000-01 for kindergarten and grade one would be maintained for 2001-02 through 2004-05.

For SAGE contracts that begin in 2000-01 on behalf of schools whose low-income pupil enrollment was at least 50% in 2000-01, the reduction in class size requirement would remain unchanged from current law.

Reduce funding for SAGE evaluation by \$125,000 GPR annually and require DPI to select an evaluator by using a competitive process to ensure an impartial evaluation.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. The SAGE program was established under 1995 Act 27 (the 1995-97 budget) based on recommendations from the Urban Initiative study completed by DPI in order to identify methods for improving pupil achievement in low-income school districts. SAGE was initiated as a five-year program and included a provision for a program evaluation, which would determine the effectiveness of the components of SAGE. As part of 1997 Act 27 (the 1997-99 budget), the Legislature recommended providing additional funding in order to fund a second round of contracts that would expire on June 30, 2003. As part of 1999 Act 9 (the 1999-01 budget), the Legislature recommended providing additional funding in order to expand the program statewide and fund a third round of contracts that would expire on June 30, 2005.

2. In 2000-01, 246 school districts have SAGE contracts with DPI on behalf of 577 individual schools and approximately 28,000 FTE kindergarten through third grade low-income pupils. School districts receive \$2,000 for each eligible pupil. The Department estimates that approximately 37,900 FTE low-income pupils will be attending 577 SAGE schools in 2001-02 and 47,500 FTE low-income pupils in 2002-03. Based on these pupil counts, the SAGE program would need an additional \$17,300,000 GPR in 2001-02 and \$36,400,000 GPR in 2002-03 to fund each eligible pupil at \$2,000 each as well as the ongoing \$250,000 per year evaluation costs.

3. The Governor's proposal would provide \$6,588,000 GPR in 2001-02 and \$15,426,000 GPR in 2002-03, but modify the program to exclude grades two and three in SAGE schools with less than 50% low-income enrollment. This modification would affect only those schools with contracts that began in 2000-01. These SAGE schools were required to reduce class size in grades kindergarten and one in 2000-01, and would continue to receive funding for those grades. SAGE schools with contracts that began in either 1996-97 or 1998-99 would not be affected

by the modification and would continue to receive full funding for grades kindergarten through third grade.

4. The Governor’s proposal also allows all current SAGE schools to renew their contracts for one or more five-year terms. The Governor’s budget proposal includes the \$9.0 million GPR annually that would be necessary to fund contract renewals for the 30 original SAGE schools, whose contracts began in 1996-97 and expire June 30, 2001. Of these 30 schools, seven are in MPS, all have low-income enrollment rates over 30%, and all but six have low-income rates over 50%. According to DPI, these schools wish to continue the program, but may not be able to do so on their own under revenue limits.

5. According to the data reported to DPI for the 2000-01 school year, out of the 508 SAGE schools with contracts beginning in 2000-01, approximately 368 schools have low-income enrollments in kindergarten and grade one of less than 50%, 125 schools have low-income enrollments of at least 50%, and there is no poverty rate data currently available for 15 schools. Approximately 9,490 low-income pupils were served in 2000-01 in these 368 schools. Of the 368 schools with K-1 low-income enrollments of less than 50%, eight schools or 2.2% are in MPS. Of the 125 schools with K-1 low-income enrollments of at least 50%, 66 schools or 52.8% are in MPS. The following table shows the number and percent of MPS third-round schools and the number of other third-round schools at various low-income rates.

Low-Income K-1 Enrollment Rates of MPS and Non MPS Third-Round SAGE Schools*

<u>K-1 Low-Income Enrollment Rates</u>	<u>MPS Schools</u>	<u>MPS % of Total</u>	<u>Non MPS Schools</u>	<u>Non MPS % of Total</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Cumulative Total</u>	<u>Cumulative MPS %</u>
More than 80%	23	85.2%	4	14.8%	27	27	85.2%
70% to 79.9%	17	85.0	3	15.0	20	47	85.1
60% to 69.9%	12	52.2	11	47.8	23	70	74.3
50% to 59.9%	14	25.5	41	74.5	55	125	52.8
40% to 49.9%	6	9.4	58	90.6	64	189	38.1
30% to 39.9%	2	1.5	128	98.5	130	319	23.2
20% to 29.9%	0	0.0	96	100.0	96	415	17.8
Less than 20%	0	0.0	78	100.0	78	493	15.0

*Based on information reported to DPI by school districts for the 2000-01 school year. For 15 third-round schools, no low-income K-1 enrollment rate data was available.

6. Some have argued that a commitment was made in Act 9 to fund statewide expansion of the program and class size reduction in grades kindergarten through three for all contracts. The schools that have signed contracts with DPI have also hired additional staff and set aside classroom space to accommodate the program. Concerns have been raised that the Governor’s proposal would not fulfill the expectations created under 1999 Act 9 for these schools.

7. The Committee could consider whether renewal of all current contracts should be authorized at this time, or if it might be desirable to renew only the contracts for the SAGE schools

that expire June 30, 2001. When created, the SAGE program was to be funded for five years and if the program proved successful in improving the performance of low-income K-3 pupils, the program could be funded beyond the June 30, 2001, sunset date. The most recent SAGE program evaluation, from December 2000, indicates that second and third grade achievement gains were significantly higher for SAGE pupils than their comparison counterparts. While SAGE students appeared to retain the gains made in first grade in second and third grades, the advantage did not appear to have increased. Teachers in the program reported greater individualization and more time spent teaching as compared to classroom management. In addition, SAGE schools reported a two-fold increase in the use of weekly progress reports requiring a parent signature, as well as an increase in the extended day activities offered and participation in those activities in 1999-00. However, the Committee may wish to wait until the next budget cycle, which will be just prior to the expiration of the second round of contracts, to determine whether additional contracts should be renewed.

8. On the other hand, some argue that SAGE should be maintained in grades kindergarten through three in order to realize long-term benefits from the program. Results from the 1999 Project STAR study, a follow-up study to a class-size reduction experiment in Tennessee conducted in the late 1980s, indicate that pupils who attended small size classes (13 to 17) in kindergarten through grade three continued to outperform pupils who attended large size classes (22 to 25), after they entered grades with larger class sizes. Academic gains made by the K-3 small-class students over their regular class counterparts were statistically significant and continued to grow in later grades, even after the students were placed in regular classes following grade three. The study reports that students who were in the small-class environment for at least four years completed more advanced courses in high school, were more likely to take college entrance exams, were less likely to be retained and were less likely to drop out of high school than those who attended regular classes or regular classes with a teacher's aide.

9. Alternatively, one could argue that exposure to the small-class environment, even only in kindergarten and grade one, provides more opportunities for pupil improvement than no exposure to such an environment. The Committee could modify the Governor's proposal to continue to fund third round SAGE schools in grades kindergarten through three if the school has a low-income enrollment of at least 30% in kindergarten and grade one in 2000-01. Schools with low-income enrollments below 30% would continue to receive funding for reduced class size in kindergarten and grade one, but would not be required or funded to do so in grades two and three. According to data reported to DPI for 2000-01, approximately 176 third round SAGE schools do not meet the 30% low-income threshold. Modifying the program from current law in this manner would eliminate the need for \$3,178,800 GPR in 2001-02 and \$6,357,600 GPR in 2002-03 compared to fully funding the program.

10. There is federal funding provided for class-size reduction. Under the federal class size reduction initiative, \$1.3 billion is appropriated for 2000-01, with each state receiving a formula allocation based on the greater of the state's share of Elementary and Secondary Education Act Title I or Title II funding. In 2000-01, \$21.8 million in federal class size reduction funds are available to Wisconsin and an estimated \$27.2 million will be in 2001-02. Each state is required to distribute all

of the federal funding to local educational agencies as follows: (a) 80% of the funding must be allocated in proportion to the number of children, based on federal census numbers, in low-income families; and (b) the remaining 20% is distributed based on school enrollments within each agency.

11. School districts may use the federal funds to recruit, hire and train teachers. In addition, up to 25% of the funds may be used to: (a) test new teachers for academic knowledge; and (b) provide professional development. If an agency has already reduced class size in the early grades to 18 or fewer students, the district may use the funds to: (a) further reduce class size in grades K-3; (b) reduce class size in other grades; or (c) improve teacher quality, including professional development. If a state or local class-size reduction goal was in effect prior to the enactment of the federal class-size reduction statute, an agency may substitute that goal instead of the federal goal, as long as it is 20 or fewer children per class.

12. Federal funding provided under this initiative may not supplant state and local funds provided to reduce class size. In addition, the funding may not be used to increase the salaries or provide benefits, except professional development and enrichment programs, to teachers currently employed by the school district. Further, no more than three percent of the funding received by the agency may be used for administrative costs. In addition, in December, 2000, Congress appropriated an additional \$1.6 billion for this purpose for the 2001-02 school year.

13. Under the two-thirds funding calculation, if funding for a categorical aid such as SAGE is increased, there is a reduction in general school aids equal to one-third of the increase. This reduction is made so that total state aid does not exceed the two-thirds funding goal. Similarly, if categorical aids are decreased, there is an increase in general school aids equal to one-third of the decrease in categorical aid in order to maintain two-thirds funding of partial school revenues.

14. The Governor's proposal reduces funding for the SAGE evaluation from \$250,000 to \$125,000 annually and requires DPI to use a competitive process to choose an evaluator. DOA officials have argued that the funding level was more than adequate for the type of research being conducted, and suggested that a competitive process might result in a less expensive evaluation and ensure that the results of the evaluation are accurate and objective. DPI has contracted with the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee (UWM) since 1996-97 for this evaluation, and even at the current funding level, UWM has covered some of the costs of the evaluation in past years with University funds. According to DPI staff, to continue the same type of evaluation model, the current level of funding is the minimum amount necessary, but a less extensive study could be conducted with a lower level of funding. Additionally, the current research design was developed over the course of a year with input from both DPI and UWM staff, and if the evaluation were to be moved to another research team, it is possible that a loss of up to a year of the study would occur. The results of the study have been widely reported, and the raw data is available to other researchers for independent verification of the conclusions.

15. UWM's evaluation of the SAGE program is well-known and cited as a significant contribution to the body of academic and public policy research on class-size reduction, school reform and minority pupil achievement. The evaluation has provided not only quantifiable data such

as pupil scores on standardized tests, but also qualitative comparisons of different teaching strategies and their relative effectiveness at raising test scores. Additionally, UWM researchers indicate that future evaluations would measure the ancillary impacts of the program as SAGE pupils progress through the education system, examining whether such indicators as graduation rates and contacts with the legal system are affected by pupils' participation in SAGE. This type of longitudinal study would represent a cost-benefit analysis of the program arguably more accurate and meaningful than any short-term comparison of test scores could provide.

ALTERNATIVES TO BASE

A. Sunset Provision

1. Approve the Governor's recommendation to allow DPI to renew contracts with all current SAGE schools for one or more terms of five years.
2. Allow DPI to renew contracts with only first round SAGE schools for one or more terms of five years. This would retain a June 30, 2003 sunset for second round SAGE schools and a June 30, 2005, sunset for third round SAGE schools as well as related sunset provisions on the SAGE appropriations.
3. Take no action. This would retain a June 30, 2001, sunset for the first round of SAGE schools.

B. Funding for Third Round of SAGE Contracts

1. Approve the Governor's recommendation to provide an additional \$6,588,000 in 2001-02 and \$15,551,000 in 2002-03 above base level funding of \$58,754,600 to fund reduced class size in grades two and three in current third round SAGE schools with at least 50% K-1 low-income enrollment. Require current third round SAGE schools with less than 50% K-1 low-income enrollment to maintain reduced class size in grades kindergarten and one, but delete the requirement that these schools further reduce class size in grades two and three. Of this funding, \$125,000 annually is attributable to the annual SAGE evaluation. Reduce general school aids by \$2,196,000 in 2001-02 and \$5,183,700 in 2002-03 in order to adjust two-thirds funding of partial school revenues.

Alternative B1	GPR
2001-03 FUNDING (Change to Base) <i>[Change to Bill]</i>	\$14,759,300 \$0]

2. Provide \$17,050,000 in 2001-02 and \$36,150,000 in 2002-03 to fully fund class size reduction in all current SAGE schools in kindergarten through grade three. Reduce general school aids by \$5,683,300 in 2001-02 and \$12,050,000 in 2002-03 to adjust two-thirds funding of partial

school revenues.

Alternative B2	GPR
2001-03 FUNDING (Change to Base)	\$35,466,700
<i>[Change to Bill]</i>	<i>\$20,707,400]</i>

3. Provide \$13,481,000 in 2001-02 and \$29,005,000 in 2002-03 to fund reduced class size in grades two and three in current third round SAGE schools with at least 30% K-1 low-income enrollment. Require current third round SAGE schools with less than 30% K-1 low-income enrollment to maintain reduced class size in grades kindergarten and one, but delete the requirement that these schools further reduce class size in grades two and three. Reduce general school aids by \$4,493,700 in 2001-02 and \$9,668,300 in 2002-03 to adjust two-thirds funding of partial school revenues.

Alternative B3	GPR
2001-03 FUNDING (Change to Base)	\$28,324,000
<i>[Change to Bill]</i>	<i>\$13,564,700]</i>

4. Take no action. Depending on whether the current law sunset provision relating to the first round of contracts is retained, the SAGE program would be underfunded in the 2001-03 biennium by an estimated \$35.2 million if the sunset were retained or \$53.2 million if the sunset were eliminated.

Alternative B4	GPR
2001-03 FUNDING (Change to Base)	\$0
<i>[Change to Bill]</i>	<i>- \$14,759,300]</i>

C. Funding for the SAGE Evaluation

1. Approve the Governor’s recommendation to reduce the current allocation for the SAGE evaluation by \$125,000 from its base level of \$250,000.

Alternative C1	GPR
2001-03 FUNDING (Change to Base)	- \$250,000
<i>[Change to Bill]</i>	<i>\$0]</i>

2. Delete \$250,000 annually and the requirement that DPI contract for an evaluation of the SAGE program.

Alternative C2	GPR
2001-03 FUNDING (Change to Base)	- \$500,000
<i>[Change to Bill]</i>	- \$250,000]

3. Take no action, which would retain the current allocation of \$250,000 for the SAGE evaluation.

Alternative C3	GPR
2001-03 FUNDING (Change to Base)	\$0
<i>[Change to Bill]</i>	\$250,000]

D. Competitive Process for the SAGE Evaluation

1. Approve the Governor’s recommendation to require DPI to select an evaluator by using a competitive process to ensure an impartial evaluation.

2. Take no action. To date, DPI has contracted with UW-Milwaukee to perform the annual evaluation.

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