



## Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #581

### Gifted and Talented Grants (DPI -- Categorical Aids)

[LFB 2019-21 Budget Summary: Page 334, #32]

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#### CURRENT LAW

School districts are required to provide access to appropriate programs for gifted and talented pupils. Funding for such programming is provided in the form of competitive grants totaling \$237,200 GPR annually, which are awarded to provide gifted and talented pupils with any services and activities not ordinarily provided in a regular school program to allow such pupils to fully develop their capabilities. Under the program, grants may be awarded to nonprofit organizations, cooperative educational service agencies, institutions within the UW System, and school districts.

#### GOVERNOR

Provide an increase of \$762,800 GPR annually to support gifted and talented education. As a result of the increase, total funding for the grants would equal \$1 million GPR annually.

Additionally, modify the statutory language describing activities eligible for funding under the program to specify that DPI may award grants only for the following purposes: (a) providing to underrepresented gifted and talented pupils those services and activities not ordinarily provided in a regular school program that allow such pupils to fully develop their capabilities, including services and activities provided inside or outside of a pupil's regular classroom; and (b) providing teachers with professional development and training related to identifying and educating gifted and talented pupils. Define an underrepresented gifted and talented pupil as a gifted and talented pupil who is any of the following: (a) a minority group pupil; (b) an economically disadvantaged pupil (eligible for free or reduced-price lunch or other measures of poverty as determined by DPI); (c) a child with a disability; or (d) a limited-English proficiency pupil.

## DISCUSSION POINTS

1. Since 1985, state law has required every school board to ensure that gifted and talented pupils have access to special programming. Gifted and talented pupils are defined as pupils enrolled in public schools who give evidence of high performance capability in intellectual, creative, artistic, leadership, or specific academic areas and who need services or activities not ordinarily provided in a regular school program in order to fully develop such capabilities. Providing access to appropriate programs for gifted and talented pupils is also included as one of the 20 standards for school districts.

2. Administrative code requires school districts to establish a plan and designate a person to coordinate the gifted and talented program. Districts must identify pupils as gifted and talented based on multiple measures, including but not limited to standardized test data, nominations, rating scales or inventories, products, portfolios, and demonstrated performance. The identification process and tools must be responsive to pupils' economic status, disability status, native language, race, and other factors.

3. The gifted and talented grant program was created under 2005 Act 25. Under the program as originally created, grants could be awarded to cooperative educational service agencies (CESAs) and Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) for advanced curricula and assessments for gifted and talented middle school pupils. Under 2007 Act 20, the program was modified to include nonprofit organizations and to include pupils from all grades, rather than only middle school pupils. The program was further modified under 2011 Act 32 to include UW System institutions as an eligible grant recipient, and to specify that funds could be used to provide services and activities not ordinarily provided in a regular school program that allows such pupils to fully develop their capabilities. Under 2017 Act 59, the specific reference to MPS was deleted, and instead any school district can qualify for funds under the program.

4. In 2018-19, grant requests were received totaling \$286,445. Grants were awarded to 10 recipients, including five CESAs, four school districts, and one non-profit organization. Grants ranged from \$10,000 to \$30,000. (DPI indicates that the Department has capped the maximum grant amount at \$30,000 due to the limited funding available under the program.) The table below shows funding for the grants over each of the last five years, as well as the amount of requested funding and the number of grant recipients.

### Gifted and Talented Grants, 2014-15 to 2018-19

	<u>Appropriated</u>	<u>Requested</u>	<u>Recipients</u>
2014-15	\$237,200	\$281,383	10
2015-16	237,200	317,519	11
2016-17	237,200	346,123	10
2017-18	237,200	343,334	9
2018-19	237,200	286,445	10

5. Based on the amount of funding requested in each of the last five years, as shown in the table above, it could be argued that the amount of funding provided in the Governor's proposal would

significantly exceed the demand for funding by eligible applicants in recent years. On the other hand, it could be the case that fewer eligible entities apply for funding due to the lack of available funds and the relatively small cap on individual awards, and the number of applicants could increase in future years if more funding is provided.

6. Other states fund gifted and talented education in a variety of ways. According to data from Ed Build, 32 states provide funding for gifted pupils. In Minnesota, the state provides each school district with a flat amount of \$13 per pupil for gifted and talented education. Iowa designates a portion of the cost of the state's base state aid payment per pupil for gifted programming, equal to approximately \$62 per pupil in 2017-18, which is intended to cover 75% of the cost of educating gifted pupils. North Dakota reimburses school districts for a portion of their costs of providing gifted and talented programming, with state aid budgeted at \$0.4 million in 2018-19. Other states also distribute funding through grant programs, such as Nebraska, which provided \$2.3 million for gifted and talented grants through lottery revenue in 2017-18.

7. The Blue Ribbon Commission on School Funding recommended an increase in gifted and talented funding in January, 2019. The bipartisan Commission, which consisted of sixteen members, including legislators, school administrators, and other stakeholders, held public hearings and informational hearings throughout the state in 2018. In its final report, the Commission recommended increasing funding for gifted and talented grants by \$500,000, \$1,000,000, or \$2,500,000 GPR annually. The Committee may wish to consider modifying the amount in the bill to match one of these funding amounts. [Alternative 1b, 1c, and 1d]

8. The bill would also modify the statutorily-allowed uses of the grants to emphasize funding programs for underrepresented pupils. The bill would define an underrepresented gifted and talented pupil as a gifted and talented pupil who is any of the following: (a) a minority group pupil; (b) an economically disadvantaged pupil (eligible for free or reduced-price lunch or other measures of poverty as determined by DPI); (c) a child with a disability; or (d) a limited-English proficiency pupil.

9. Some have expressed concern that underrepresented pupils may not have equal access to gifted programs. Research cited by a 2015 National Bureau of Economic Research working paper suggests that minority group pupils, low-income pupils, and English learners are all less likely to be referred to gifted programs, and therefore are underrepresented in those programs compared to their share of the overall population. As a result, such pupils may not have access to coursework and other educational opportunities that are sufficiently challenging.

10. In its agency budget request, DPI indicated that of the approximately 860,000 pupils enrolled in Wisconsin public schools in 2017-18, 103,000 may meet the statutory definition of gifted and talented in intellectual, creative, artistic, leadership, or specific academic areas. It could be argued that because the amount of funding available is relatively small compared to the number of gifted pupils in the state, it may be beneficial to target the funding to areas of particular need. The bill would take this approach by funding programs that target pupils who may otherwise not have access to gifted programs.

11. On the other hand, some would say that because the grants are awarded through a

competitive process, all eligible entities should be able to compete for funds regardless of the population they target. Programs that compete favorably should receive funding, whether they target underrepresented pupils or not. The Committee may wish to consider maintaining the current-law grant requirements. [Alternative 2b]

12. In addition to restricting the use of grants for programs related to underrepresented pupils, the bill would also modify the program to allow funding to be used for professional development related to identifying and educating gifted pupils. In its agency budget request, DPI indicated that adding professional development as an allowable use of grant funds would result in more effective gifted programming. It could be argued that providing training to educators in effective activities and programs for gifted and talented pupils may allow gifted programming to reach a greater number of pupils over a longer period of time, because each trained staff member will educate many pupils over the course of his or her career.

**ALTERNATIVES**

**1. Funding**

a. Approve the Governor's recommendation to provide \$762,800 annually above base level funding of \$237,200 for grants to support gifted and talented education.

ALT 1a	Change to	
	Base	Bill
GPR	\$1,525,600	\$0

b. Provide an increase of \$500,000 annually over base level funding, as recommended by the Blue Ribbon Commission in its 2019 final report.

ALT 1b	Change to	
	Base	Bill
GPR	\$1,000,000	- \$525,600

c. Provide an increase of \$1,000,000 annually over base level funding, as recommended by the Blue Ribbon Commission in its 2019 final report.

ALT 1c	Change to	
	Base	Bill
GPR	\$2,000,000	\$474,400

d. Provide an increase of \$2,500,000 annually over base level funding, as recommended

by the Blue Ribbon Commission in its 2019 final report.

<b>ALT 1d</b>	<b>Change to</b>	
	<b>Base</b>	<b>Bill</b>
GPR	\$5,000,000	\$3,474,400

- e. Take no action.

<b>ALT 1e</b>	<b>Change to</b>	
	<b>Base</b>	<b>Bill</b>
GPR	\$0	-\$1,525,600

## **2. Eligible Grant Activities**

a. Approve the Governor's recommendation to modify the statutory language describing activities eligible for funding under the program to specify that DPI may award grants only for the following purposes: (a) providing to underrepresented gifted and talented pupils those services and activities not ordinarily provided in a regular school program that allow such pupils to fully develop their capabilities, including services and activities provided inside or outside of a pupil's regular classroom; and (b) providing teachers with professional development and training related to identifying and educating gifted and talented pupils. Define an underrepresented gifted and talented pupil as a gifted and talented pupil who is any of the following: (a) a minority group pupil; (b) an economically disadvantaged pupil (eligible for free or reduced-price lunch or other measures of poverty as determined by DPI); (c) a child with a disability; or (d) a limited-English proficiency pupil.

- b. Take no action.

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