



PAUL MELOTIK

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 24TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

(608) 237-9124

Toll-Free: (888) 529-0024

Rep.Melotik@legis.wisconsin.gov

P.O. Box 8953

Madison, WI 53708-8953

Assembly Bill 937: Incorporating Cursive Writing into the State Model English Language Arts Standards and Requiring Cursive Writing in Elementary Grades

Good morning Chairman Kitchens and Members of the Education Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on Assembly Bill 937 and its potential impact on ensuring that all Wisconsin students acquire proficiency in cursive writing.

While education encompasses various goals, I firmly believe that maximizing the potential of our minds ranks among the most crucial. The ability to think critically and creatively is fostered by activating neurological pathways that connect different parts of our brains. Cursive writing uniquely contributes to this process by training the brain to integrate visual and tactile information, along with fine motor dexterity. Unlike printing and typing, cursive stimulates synchronicity between the right and left hemispheres of the brain, offering a comprehensive cognitive exercise.

Furthermore, studies have shown that memory recall of content written in cursive surpasses that of typed words. The distinct muscular engagement and brain activation involved in cursive writing contribute to enhanced memory retention. Additionally, cursive writing aids in the development of motor skills, benefiting students across grade levels.

For students with learning disabilities, particularly dyslexia, cursive writing emerges as a supportive tool. Many struggle with writing in print, and cursive, with its 'flow' style and mind-body connection, often feels more natural to these students. The utilization of different brain regions during cursive writing has been linked to improved learning outcomes, providing a crucial resource for students facing challenges.

Currently 23* states have already recognized the importance of cursive proficiency, incorporating it into their educational standards. As Wisconsin seeks ways to enhance education, it's essential to consider impactful strategies. Cursive writing stands out as such a tool, demonstrating positive results in students' brain development and overall learning outcomes.

In conclusion, I strongly advocate for giving Wisconsin students every opportunity to succeed in school. Cursive writing, a relatively simple yet highly beneficial tool, can play a pivotal role in achieving this goal. Thank you for considering the positive impact of AB 937.

*States that require cursive be taught: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia. 3 have legislation introduced: Minnesota, New Jersey and Washington.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Melotik", written over a horizontal line.

Representative Paul Melotik
24th Assembly District



JOAN BALLWEG

STATE SENATOR · 14TH SENATE DISTRICT

Assembly Bill 937: Incorporating Cursive Writing into the State Model English Language Arts Standards and Requiring Cursive Writing in Elementary Grades
Assembly Committee on Education
Testimony of Senator Joan Ballweg
January 17, 2024

Thank you, Chair Kitchens and members of the committee, for hearing this legislation that incorporates cursive writing into the state's model academic standards for English language arts.

At a time when technology is rapidly evolving and kids are growing up without ever knowing a time before computers, it might seem unnecessary to advocate for legislation promoting cursive writing. However, I believe it is the perfect time to make sure the skill of cursive writing is not lost for our younger generations, especially when Wisconsin students are struggling to learn how to read. While it is important that kids in school learn to type and properly use a computer, there is an abundance of research that shows learning to write by hand, particularly in cursive, helps build foundational skills for literacy.

Recent reports on reading scores for Wisconsin students show they are struggling with reading. According to the National Assessment of Education Progress, about 63% of fourth graders failed to achieve a score at proficient or above in reading. When you break out reading scores by race, the statistics are starker. The report shows "Black students had an average score that was 40 points lower than that for White students. This performance gap was not significantly different from that in 1998 (41 points)."

Having the availability to write in cursive can greatly benefit Wisconsin students, because it helps them to learn how to spell, read, and write. Block printing, cursive, and typing each elicit distinctive neurological patterns. Cursive writing causes the brain to integrate visual and tactile information, with fine motor dexterity. Additionally, while normal printing and typing elicit these patterns, they do not stimulate the synchronicity between both sides of the brain, while cursive can. As students with dyslexia oftentimes struggle with writing in print, numerous studies have shown that cursive may come more naturally to these students and can also improve their learning outcomes.

Assembly Bill 937 requires the state superintendent to incorporate cursive writing into the model academic standards for English language arts. The bill requires all school boards, independent charter schools, and private schools in the parental choice program to include cursive writing in their elementary school curriculum with the objective that students can write legibly in cursive by the end of fifth grade.

When Common Core standards were introduced in 2010, cursive writing was not required in the standards. Since then, at least 23 states have adopted some form of requirement that cursive be included in instruction according to mycursive.com which tracks cursive writing requirements nationwide. We hope Wisconsin can be added to that list soon.

Thank you for your consideration of AB 937.



January 17, 2024

Assembly Committee on Education

**Department of Public Instruction Testimony
2023 Assembly Bill 937**

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) extends its thanks to Chair Kitchens and the committee for this opportunity to offer testimony in opposition to Assembly Bill 937 (AB 937).

Wis. Stat. sec. 121.02(1) enumerates the standards that all public-school districts in Wisconsin must follow. The standards include the subject areas for which public schools are required to provide regular instruction to students (i.e., reading, language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, health, etc.). The standards also include other requirements for school districts, such as employing DPI-licensed/certified staff, administering student (academic) assessments, ensuring that school buildings are safe and healthy, providing emergency nursing services and counseling services – as well as including instruction in specific topics as part of instruction – e.g., personal financial literacy; as part of social studies, instruction on the Holocaust and other genocides, and the history, culture, and tribal sovereignty of the federally recognized American Indian tribes and bands located in this state.

While state statute directs public schools to teach specific subjects and topics, it does not dictate specific curriculum to be used for instruction. Similarly, while DPI develops the Wisconsin Model Academic Standards (WMAS), locally elected school boards adopt academic standards in each subject area to best serve their local community. This is a tenet of the local control philosophy that is foundational to public schools in Wisconsin – that school boards determine the specific standards to adopt and the curriculum that will be used for instruction on required subjects and topics within the school district’s classrooms.

There are currently no legislative requirements (beyond the sequential curriculum plan) related to specifics of English language arts curriculum - specifically, none regarding the Wisconsin Standards for English Language Arts. Although the State Superintendent adopts standards for English language arts, all decisions about standards, curriculum, and assessment are made at the local level.

In 2020, Wisconsin’s Standards for English Language Arts were revised to include the addition of cursive writing. As part of a highly transparent process for adopting standards, the State Superintendent appointed an Academic Standards Review Council that included the respective chairs of the Senate and Assembly Education Committees and a minority member from each of those committees. The Standards Council advised the State Superintendent on the adoption of standards.

Wisconsin's current standards for English language arts include printing and cursive writing. According to those standards, students should be able to print all upper- and lowercase letters by the end of grade 1. Wisconsin's previous standards (adopted in 2010) included only printing. Wisconsin's current standards for English language arts also include keyboarding (typing a minimum of three pages in a single sitting by the end of grade six). Since Wisconsin's Standards for English Language Arts already include cursive writing for kindergarten through grade 6, this legislation is redundant and unnecessary. AB 937 would also set a precedent for the legislature to impose, via statutory requirement, the inclusion of specific skill in the model academic standards produced by DPI.

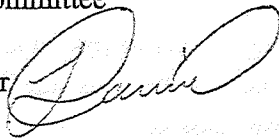
AB 937 minimizes local control by placing a curricular mandate that schools and districts include cursive writing as part of each school's/district's sequential curriculum plan. Currently, school districts are empowered to include cursive writing as part of their curriculum, and some choose to include it and some do not. Further, this bill does not include funding for curriculum, materials, or professional learning for educators.

While the bill requires all students to be proficient in cursive writing by the end of grade five, the bill includes no information or direction about how this proficiency would be assessed. Teaching cursive writing would require time for instruction and practice, which would draw time away from other instruction in core subject areas (reading, science, or social studies) and/or other school activities (such as lunch or recess).

Finally, and most importantly, there is no decisive body of research about cursive writing, thus, no evidence to support the asserted benefits of learning to write in cursive, e.g., the impact of cursive writing on reading or spelling skills, the impact of cursive writing on students' motivation to write or proven instructional and practice techniques for teaching cursive writing.

If you have questions or would like additional information, please contact Kevyn Radcliffe, Legislative Liaison, at kevyn.radcliffe@dpi.wi.gov or (608) 264-6716.

TO: Members, Assembly Education Committee

FROM: Daniel Henderson, Project Manager 

DATE: January 17, 2024

RE: AB 937 - Incorporating cursive writing into state standards.

Thank you for your consideration. The Wisconsin Council of Religious and Independent Schools (WCRIS) opposes AB-937.

As you may know, WCRIS represents over 600 private schools and over 100,000 students in K-12 schools across the state. Nationwide, Wisconsin is in the top 10 of states for private school enrollment. Wisconsin's private schools enroll about ten percent of our state's K4-12th grade population.

About two-thirds of those schools utilize the choice programs to carry out their mission of expanding access to the education they provide.

Currently, many choice schools still provide instruction in cursive writing to their students. Because of that practice, AB-937 would not impose anything new on most choice schools.

However, it will remove a school's autonomy. This autonomy is the driving force behind our schools' success and the reason many parents seek out our schools.

While some may argue that AB-937 is just a minor bill for our schools to follow, WCRIS is here to remind you that it is another mandate looming over our schools this session.

Currently, our choice schools are in the process of revamping their reading curriculum because of the Right to Read Act. Many high schools are awaiting crime reporting rules because of 2023 Act 12.

Furthermore, other proposals are looming that currently lead to more government regulation, bureaucracy and expense:

- AB 24 - Requiring the posting of child abuse and neglect hotline;
- AB 163 - Requiring anti-choking devices in school;

Archdiocese of Milwaukee

Association of Christian
Schools International

Christian Schools
International

Diocese of Green Bay

Diocese of LaCrosse

Diocese of Madison

Diocese of Superior

Lutheran Church
Missouri Synod
North Wisconsin District

Lutheran Church
Missouri Synod
South Wisconsin District

Wisconsin Association
of Independent Schools

Wisconsin Conference
of Seventh Day Adventists

Wisconsin Evangelical
Lutheran Synod
Northern Wisconsin District

Wisconsin Evangelical
Lutheran Synod
Western Wisconsin District

Wisconsin Evangelical
Lutheran Synod
Southeastern Wisconsin
District

Associate Members

PHONE
(608) 287-1224

E-MAIL
wcris.staff@wcris.org

WEBSITE
www.wcris.org

ADDRESS
110 East Main Street
Suite 802
Madison, WI 53703

- AB 223 - Maintaining and supply of opioid antagonists in schools;
- AB 346 - Requiring a cold-water immersion tub at a youth athletic activity hosted by a private school;
- AB 347 - Requiring an automated external defibrillator at youth athletic activities operated by a private school;
- AB 377 - Participating in sports according to sex;
- SB 333 - Relating to the sexual misconduct of school staff and volunteers.

Our schools are responsive to their community and parents. They want school safety for their children. Their wisdom has already instituted many measures that will help improve the education of their students. If any of the above measures are necessary, they will occur as a result of the free choices of the people in charge.

It is no secret that choice schools have received a sizable voucher increase this session. However much of the increase has been needed for costs to comply with the new reading and crime reporting requirements, rather than for closing the existing funding gap. This leaves our schools little additional funding to address these proposed new regulations.

We ask for the removal of private schools from the cursive writing requirements.

Allow our schools and parents to use the competition of the free enterprise system to create the requirement, if needed. It's this very component that has made our schools places of educational excellence, and places of choice for parents.

Please do not hesitate to contact our office if we can be of assistance.

Assembly Bill 937

Requiring instruction to incorporate cursive writing into academic standards

Dear Assembly:

My name is Laura Ackmann and I am the Chapter Chair for Winnebago Moms for Liberty Chapter. Our organization is all about ensuring our children are educated and become contributing citizens. It is amazing that we even have to create a bill to ensure that common sense prevails. Thank you for creating this bill and driving this extremely important initiative – this is critical to Wisconsin Children.

I found the following on the intranet, it wasn't cited but it sound like common sense.....

1. Cursive provides a flow of thought as well as a flow of words.

Numerous studies on the effect of writing in cursive have been completed, but one of the most influential remains a 1976 investigation from the journal *Academic Therapy*. It demonstrated that the act of writing words in a continuous fashion—as opposed to the interrupted format of block letters—promoted an understanding of complete words better than separate letters. Humans, after all, think structurally, not phonetically. Cursive helps reinforce that.

2. Cursive helps you focus on content.

When one becomes proficient in cursive, the barrier between thought and action is minimal. In fact, the College Board found that students taking the essay portion of the SAT exam scored slightly higher when writing in cursive than if they printed their answers. By not having to slow down with block printing, experts believed they could put virtually all of their focus on the content of their work.

3. Cursive gets the entire brain working.

Cursive may seem like just a different way of writing, but studies have found that it activates different neurological pathways than typing or manuscript writing. And reading cursive also activates different parts of the brain than printed text—one study found that in all cases they studied, when they presented information to the left hemisphere of the brain fewer errors occurred than when it was presented to the right hemisphere. But

when reading cursive, this advantage was much smaller, indicating that the right hemisphere plays a much larger role in reading cursive than in printed form.

4. Cursive helps you retain more information.

Studies have shown that taking notes during an educational class using handwriting is preferable to typing. That's because when we type, we're able to transcribe speech almost verbatim. When we write, we have to be more selective and the brain has to process information to decide what's important enough to write down. That level of brain engagement tends to make information "stick" rather than just pass through our typing fingers.

5. Cursive may help improve motor control.

Cursive handwriting is a fine motor skill that allows for plenty of practice. For people with developmental dysgraphia this can have a range of benefits to improve these skills.

6. Cursive will make you a better speller.

The act of writing out words and thinking of them as a single unit means you're more likely to retain their proper spelling than if you simply typed them out. Cursive writers tend to spell more accurately as a result.

Every time you put pen to paper, you can get creative from curlicues to calligraphy. It's just one of the incredible things paper can help you do.

Personally I do not comprehend information as easily on-line and retain information much more when I write my notes and writing in cursive is much faster than printing.

I am in full support of this bill.

Warm Regards,

Laura J. Ackmann

Chapter Chair – Moms for Liberty Winnebago

From: Kay Hudak <khudak07@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 16, 2024 1:04 PM
To: Delaporte, Bob <Bob.Delaporte@legis.wisconsin.gov>
Subject: Civics and Cursive Writing Bill

Dear Bob:

I support your bill regarding incorporating Civics and Cursive Writing into the curriculum. Students need to learn about the history of their country and cursive writing is so important for signing legal documents, etc.

I worked in the school system for 10 years and schools really need to teach this

Kay Hudak
Neenah, WI