



WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GUARANTEE IN EDUCATION (SAGE) PROGRAM

Room 411 South
State Capitol

July 23, 2014
10:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

[The following is a summary of the July 23, 2014 meeting of the Study Committee on the Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) Program. The file copy of this summary has appended to it a copy of each document prepared for or submitted to the committee during the meeting. A digital recording of the meeting is available on our Web site at <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lc>.]

Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Olsen called the committee to order. The roll was called and a quorum was determined to be present.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Sen. Luther Olsen, Chair; Rep. Mary Czaja, Vice Chair; Sen. Dave Hansen; Reps. Jill Billings, Sondy Pope, and Jeremy Thiesfeldt; and Public Members John Gaier, Beth Graue, N. David Kipp, Randy Nelson, Anne Smith, Robert Way and Angela Wiemer.

COMMITTEE MEMBER EXCUSED: Public Member Miguel Sanchez

COUNCIL STAFF PRESENT: Katie Bender-Olson and Jessica Ozalp, Staff Attorneys.

APPEARANCES: Senator Luther Olsen, Co-Chair, Joint Legislative Council; Terry Anderson, Director, Legislative Council Staff; Jennifer Kammerud and Shelly Greller, Department of Public Instruction (DPI); Grant Sim, Value-Added Research Center, University of Wisconsin (UW)-Madison; Peggy Jones, Bonduel School District; Wally Leipart, Merrill Area Public Schools; and Ken Lasure, Spring Valley School District.

Opening Remarks

Chairman Olsen made welcoming remarks and explained the Legislative Council process. He explained his plans and expectations for the committee. Director Anderson provided remarks about the Joint Legislative Council and thanked members for their willingness to serve.

Introduction of Committee Members

The committee members introduced themselves and provided comments regarding their background with education issues and their interest in the topic of the study committee.

Presentations by Invited Speakers

Department of Public Instruction

Jennifer Kammerud and **Shelly Greller**, DPI, presented to the study committee regarding the history of the SAGE program, flexibility for schools and districts in meeting SAGE requirements, state funding for the program, and research on the impacts of the SAGE program. **Grant Sim**, Value-Added Research Center, UW-Madison, also provided comments regarding evaluation of the SAGE program and preliminary findings about the effectiveness and impact of the program.

Ms. Kammerud and Ms. Greller explained how the SAGE program has changed since its establishment in the 1996-97 school year. The program was originally targeted to school districts with at least one school where more than 50% of the students were low-income, but was later expanded to include many more districts. Participation in the SAGE program originally required teacher-to-student ratios of 15:1, but was later raised to 18:1 or 30:2. The speakers further explained that DPI was allowed to grant waivers from various SAGE requirements under prior law, but was prohibited from waiving such requirements after passage of 2009 Wisconsin Act 301.

Ms. Kammerud and Ms. Greller informed the committee that funding for SAGE has been prorated among eligible, low-income students in recent years and provided statistics regarding participation and funding levels. The speakers noted that the number of students eligible for SAGE funding because they qualify for free and reduced-price lunches has increased considerably since 2001.

Ms. Kammerud explained that SAGE has shown an impact on students while they are in SAGE classrooms, but that lasting effects are difficult to determine given the changes to the program over time. The speakers further noted that an analysis of the SAGE program is currently being conducted by the UW-Madison Value-Added Research Center to compare growth of academic performance of students in SAGE schools and those in non-SAGE schools. Mr. Sim provided additional information regarding the evaluation methods used in the ongoing analysis.

The presentation was followed by questions from committee members. The members raised a number of potential changes to the SAGE program during the resulting discussion, such as connecting the SAGE program to year-round school efforts, including 4K classrooms in the SAGE program; allowing DPI to authorize an additional wave of SAGE contracts; and allowing schools to target SAGE funding at specific segments of the student population.

School Administrators

A panel of school administrators provided remarks to the committee. **Peggy Jones, Elementary School Principal, Bonduel School District**, addressed the committee and explained the experiences of her school with the SAGE program. She noted the importance of small class sizes in allowing teachers to spend quality time with students, providing more individualized reading and math instruction, preparing students to take assessments, implementing initiatives, and building close relationships between teachers, students, and parents. Ms. Jones noted that flexibility in the 18:1 classroom ration could be provided when counting students that have severe disabilities that cause them to be outside of the classroom for a large portion of the day.

Wally Leipart, Superintendent, Merrill Area Public Schools, addressed the committee and shared his school district's experience with the SAGE program. He noted the importance of the program for maintaining elementary staff levels and teacher collaboration. Mr. Leipart suggested that the committee consider additional flexibility in the 18:1 classroom ratio in situations where the addition of one or two students renders the entire grade or school ineligible for SAGE funding. He noted that such an "equivalency" model could allow schools to maintain SAGE funding by implementing research or evidence-based programs to support early literacy. Mr. Leipart further suggested weighting all four conditions of the SAGE program in determining SAGE funding eligibility, rather than simply tying eligibility to maintaining 18:1 classroom ratios.

Kenneth Lasure, Elementary School Principal, Spring Valley School District, also addressed the committee regarding his experiences with the SAGE program and his school's effort to maintain required SAGE classroom ratios. He noted that the small number of class sections at each grade level in Spring Valley pose difficulties in meeting the 18:1 ratio requirement of the SAGE program. The school has met the ratio requirements by both hiring additional teachers and by implementing multi-age classes (grades K-1, 1-2, and 2-3). Mr. Lasure noted that these efforts were necessary so that the addition of one or two students would not render his small elementary school ineligible for SAGE funding. He suggested that additional flexibility in classroom ratios and authorization for new SAGE contracts would be helpful to schools.

Presentations by the school administrators were followed by questions from the committee. The members inquired whether allowing flexibility in the 18:1 ratio would lead to future requests for more flexibility, referred to as a "slippery slope." The members also questioned whether allowing individual classrooms that continued to meet the 18:1 ratio to

keep funding, without disqualifying the entire grade level, would lead to “stacking” of students in certain classrooms at numbers far above 18.

Discussion of Committee Assignment

Chair Olsen led committee discussion after completion of invited testimony. He asked members to comment about additional information they would like to receive at future meetings. Committee members made requests for specific statistics and data, as well as research on the efficacy of small class sizes. Members also engaged in discussion regarding various options for altering the current SAGE program that were raised during the presentations.

Other Business

Chair Olsen thanked the members for their attendance and service on the committee.

Plans for Future Meetings

The next meeting of the Study Committee is scheduled for **Thursday, August 14, 2014**, in Madison. The meeting will likely be held in Room 411 South of the State Capitol building.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

KBO:ksm