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## WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

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### STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GUARANTEE IN EDUCATION (SAGE) PROGRAM

Room 411 South  
State Capitol

August 14, 2014  
10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

[The following is a summary of the August 14, 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>.]

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#### 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 and Sindy Pope; and Public Members John Gaier, Beth Graue, N. David Kipp, Miguel Sanchez, Anne Smith, Robert Way and Angela Wiemer.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS EXCUSED: Rep. Jeremy Thiesfeldt and Pubic Member Randy Nelson.

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

APPEARANCES: Beth Graue, Professor of Curriculum and Instruction, Wisconsin Center for Academic Research; Dave Loppnow and Christa Pugh, Legislative Fiscal Bureau; and Lauren Heintz, Research Analyst, National Conference of State Legislatures.

## **Approval of the Committee's Minutes from the July 23, 2014 Meeting**

The committee unanimously approved the minutes from the committee's July 23, 2014 meeting.

### **Presentations by Invited Speakers**

#### **Beth Graue, Sorenson Professor of Early Childhood Education, Wisconsin Center for Education Research (WCER)**

**Beth Graue**, University of Wisconsin-Madison Department of Curriculum and Instruction, presented to the study committee regarding a research study performed five years ago to evaluate the effects of class size reduction and the SAGE program. She emphasized that classroom size is only one of the reforms implemented by the SAGE program, along with the provision of challenging curriculum, teacher professional development, and better home-school collaboration. She differentiated pupil-teacher ratio, which is a method of ensuring equitable distribution of state funds, from class size reduction, which is a grouping strategy to reduce the number of children assigned to each classroom.

Ms. Graue discussed the theory of an inverse relation between classroom size and desirable student outcomes. She explained that the assumption behind this theory is that better outcomes will result from more assessment opportunities, better interaction between home and school, and better knowledge of students' individual needs. Ms. Graue then discussed the findings from the Student Teacher Achievement Ratio (STAR) study of Tennessee elementary students assigned to smaller classes of 13-17 students. These students outperformed classmates assigned to regular classes of 22-25 students. There were both short-term and long-term improvements in outcomes, including better ability to self-regulate behavior in the classroom.

Ms. Graue informed the committee about "side effects" of smaller class sizes, such as impacts on teacher hiring and teacher quality, and variations in local implementation of class size reduction. She also addressed differential effects on students from varied racial backgrounds. In response to committee questions, she discussed alternative options and influential factors, such as teacher quality and teacher professional development. Ms. Graue noted that opponents of the investment in class size reduction cite the cost and argue for more economical approaches. She listed reasons reported by nonparticipating school districts for not participating in SAGE, such as insufficient funding and space limitations.

The committee members discussed with Ms. Graue the importance of professional development and access to resources and supports for teachers in SAGE classrooms, which enable teachers to adapt responsive teaching strategies to maximize the benefits of small classrooms. Ms. Graue noted that the agenda for professional development in most districts is currently focused on implementing the Common Core state standards. She explained that while other factors could make a difference in teaching effectiveness, research shows contextual factors such as class size "cannot be ignored" because they significantly impact teaching effectiveness and outcomes.

**Dave Loppnow and Christa Pugh, Legislative Fiscal Bureau (LFB)**

**Dave Loppnow** and **Christa Pugh**, LFB, presented general information about categorical aid funding, information on state funding for the SAGE program, as well as information regarding participation by school districts across the state. Mr. Loppnow and Ms. Pugh described the LFB memorandum submitted to the committee, which provides an overview of SAGE funding and participation.

Mr. Loppnow and Ms. Pugh informed the committee about the proportion of general purpose revenue (GPR) appropriated for school aids, school levy, and first dollar tax credits (which reduce the gross school property tax levy). The speakers presented details on 2014-15 general fund appropriations by spending purpose. They also described state funding for school aids in the 2013-15 biennium.

Mr. Loppnow and Ms. Pugh presented the GPR categorical aid appropriations in 2014-15, by funding amounts, and broke down per pupil aid and SAGE appropriations. They noted the number of SAGE school districts, school buildings, full-time equivalent (FTE) pupils, and aid amounts, as well as the number of free and reduced price lunch eligible students and other relevant statistics.

Responding to questions from the committee, Mr. Loppnow and Ms. Pugh noted that Department of Public Instruction (DPI) has further data on local contribution and that information may be available on property ownership to determine how much of the contribution comes from property tax on second homes or rental properties.

**Lauren Heintz, Research Analyst, National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)**

**Lauren Heintz**, NCSL, addressed the committee regarding legislative and policy initiatives other states have implemented regarding class size reduction. She provided information in her materials regarding state class size laws and the range in class size requirements. She also furnished a list of state class size statutes for the committee's reference.

Ms. Heintz described nationwide trends in general class size law, and the range of measures to enforce caps and ratios. She informed the committee about a variety of funding mechanisms utilized in different states to achieve smaller class sizes, and explained the most common uses for the funding. She then outlined recent research on class size reduction and its effect on student outcomes.

Ms. Heintz noted policy considerations in state efforts, such as funding, professional development for teachers and administrators, and parental and community involvement. She stated the laws are mostly general, although Washington has taken a more prescriptive approach. She discussed the difficulty of measuring impacts when the only measures available in early grades are indexes of social and emotional development. She noted that most states do not formally assess students in literacy or mathematics skills until they reach fourth grade.

## **Discussion of Committee Assignment**

Chair Olsen led committee discussion after completion of invited testimony. Members engaged in discussion regarding various options for altering the current SAGE program that were raised during the July meeting and summarized by Legislative Council staff in Memo No. 1. Representatives from DPI made themselves available to answer questions regarding federal Title I rules, and to clarify DPI's counting procedures for SAGE student-teacher ratio requirements.

The committee requested fiscal estimates from LFB. The committee also requested that the Legislative Council perform a survey of schools which have terminated participation in SAGE to find out more about their reasons and what factors would make it feasible for them to participate again.

## **Other Business**

Legislative Council staff announced that future meeting dates would be determined after an email survey to determine member availability.

## **Plans for Future Meetings**

The next meeting of the Study Committee is scheduled for **Monday, September 22, 2014**, in Madison.

## **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

JO:ksm