WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Tony Evers, PhD, State Superintendent

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To: Directors of Curriculum and Instruction; Directors of Special Education and Pupil Services

From: Sheila Briggs, Assistant State Superintendent, Division for Academic Excellence

Carolyn Stanford Taylor, Assistant State Superintendent, Division for Learning Support

Subject: Reading Teachers and the Provision of Specially Designed Reading Instruction as Outlined in Students' IEPs

The purpose of this memo is to make local educational agency (LEA) leadership aware of a flexible option to help with decision-making for providing and funding instructional supports for students with disabilities who are struggling in the area of literacy and require specially designed reading instruction as a special education service. LEAs may choose to use reading teachers (1316 licensed) to provide the specially designed literacy instruction outlined in a student's individualized education program (IEP). Additionally, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) flow-through or preschool funds may be used to fund the portion of the time that is used to provide this specially designed instruction. At this time, such instruction is not eligible for state special education categorical aids reimbursement.

LEAs are responsible for assigning qualified staff to implement the special education services listed on a student's IEP. When reading instruction is listed as an IEP service, the LEA may determine whether a special education teacher or a certified reading teacher will provide the outlined instruction. This decision may be based on a number of factors, such as teacher background and level of expertise in the content area of literacy and match to the individualized needs of the student. LEAs should look broadly at the services needed for both students with and without disabilities to ensure all students receive high quality reading instruction. Additionally, LEAs are encouraged to provide professional development and coaching opportunities in the areas of reading instruction and assessment for teachers who may lack expertise in these areas. IDEA flow through or preschool funds may also be used to pay for professional development and coaching of special education teachers by reading specialists.

It should also be noted that while teachers holding a reading teacher license (1316) are licensed to teach reading to all students, including those with disabilities, teachers holding only a special education license are only licensed to teach reading to students with disabilities when reading is listed as a special education service in the IEP. For more information regarding special education personnel working with students without IEPs, please see guidance at: https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sped/pdf/sped-incidental-benefit.pdf. For more information about the licensure requirements for providing interventions within a multi-level system of support see guidance at: http://tepdl.dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/tepdl/pdf/RtI-Licensure-Guidance.pdf.

The time that appropriately licensed reading teachers provide reading instruction to students with disabilities as outlined in IEPs may be reimbursed with IDEA flow-through or preschool funds if time and effort documentation is maintained by the LEA. For more information on time and effort reporting, please see guidance at: http://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/wisegrants/pdf/time-and-effort-requirements.pdf.

It is the hope that, with this flexibility in the use of personnel and funding sources, LEAs will be able to make decisions to best meet the needs of all students.