

Assembly Committee on Education
July 16, 2015

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Testimony on 2015 Assembly Bill 248

I want to thank Chairman Thiesfeldt and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Jennifer Kammerud and I serve as a policy advisor at the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and with me today is Sheila Briggs, Assistant State Superintendent, Division for Academic Excellence. I am here today to testify in opposition to Assembly Bill 248 (AB 248).

While AB 248 would require local school boards to incorporate the Model Academic Standards for Financial Literacy into their curriculum, the requirement that the statewide examination under Wis Stat. §118.30 (1) assess a pupil's financial literacy is of particular concern.

The bill would require the statewide examination, now given in grades 3-11, to assess a pupil on personal financial literacy in addition to English language arts (ELA), mathematics, and science. This creates several implementation concerns and could directly impact the current request for proposal (RFP) to replace the Smarter Balance examination for the 2015-16 school year and the existing ACT exams in high school.

Additionally, I would like to note the following:

- There is no way to incorporate these changes into the current RFP without starting the RFP process over, which would make it impossible for the state to have a test in place in the next school year.
- DPI is not aware of any test vendors with a product that tests ELA, mathematics, science and personal financial literacy.
- As a result, DPI would need to procure a separate statewide standardized financial literacy assessment customized to align with Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards for Personal Financial Literacy. This would be expensive to develop, test, and implement.
- This creates another state-mandated testing requirement in a time when we are having a national conversation about the number of tests students should take and the time spent on testing.

As for the current state of financial literacy in Wisconsin schools, Sheila and the staff in her Division worked with the Department of Financial Institutions (DFI) in 2013 to initiate a survey of all state school districts to determine the level at which personal finance was being taught to Wisconsin students.

The survey was conducted by St. Norbert's College Strategic Research Institute, and had an excellent response rate of 97 percent of Wisconsin's 424 school districts responding. The survey showed that in 2013:

- **74 percent** of districts included Personal Financial Literacy (PFL) content integrated within courses other than a discrete PFL course.
- **60 percent** of school districts reported offering PFL content at grade levels other than high school.
- In districts with a required course, **89 percent** aligned their PFL to Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards for Personal Financial Literacy.
- **44 percent** of Wisconsin school districts already required a course in PFL in order to graduate.

DPI also currently administers the Financial Literacy School Initiatives program in collaboration with DFI to promote teaching financial literacy in the Wisconsin classrooms. This program, which is funded by DFI, supports public and private schools and school districts in providing sustainable financial literacy programs, events, and policies. Proposals received by DPI are brought to the Governor's Council on Financial Literacy which reviews and approves recommendations. In 2015, \$358,000 in grants will be awarded to 27 Wisconsin school districts to support financial literacy efforts. Fourteen of those grants are being awarded to schools districts for establishing a required course in PFL.

Finally, I should note that AB 248 would make the state's academic standards for financial literacy mandatory for all school districts and expand the scope of state-required assessment. This runs counter to what we have been hearing regarding local control, the amount of time spent on testing, and the scope of that testing.

Given the implementation issues and policy concerns, we ask you not to advance this proposal.

Thank you, Chairman Thiesfeldt and committee members, for your time today. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.