

**Joint Meeting of the Senate Education Reform Committee &
Assembly Education Committee
March 10, 2015**

**Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 67 & Assembly Bill 78**

Senator Farrow and Representative Thiesfeldt, thank you for holding public hearing on this important issue. My name is Jeff Pertl, and I am a Senior Policy Advisor at the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). I am testifying in support of Senate Bill 76 & Assembly Bill 78. DPI also supports the clarifying amendment (and this testimony will reflect that intent).

There have been a lot of changes going on in our schools over the last few years, including new district and school report cards, an educator effectiveness system, interventions for low performing public schools, college- and career-ready standards, interoperable data systems, academic and career planning, and next generation assessments.

In State Superintendent Evers' travels across the state, he has heard concerns about the changes in assessment and how those changes might impact data in the educator effectiveness and school report card systems. In his February 17, 2015, letter to District Administrators, State Superintendent Tony Evers outlined key principles around uniform, annual assessment:

- He supports the annual testing requirements that presently are found in state and federal law, including a uniform assessment for all publically funded schools in our state;
- Wisconsin is a high achieving state overall, but we face some of the largest achievements gaps in the country (and we know that because of assessment);
- Assessments should be seen as flashlights that help educators and parents shine a light on students' strengths and weaknesses and support student learning.

However, he also wrote that he supports "hitting the pause button on aspects of school report cards, and educator evaluations, related specifically to the new Badger Exam." This bill does that in two specific ways.

SB 67/AB 78 creates a "report card holiday," where district and school report cards would not be published in 2014-15. This will provide much needed relief to schools, allowing them to focus on student learning and successful implementation of the new assessments, without worrying about how results of the new assessments will impact report card scores.

To be clear, schools are still required to take state assessment under federal and state law, and student performance will be included in the WISEdash public reporting portal. Please note, these

requirements cannot be waived and failure to properly assess students and report results puts at-risk \$600 million in federal education funding.

The assessments, though new, will still provide valuable information about student learning. Moreover, publicly reported data will keep the focus on student performance and ensures we all remain vigilant around closing achievement gaps, while reducing report card-related anxiety in this time of transition.

SB 67/AB 78 as amended will delay integrating the state assessment into the educator effectiveness (EE) system for one year. The holistic EE system will still be implemented, but will not include results from the Badger Exam. Effectiveness is about much more than the state assessment and educator scores would be based on the other metrics, including student learning objectives (SLOs) and measures of practice. Removing the state assessment data from the EE system this year will relieve educators of the stress of wondering how these new assessment results will affect their evaluations, allowing them to remain focused on improving student learning.

SB 67/AB 78 offers a sensible pathway forward that provides needed flexibility and relief, while preserving Wisconsin's longstanding tradition of high quality education. I have included the State Superintendent's letter to district administrators for your reference, and I would be happy to answer any questions.