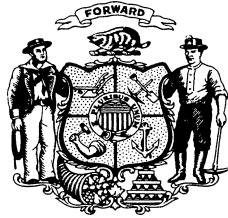


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JOINT COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

MEMORANDUM

To: Members
Joint Committee on Finance

From: Senator Howard Marklein
Representative Mark Born

Date: October 16, 2025

Re: DPI Report to JFC

Attached is a report on Literacy Coaching from the Department of Public Instruction, pursuant to s. 115.39(4), Stats.

This report is being provided for your information only. No action by the Committee is required. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

Attachments

HM:MB:jm



Report on Literacy Coaching

As required by Wis. Stat. §§ 115.39(4)

October 15, 2025

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Report on Literacy Coaching

As required by Wis. Stat. §§ 115.39(4)

Developed by
Barb Novak, PhD
Director, Office of Literacy



Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Jill K. Underly, PhD, State Superintendent
Madison, Wisconsin

This report is available from:

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October 2025
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

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Introduction

Purpose of the Report

Wis. Stat. §§ 115.39(4) requires the Office of Literacy within the Department of Public Instruction to compile a report on at least all the following for the previous school year.

The report must be submitted to the Joint Committee on Finance by October 15, 2024, and by each October 15 thereafter.

- The number of literacy coaches assigned to schools under Wis. Stat. §§ 115.39(3)(a-b)
- The number of schools that were assigned a literacy coach Wis. Stat. §§ 115.39(3)(a-b)
- The number of contracts that the office entered into for literacy coaches and the number of contracts that were terminated
- The number of requests submitted for a literacy coach by schools who request early literacy support
- The results of the grade 3 Wisconsin Forward results for reading and early literacy screening results for schools assigned a literacy coach under Wis. Stat. §§ 115.39
- A description of the ongoing training on science-based early literacy instruction and instruction practices provided to literacy coaches by the Office of Literacy
- For the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years, the number of individuals who completed the mandatory professional development training under [2023 Wisconsin Act 20](#), section [27 \(2\)](#)

The following report fulfills DPI's statutory requirement.

Reporting for Wis. Stat. §§ 115.39(4)(a-f)

Funding for the literacy coach program was granted to DPI through the 2023-2025 state biennial budget Wisconsin state statute Chapter 20: Appropriations [20.255\(1\)\(fc\)](#), and the subsequent 2023 Act 100.

In late June, actions taken by the Joint Committee on Finance made \$9 million available to administer this program. This report includes data from fiscal year 2025 (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025). Because funds for early literacy coaching were not available until late June 2025, this report does not include information about the early literacy coaching program during the 2024 – 2025 school year.

Early Literacy Coaching Program for 2025-2026 and beyond

With \$9,009,900 available for the early literacy coaching program, the department is prepared to place coaches in schools. Per statute, coaches will be assigned at the school level with three coaches per CESA and an equal distribution of coaches assigned to schools with the greatest need and schools who request a coach, including at least one coach in a private school and one coach in a charter school.

The department anticipates entering contracts with schools for the equivalent of 36 full-time coaches. While statute allows for the equivalent of up to 64 full-time coaches, funding would allow for up to 64 coaches for one year. Awarding contracts to schools to place up to 36 full-time equivalent coaches allows coaches to serve for two years.

Coaches will be assigned as half-time or full-time with the size and needs of the school determining the allocation.

To be selected to enter a contract for an early literacy coach, a school must:

- agree to enter a two-year contract with DPI and commit to meeting all contract deliverables and
- complete an application detailing how the coach will contribute to meeting the school's early literacy improvement goal by supporting explicit and systematic instruction in science-based early literacy coaching without using three-cueing.

The district may submit an invoice for payment three times per year. Payment will be made based on progress toward contract deliverables.

Timeline

Mid-December	The contract, application, and related guidance are - shared on the DPI website and district and school leaders are notified about the opportunity.
Mid-January	The application is closed.
Late-January	DPI and CESAs will engage in a collaborative process to select schools to participate in the early literacy coaching program.
Mid-February	Schools will receive notification from DPI that they have been selected to participate in the early literacy coaching program.
Early April	<p>If a school prefers and can secure a qualified coach, a modified contract will be issued that allows the early literacy coach to begin work in the 2025 – 2026 school year.</p> <p>Coaches with an early April start date will be engaged in training and professional learning facilitated by the department with an emphasis on building relationships, understanding the current school practices and student learning data, planning for 2026 – 2027 school improvement efforts related to early literacy, including facilitating professional learning in Summer 2026.</p>

Hiring Coaches

The school or district is responsible for hiring the early literacy coach, who must meet the qualifications outlined in the contract and have or be in the process of obtaining a valid 17 (reading specialist license). This could include a school or district contracting with a CESA for a coach or management of the process of hiring a coach.

When selecting schools the department will prioritize applications from schools that do not currently have an early literacy coach. However, applications will also be considered from schools that already have a coach. In such cases the contract and related funds must be used for the salary and benefits of the early literacy coach. The school or district will then divert the funds currently being used to pay the early literacy coach to one of the following: staffing for reading intervention in 5K – 3rd grade, staffing for reading intervention in 4th through 6th grades, an additional coach to serve in grades outside of 4K – 3rd grade, or a proposal for other staffing related to early literacy to be approved by the department.

The Work of Coaches

Per statute, coaches may not have duties other than coaching. Therefore, coaches cannot serve as substitutes, be assigned duties (like lunch or recess duty), or teach students in universal instruction or intervention. It is also not permissible for coaches to be responsible for administering screening or diagnostic assessment or writing personal reading plans.

Coaches will use improvement cycles in which the coach:

- studies what is currently happening in classrooms;
- collaborates with other school and district leaders to select evidence-based early literacy practices to accelerate student learning with an emphasis on practices that address student achievement disparities in reading;
- facilitates training for all staff about how to use the selected practice;
- coaches one-on-one or in small groups to support and refine implementation of the practice; and
- visits classrooms to collect data to inform next steps,

This cycle is repeated until the desired practice is consistently being used in classrooms. Then, the cycle is repeated with a new practice.

In addition to developing teacher practice, the coach will work with school and district leaders to implement a multi-level system of support (MLSS) for early literacy to ensure the system is able to respond to each student's unique strengths and needs.

Schools assigned a coach are encouraged to connect the work of the coach to other requirements, such as but not limited to school improvement planning processes required for the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA). The department will leverage existing DPI-paid services available within CESAs, including the WiMLSS Project and the TA Network, to support intentional connections to school improvement efforts.

Training and Professional Learning for Coaches

Coaches will be supported by a statewide coordinator. The statewide coordinator, together with the Director of the Office of Literacy will lead learning and training about strengthening coaching practice, planning and delivering high-quality adult learning, and science-based early literacy. Coaches will submit monthly data and evidence to demonstrate progress toward contract deliverables.

Reporting for Wis. Stat. §§ 115.39(4)(g)

Administrators and Educators

DPI is required to report (for the 2023 – 24 and 2024 – 25 school years), the number of individuals who completed the mandatory professional development training under 2023 Wisconsin Act 20, section 27 (2), which requires teachers of 5K through grade 3 and principals and reading specialists serving students in 5K through grade 3 to complete professional development training that meets the requirements of 2023 Wisconsin Act 20, section 27(2).

Teachers must enroll in the professional development training prior to July 1, 2025. Administrators must complete the training prior to July 1, 2025.

An online survey was sent to the superintendent or equivalent of each district or independent charter school that serves students in 5K through grade 3. Recipients received a unique link and had approximately six weeks to reply. Reminders were sent. Seventy-three percent (314 of 430) of districts and charter schools responded.

Group	Total Number	Number Completed (%)	Number Enrolled (%)	Number Not Started (%)
Administrators	1,325	1,219 (92.0%)	97 (7.3%)	9 (0.7%)
Teachers	9,545	5,600 (58.7%)	3,846 (40.3%)	99 (1.0%)

University of Wisconsin System Faculty or Academic Staff

2023 Wisconsin Act 20, section 27 (2) also requires professional development training for University of Wisconsin System faculty or academic staff member who teach a course that includes curriculum in reading instruction designed for an individual who intends to apply for a license issued by the DPI to teach a grade from kindergarten to 3, to be a principal, or to be a reading specialist has received the professional. The training must be complete by July 1, 2025.

The University of Wisconsin System did not reply to requests for information about progress toward this requirement.