

9.14.2021 Wisconsin Assembly Education Committee hearing on AB446 (Machine Generated Transcript)

[00:00:00] **Peng Her:** Alright, uh, next we have Peng Her, who is speaking in favor is from Madison and on deck. Has Robert Meyer also speaking in favor. So Robert, if you, well, wherever you decide, it's quicker to bounce up here is right from there to, there is fine. All right, Mr. Her, you may begin. No, no. Thank you, gentlemen, please Feld in extreme members of the education committee to allow me the opportunity to speak before the education can be done.

[00:00:25] AB four 40. My name is Peng Her. And, um, I'm not an education expert. Um, I'm not here to talk about, um, you know, what's the best reading strategy or assessment to use or how funding should be used, but, uh, what I am as a father of three, and I'm someone who cares deeply for the success among students here in Madison.

[00:00:44] I'm here really to share with you things I've seen and experienced over the past 10 years and what the Hmong community has really had to do to make sure their student or their child got the academic support that they need to be able to read and write and perform math at [00:01:00] grade level here in Madison, I'm here to talk about why it's so important to make sure parents are notified in a manner that they understand how their student and their child are doing in school.

[00:01:11] Um, whether it's a standardized test or with the sec, these assessments, um, and the port is, uh, providing appropriate interventions for these students as they continue on with your educational careers and the Madison metropolitan school district, how I'll use the acronym can MMSD. It took me about five years and working with two different superintendents to get the Hmong data desegregate out of the Asian-American data.

[00:01:36] The challenges that our most students were facing were being. When these data were being, um, compiled together because there were some Asian members doing group two really well. When I finally got the MMSD to desegregate the Hmong data, it showed that in 2012 and 2013 school year with our WKCE test scores, 6.8% Hmong students were proficient in [00:02:00] reading and only 26% proficient in math.

[00:02:03] So I handed some handouts to you. And so that the handout I'm referring to is this one here on the F on the front. Um, before I would have payer Hmong parents telling me that their child wasn't doing well in school, but these are all anecdotal stories because we didn't have any data to prove it. But when the data came out, it was eye-opening.

[00:02:25] They took our breath away, nine out of 10. Most students not being able to be proficient in reading or seven out of 10, not proficient in math at grade level. What would the future hold for these young men? What would the future be like? Well, we have another generation of students falling between the cracks.

[00:02:48] What message are we telling these parents and these students that they don't matter? Many of the Hmong parents told me that they knew that their child's tests. Um, many of the Hmong [00:03:00] parents told me they didn't know how their students were doing on these times. But they knew they had to do something. And this prompted my own parents to create the molten language, culture, rich program using culturally and linguistically relevant teaching model.

[00:03:15] That if a child is grounded in their home language, culture, they do better in school and better in the career. If a student knows who they are, where they're from and their culture in the language, this increases their positive, else's positive, self-esteem their self-confidence and self pride in where they are, where they came.

[00:03:34] Parents' old egg rolls. They volunteered to cook lunches for the students. Um, they bought school materials as we first started this program among the language cultural rich proprio teaches among students how to read and write him on how to speak in Hmong about the history of their culture. On average students increase their reading, writing and Hmong by 60%.

[00:03:58] And that's in six weeks. This [00:04:00] is a summer program for six. For those of you who may not know the Hmong language is a tonal language, which means one word could be pronounced seven different ways. Um, and so as you could imagine, it could be very difficult for a young person, but at the same time, if you create an environment that supports them, have teachers that look like them, they thrive and they succeed.

[00:04:23] Um, we felt it was important to be more proactive than reactive with the data that.

[00:04:34] The other challenge we saw was the lack of interventions, um, that supported our students. Current law requires school boards and schools to provide interventions for students who show, um, uh, not being ready for reading readiness. Um, when I last checked with the Madison Metropolitan school district, we have one part-time certified bilingual resource teacher [00:05:00] for the whole day.

[00:05:01] Of 900 among students, one person working part-time serving 900 Hmong students. I think we can all agree. That's probably not enough. Parents tell me that students, um, don't receive any interventions. Um, there aren't any support programs for most students. If you look on the, if you flip the page over, you'll see it from 2014 to 2019 school year data using the map score.

[00:05:29] Reading proficiency, pretty stagnant. It's straight across about 34% math. Again, stagnant 20% proficiency for Hmong students. There's little change in these test scores, which showed parents were right. There were little interventions helping our students succeed in school. So the challenges parents shared with me, as I mentioned, not getting the test results in a language that.

[00:05:55] So they could really understand what was going on and how the student was performing, [00:06:00] but also the lack of interventions to support the most students clearly shown by the data that I showed you. This bill helps make sure parents are notified, um, in a language that they're comfortable with, whether it's mom, we're Spanish, um, making sure that they also know how to advocate to get the interventions that their students need.

[00:06:18] Increasing literacy should be a paramount issue for everyone in this state, because that's our future. It shouldn't be a partisan football being kicked around by both parties. And I'm not saying that one blaming one over the other. I think that we all agree that the feature was concert really rests on these young men and women.

[00:06:35] And we should do whatever we can to make sure that their reading literacy is increase to where they can perform and do the work that we need them to do. And as global community that we are going to be facing in the future. So I thank you for your time and hopefully no tough questions for me.

[00:06:54] All right. Thank you for your testimony and for these statistics that were provided to us. [00:07:00] Uh, I think that, uh, whether you can answer this or not, I'm not sure, but I'll, I'll lob it out at you. And if you can't, we have a lot of people who I would say our experts who will be testifying following you. And a lot of the among children are, this is a second language, uh, English as a second language to them.

[00:07:20] And so. Learning a new language, I would think would even emphasize the importance of the science of reading as the approach to learning how to read, because you don't necessarily have those same relationships with the letters and a foreign language as you do in English. And then perhaps some of the letters might even be different, not even use just symbols of some sort.

[00:07:44] Uh, so. Any thoughts on that? At first, I would say that, um, whether they're Hmong students or Spanish students or students who speak multiple languages, we should see that as a, instead of a deficit model, but a [00:08:00] something positive because we now have students or individuals who speak multiple languages.

[00:08:04] And I think that helps the student as they, their brain develops, be able to learn quicker and better. Um, I think that many. Again, in the Madison school district, about 80% of among students are labeled ELL and about 76% qualify for free reduced lunch. And so sometimes they people think that those two relate to.

[00:08:28] 'cause they're ELL. They're poor. Right? And so that's where the deficit model comes in. And so I think we, as a community need to start looking at that as more of a positive that folks who speak multiple languages and also take advantage of how can we then use that to make sure students learn, um, um, in a way that's appropriate for them.

[00:08:46] And so one of the strengths of our program is that culturally relevant teaching model, where, uh, we take into consideration the culture aspect of that. Making sure that the teaching style, the teaching method both fits with the [00:09:00] student as well as with the parents, because we recognize parents are the students' first teacher and making sure that they feel comfortable, uh, advocating for their students in a way that is culturally responsive.

[00:09:10] Right. And so I think those are things that, um, I hope whether it's DPI or is this legislation or, uh, members of this committee also consider when they're thinking about whether it's this bill or future. Representative Roser and then representative kitchens.

[00:09:29] Uh, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Um, appreciate you coming today and giving testimony to the committee. I just wanted to clarify something that you, um, talked about, um, and make sure I understand. Um, I love people that are multilingual. I think that it's just great and I agree 100% that it's to people's benefit to learn multiple languages when you're talking about.

[00:09:55] Um, increasing literacy and I'm not sure exactly what your [00:10:00] phrase was in the language they're comfortable in. Are you, are you promoting that? We do more in the classroom to have. Students where English is not their primary language to shore up with that language. Or I'm just looking for some clarification on your understanding of how we can help students, whose language is not primary English to increase their.

[00:10:34] Sure. Yeah. I think one of the ways I, as I mentioned, um, is having teachers and administrators that look like them who reflect their, um, ethnicity, um, having staff who are bilingual, helping them understand whether it's, um, you know, working through a problem or the reading readiness, so that, uh, if, um, a teacher is explaining it in English and the [00:11:00] child may not fully understand.

[00:11:03] Being able to do that. But I think also, uh, having programs that help support the student in their native language also can also help benefit them as they're learning. Right. I recognize that, um, English is a language that is spoken universally globally. And so English is very important to, to learn at the same time supporting that child and their native language.

[00:11:26] Also, it is important to ask a followup question, please. And I'd like, I'd like you to just understand where I'm coming from. I was a professor at UW Eau Claire college of nursing for awhile. We had some Hmong students. Who were not successful in our program because I didn't teach my nursing students in Hmong.

[00:11:48] I taught my nursing students in English. And so when I tested the students that I taught, I happened to have taught pharmacology was not a very easy course, [00:12:00] and I didn't make it very easy. So when I tested my students, there was a real language. Barrier. There were sometimes a student

whose language was not English didn't even understand the questions that I was asking.

[00:12:17] So how do you expect them to give a correct answer? When their literacy in the language that they were being taught in was not, um, a language that they were familiar with. And you know, when we talk about reading is critical to future success. I don't disagree with you that there needs to be a cultural component to that, but there also needs to be the cultural component of the culture that the individual is living in.

[00:12:51] And I'm not being critical at all. I'm just telling you that for those students, Who were not proficient in [00:13:00] English. It was very difficult for them to come into my nursing. And I say my nursing program. So it certainly wasn't. My nursing program was the one I taught in. Because they were not proficient in English.

[00:13:14] It was very difficult for them to be successful in our program. I would have done anything I could have to have helped these students, but they, they could not be successful. So I guess I'm just having a hard time understanding where being proficient in another language. Is going to help long-term success for people who are also not proficient in the language that is the predominant language of the culture that they live in.

[00:13:44] Am I making sense? You are? You're making sense. I think for me, I think one of the things we also have to look at is, is that standardized tests you're talking about, um, done in a way that shows the proficiency of a student. Right? And so, in [00:14:00] your example, um, if. Most nursing student was taking a written standardized test in English and their literacy wasn't up to par.

[00:14:09] They didn't pass because they weren't proficient because they didn't know what they're doing is because they weren't proficient in the literacy of that test. Right. So I think we can all agree that, that, um, we can look about how can we change that model so that a person who may not speak English as their first language.

[00:14:26] We have shown and demonstrated their proficiency and other ways, whether it's taking the temperature and you measure it that way, are they, uh, uh, giving a shot, the shot to a, uh, uh, patient correctly versus just only using standardized tests? Uh, secondly, I think, um, um, more research needs to be done on if a person, um, you know, let me get back.

[00:14:51] I think there's, I don't know how we can measure a person's, uh, Uh, ability to speak multiple angels, being comfortable in the language [00:15:00] and having self-confidence self pride in their culture and their language is measured on a test. And so how do we also measure that, um, in our program where students who, um, are not doing well in reading and writing in English can come to this program, learn to read and write in their language is by 60% within six.

[00:15:19] Uh, show that, um, having a program that's culturally competent can help them increase the literacy, whether it's in Hmong or in English.

[00:15:30] I appreciate your comments. And I, I, you were probably going way above this, this bill, but it, that reading literacy is so important to future success. And I don't know how we do that in multiple languages when we're not doing a very good job in English. Thank you. Uh, alright then representative kitchens.

[00:15:53] And I think he's the last question. Oh, we got represented. What key after him then? Yeah. And that's just kind of a little on the lines of her. I wanted to [00:16:00] understand that a little bit. So you formed a foundation to teach these among kids where they were, they strictly learning one literacy or you or English as well, or was there a correlation?

[00:16:13] There's a correlation. So we spent half of the time that the morning teach them how to read and write. But we also provide academic tutoring in math, in English also, because we also recognize at the end of the day, when they go back to their home school, they're going to get tested on their ability to read and write in English.

[00:16:28] And so we do both. So you're essentially doing what the schools should have been doing for those kids. You had to form a people to take that credit. If you want to give me that credit. Well, it's credit to you, but it's discredit sort of to the school system that that was necessary, I guess. But thank you.

[00:16:45] Represent. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you for your testimony. Step one quick question, because, uh, talk a lot about, um, notifying parents and so on and, uh, come from areas of state. Like I do, you know, that family structures [00:17:00] sometimes aren't as clean as they should be. So you've worked with a community of people that, you know, looking at a parent, uh, notifications and things like.

[00:17:10] Did you do anything? Or do you have any recommendations where let's say the family structure may not. I've heard it termed as the bridge between school and home. So if there's, so you have to find a way to bridge that to, to help student be successful. So in that vein, w w did you find anything that you specifically did that had helped that situation?

[00:17:33] Or if, if the, if not, that's fine. I just was curious. Yeah, I'll share the example. So when we started this program, let me backtrack. So for many of our young parents, they come from, um, from Laos. So educational system much different than. And so in that educational system, the belief is that when a parent sends a child to school, it is the sole responsibility of the school then to educate and maybe be disciplined if needed.

[00:17:57] Right? And so you come here and that's not the case. [00:18:00] Parents would call me and says, Hey, I got a call from this high school saying that my son is

missing. Like not at school. I dropped them off. I saw him walk into this door. Why is the school calling me? Why are they not out looking for my child? Right. And I have to explain.

[00:18:14] And this educational system as a parent, you're still respond, even though you, you dropped them off, he saw him walked through the front door and then you laugh. It's still your responsibility. And so when we started this program, I think parents were excited about it and they started volunteering. And when they started volunteering, they started seeing how important it is to be active in your child's education so that they learn.

[00:18:40] Efficacy plays a big role. And so for us, what really helps our school be successful is how do we get parents to, uh, uh, be active and be part of a child's education. Right? And so by creating that space, Felt comfortable coming to, uh, felt [00:19:00] comfortable talking to, well, I don't call myself administrative of folks who help run the program teachers.

[00:19:05] Um, they began to open their eyes about the need for that. And so I think that correlates to your question about how do we engage our parents, right. Who may not be as engaged in the past. And I think that, um, Um, a lot of that ownership goes to this school district or school administrators in that particular school, because they know their community in the sense that here, man, has, we have a large amount community maybe up in Rhinelander, maybe not as big as one, but there might be more, um, folks who work in the rural, uh, the, uh, the, the farming who, uh, go up there, do that.

[00:19:39] And so, uh, how do we, um, teach or get our administrative. To find ways to reach out and get parents to be more involved in that, in that piece of it also.

[00:19:54] Alright. I, I especially appreciate a line of that questioning and your response to it [00:20:00] also because it's always every school that I've had been blessed to serve over the years that has been paramount, that parents understand the school is there to assist them in the education of their. It's not to have it turned over to them entirely as a parent, you still have that responsibility.

[00:20:16] And if you see things aren't working, then you need to look somewhere else. And hopefully you've got options, which is what we're trying to provide here. All right. Thank you for your testimony. Thank you.