

## 2015-17 State Budget Implications for Assessment and Accountability

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The 2015-17 biennial budget, signed into law as Act 55, alters many facets of public education in Wisconsin. This document describes the provisions in the budget regarding state assessment and accountability, and some corresponding implications for schools and districts.

- A more complete summary of all of the education-related items in the budget is located here: <http://pb.dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/budget/pdf/Final%20Act%2055%202015-17%20budget%20summary.pdf>. (Page numbers below refer to this linked summary document.)
- Those interested in reviewing the budget document should reference this PDF: <http://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/raw/path/Publisher/WSL/FrontPage/Special/100%20-%20Act%2055%20-%20Executive%20Budget%20with%20Partial%20Veto>.

It is important to note that technical changes, clarification of language, and the release of additional rules and guidance will take place in the coming months. We will continue to update schools and districts throughout this process.

### Pupil Assessments (p. 35-36)

#### *Alternative Pupil Assessments*

DPI is required to request a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education (USED) that allows DPI to approve multiple assessments for administration in place of the state-procured assessment. To date, USED has never allowed a state to administer and report on more than one statewide summative assessment for federal accountability.

However, if the waiver were to be granted, districts, independent charter schools, and private schools participating in the choice program would have the option to choose from among three to five alternative assessments in place of the examination selected through the state procurement (see below). All costs above those designated for the state exam would be the responsibility of the district, operator, or governing body of the school.

Results from the alternative assessments would be statistically equated to the state-procured exam and would be used for school and district accountability report cards. It seems the intent of this language is to select alternative general education assessments, and would not apply to the alternate assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities.

Note that that, if DPI were to receive a waiver from USED to allow for alternative assessments, the soonest this would be implemented is the 2016-17 school year. There will be a single statewide academic assessment for 2015-16.

#### *Requirements for Statewide Assessment System (p.36-37)*

The following overall requirements remain in effect for statewide assessments, in alignment with state and federal law: all students in grades 3-8 and 11 are to participate in ELA and mathematics assessments. Students in grades 4, 8, and 10 must also take science and social studies assessments. Students participate



in either the general education assessment or an alternate assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities. Additionally, state law requires 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade participation in ACT Aspire.

Act 55 made the following changes to the state assessment system:

### *ACT Aspire*

The 9<sup>th</sup> grade ACT Aspire will no longer be administered in the fall. The spring administration requirement remains in effect for grades 9 and 10.

### *New ELA, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies Assessments*

DPI is barred from adopting assessments from the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. Anticipating the prohibition to participate in Smarter Balanced, DPI issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) in the spring and the procurement process is underway. This process will result in selection of new statewide summative assessments for grades 3-8 in ELA and mathematics, and grades 4, 8, and 10 in science. A separate RFP was issued for social studies. As a result of this new procurement, the fall WKCE science and social studies tests at grades 4, 8, and 10 will no longer be administered. Science and social studies assessments will shift to a spring administration. The procurement goal is to release an “Intent to Award” (i.e., select the vendors) by September 2015.

### *Allow Districts to Select Assessment of Reading Readiness*

The current law requiring districts to assess reading readiness using PALS remains in place for the 2015-16 school year. Beginning in the 2016-17 school year, PALS will no longer be administered statewide. Instead, districts and charter school operators will select their own reading readiness screener and receive some funding for the use of that screener.

### *Civics Assessment Requirement for High School Graduation*

Beginning with the 2016-17 school year, districts, charter operators, and private choice schools may not grant a high school diploma until the student successfully completes a civics test. A student may re-take the exam until he/she passes. The exam must consist of 100 questions, 60 of which must be answered correctly to pass. (Students with an IEP must complete the exam to receive a diploma, but are not required to meet the benchmark of 60 correct answers.) The questions must be identical to those on the U.S. citizenship test administered by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. This assessment falls under the jurisdiction of districts, charter operators, and choice schools and will not be administered by DPI. As such, districts and schools will be responsible for the format and date of the exam.

## **School and District Accountability (pp. 34-35)**

### *Report Cards*

Statutory language about the accountability report cards existed prior to the enactment of the 2015-17 budget, but Act 55 does require some key changes to the accountability report cards. While school and district report cards [will not be released](#) for the 2014-15 school year (due to separate legislation), all schools receiving public funds—public, charter, and private schools participating in the voucher program—will receive a [report card](#) (or complete the [alternate accountability](#) process) for the 2015-16 school year.

### *Priority Areas*

It is no longer *required* that the multiple measures in the report card include measures of college and career readiness. This does not mean that the report cards *may not* include such measures.

### *Ratings*

In addition to an overall score and the existing rating categories, Act 55 also requires that DPI institute a five-star rating system for the report cards, and prepare descriptions of each of the rating categories.

### *New Weighting Formulas*

Two new weighting formulas were legislated and will be in effect for the 2015-16 report cards.

1. The first adjusts the weighting of the Student Achievement and Student Growth priority areas so that they are **weighted with respect to the percentage of economically disadvantaged (ECD)** students in the school or district, respectively. Generally, the higher the proportion of ECD students, the greater the weight assigned to growth, and vice versa.

*Note: DPI is aware and notified the legislature that this weighting structure will result in lower overall scores for high-poverty schools that are also high-performing. We anticipate that this affect will impact about one-third of schools that receive a report card score.*

2. The second change **accounts for student enrollment** length (up to three years). With some possible exceptions, the longer a student is enrolled in the district, the greater the impact the student's performance will have on school and district report card scores.

*Note: DPI is aware and notified the legislature of calculation errors in the budget language. Due to the calculation errors, we anticipate technical changes to the budget are forthcoming.*

### *Private schools in the choice program*

Report cards for private schools participating in a choice program will reflect one of two scenarios:

1. If the school submits data for only those students attending under the choice program, the school's report card will be based solely on those students.
2. If the school submits data for all students at the school (those attending under the choice program and those attending privately), the school will receive two report cards: a "choice pupil report card"—which includes only choice students—and a "private school report card"—which includes all students in the private school.

### *Virtual charter schools*

Data for all students in virtual charter schools in which at least 50% of the students are attending under full-time open enrollment are excluded from district report cards calculations. The virtual charter schools will still receive school report cards.

### *Notice of Educational Options (p. 41)*

All schools receiving public funds—public, charter, and private choice—must annually provide to the parent/guardian of each enrolled student a copy of the School Report Card and a list of the educational options available to children from ages 3 to 17 who reside in the school district. This includes public schools, charter schools, choice schools, virtual schools, open-enrollment, youth options, course options, and options for home-schooling. This requirement falls under the jurisdiction of districts, charter operators, and choice schools, which are responsible for distributing copies to families.