



WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE

Joint Audit Committee

Committee Co-Chairs:

State Senator Robert Cowles

State Representative Samantha Kerkman

NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 21, 2020

For More Information Contact:
Senator Cowles ~ 800.334.1465
Representative Kerkman ~ 888.529.0061

Audit Bureau Reviews DPI Guidance to Schools and School Districts

MADISON – Today, the nonpartisan Legislative Audit Bureau (LAB) released its review of the best practices guidance for transitioning from virtual instruction to in-person instruction that the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) posted on its website (report 20-8). 2019 Wisconsin Act 185 required DPI to post such guidance by June 30, 2020.

To complete its review, LAB independently identified best practices by reviewing more than 65 documents from international, federal, and state entities, as well as other organizations. Although DPI's guidance contained almost all of the best practices LAB independently identified, LAB found DPI's guidance did not include two best practices. LAB also found that DPI's guidance relied on information that the Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association (WIAA) had developed for extracurricular activities, but this information did not address certain types of extracurricular activities not overseen by WIAA.

"I appreciate the work of the Legislative Audit Bureau in identifying and compiling best practices from many sources against which the DPI guidance to school districts can be compared," said Rep. Samantha Kerkman (R-Salem Lakes). "It is reassuring to have an independent check of DPI's work in this area, and to see what needs to be corrected."

LAB recommended that DPI update its guidance to advise school districts and schools to review and potentially revise staff contracts and employment documents to reflect virtual instruction and flexible leave time policies, advise them to determine the level of staff and student absenteeism that will disrupt teaching and learning, and provide them with guidance on offering extracurricular activities that are not overseen by WIAA. LAB recommends DPI report to the Joint Legislative Audit Committee by September 30, 2020, on the status of its efforts to implement LAB's recommendations.

"It's my hope that DPI includes LAB's recommendations into their guidance document and that School Districts utilize and implement these best practices to provide a healthy and safe school year," said Senator Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay).

Provisions of Act 185, which was enacted in April 2020, require LAB to use risk-based criteria to review selected programs affected by Act 185 and selected expenditures made with funds authorized by Act 185. Report 20-8 is the second such review performed by LAB under Act 185.

Copies of LAB's report (report 20-8) may be obtained from its website at www.legis.wisconsin.gov/lab or by calling (608) 266-2818. Report concerns related to state government activities to LAB by calling the toll-free hotline at 1-877-FRAUD-17.

-###-