

Rep. Kitchens: Assembly passes reading bill

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MADISON, Wis. – Rep. Joel Kitchens (R-Sturgeon Bay) is pleased that the state Assembly has passed his bill that ensures schools have the needed framework and tools to help students learn to read proficiently.

“We know that far and away the largest determinant of a child receiving a good education and succeeding later in life is learning to read well in their early years,” Rep. Kitchens said. “I still strongly believe the United States is the land of opportunity and that we provide more possibilities than any other country in the world. But, if we don’t teach our kids how to read well and get an acceptable education, that American dream is locked off to them.”

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, close to 65 percent of fourth graders in Wisconsin are not proficient readers, with 34 percent failing to meet basic standards.

Of the 42 states that report separate reading scores for African American students, Wisconsin ranks dead last in reading achievement, falling 31 places since 1992. During that same time frame, reading achievement for white students has dropped from 6th to 27th and Hispanic students from 1st to 28th.

“We are facing a crisis right now in Wisconsin, and what that means for the future of our state should scare everyone,” Rep. Kitchens said.

Research has shown that children who cannot read at grade level in fourth grade will struggle to graduate from high school and are far less likely to lead productive lives. About 85 percent of juvenile offenders are functionally illiterate, as are 70 percent of prison inmates. More than 75 percent of those on welfare have

difficulties in reading the simplest texts.

AB 446 will allow teachers to intervene earlier in situations where a student has difficulties in reading by expanding necessary reading screening components, increasing literacy assessment frequency and mandating that schools provide additional screenings for students scoring below the 25th percentile.