

# Sen. Darling: Urges Governor to sign reading bill, DPI head sides with delay and status quo over kids

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Madison – Recent data released by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) shows reading scores are dropping in our state. Unfortunately, [the new DPI Superintendent needs another task force to tell us what we already know, kids are struggling to read.](#)

The chair of the Senate Committee on Education, Senator Alberta Darling, is urging Governor Evers to sign [Senate Bill 454](#) which will help identify children who are struggling with reading and overhaul the way we intervene to improve their reading skills. Senator Darling says the legislation is a crucial initial step to improving test scores and outcomes.

“If kids don’t learn how to read by the end of third grade, they are likely to fall behind in all of their other subjects and stay poor readers for the rest of their lives.” Darling said, “Governor Evers has supported bipartisan reading programs. It’s time for him to do it again.”

[Senate Bill 454](#) was introduced by Senator Kathy Bernier of Chippewa Falls and co-authored by Senator Darling. The bill will screen schoolchildren on their reading abilities earlier and more often, notify parents of concerns, and create a clear direction to get kids back on track to succeed. The bill is based on successful models in other states, including Mississippi which saw their reading levels increase dramatically after passing similar legislation. Spotting reading problems sooner dramatically increases the chance that a child will succeed in school and life.

Too many students in our state are falling behind in reading. Sixty-four percent of

fourth-graders are not proficient in reading. Our state ranks dead-last in reading achievement among black students. Hispanic students dropped from 1st in the nation to 28th while white students fell from 6th to 27th. [Despite historic funding for public education, less than one-third of students are proficient in English or math.](#) Senator Darling says while the DPI Superintendent delays with another study, Governor Evers has a real opportunity to help our kids.

“If kids can’t read, their prospects in life are dim. We don’t have time for another study or another task force that will just end up on a shelf somewhere,” Darling said, “Signing this bill should be a top priority for Governor Evers. Wisconsin’s families are counting on it.”

Senator Darling represents portions of Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Washington, and Waukesha Counties.