

Rep. Gundrum: Votes to improve early literacy

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Madison, WI – Representative Rick Gundrum (R-Slinger) today voted in favor of Assembly Bill 321, which was introduced to reverse Wisconsin's poor reading scores. After passage of the bill, he released the following statement:

"Everyone knows reading is an essential part of our education system. However, Wisconsin is falling short in early literacy. For the last few decades, schools across the country have been abandoning foundational reading skills like phonics in favor of a strategy known as 'balanced literacy.' Ironically, balanced literacy has led to an unbalanced result in our state and across the country. Two-thirds of Wisconsin's fourth graders cannot read at grade level. It is time for us to reverse these trends. If we do not attempt reforms, then the long-term ramifications are less high school graduates and less opportunities to find good jobs.

"This legislation will provide needed support for our teachers for a variety of reasons. One major part of the bill is to have the Department of Public Instruction contract with up to 64 literacy coaches who will be trained in the Science of Reading approach. They will be assigned to school districts that have the lowest reading scores and to the state's twelve Cooperative Education Service Agencies.

"There will also be a more effective way of screening for struggling readers with requirements for reading readiness assessments and interventions. This will take place at least three times per year before they get to third grade and it will be helpful in evaluating what students need individualized reading plans to get caught back up. This is crucial because if a school is able to identify a student who is having reading issues and intervene early to help them, then it will lessen the need for intensive instruction later.

“If this bill becomes law, we will be able to put a real focus on the students who have been falling behind in early literacy. By improving reading proficiency, Wisconsin’s youth will be more successful in their adult lives and the state will have stronger communities.”