

Reading Assessment and Intervention Program

Scoping Paper for the Management
Audit Committee July 31, 2009



Background

W.S. 21-3-401 creates the Reading Assessment and Intervention Program (Program). According to W.S. 21-3-401 (a)

“Each school district shall design and implement a reading screening program that measures student reading progress in grades one (1) and (2). The screening program shall be designed by each school district aligned to the statewide educational program standards and shall specifically screen for student performance in reading at grades one (1) and two (2).”

Wyoming has 48 independent school districts, which are responsible for ensuring W.S. 21-3-401 is implemented. More specifically, districts are responsible for the following with respect to the implementation of the Program:

- Assess students, who do not screen successfully, to *“identify the specific reading problems and determine its nature”*.
- Place students who do not screen successfully, on an *Individualized Reading Plan (IRP)* to address the specific reading problem(s).
- For school year 2002-2003 and each school year thereafter, *“each district shall annually report to the department of education on the progress toward reaching the goal of eighty-five (85%) of identified students being reading proficient”*.
- Reports shall *“include longitudinal data on all students in grades one (1) through four (4) identified for intervention”*.
- Districts shall *“report the reason the goal was not reached and the steps being taken by the district to solve the problem”*.

Program Funding Prior to Recalibration

Prior to the recalibration of the school funding system, which was conducted in 2005 by Lawrence O. Picus & Associates, Wyoming school districts received separate categorical funding for Program implementation. Table 1 illustrates that Wyoming school districts received a total of \$11,109,236 in categorical funding for SY2003-04; SY2004-05; and SY2005-06.

Table 1
Reading Assessment and Intervention Program: W.S. 21-3-401
Categorical Appropriation Amounts

Reference	Description	Amount
*2001 Laws-Ch. 139, Section 341	Initial Appropriation (SY 2001-02)	\$3,430,000
**Wyoming Department of Education	SY2004-05	\$3,810,579
**Wyoming Department of Education	SY2005-06	\$3,868,657
Total		\$11,109,236

Source: LSO from information provided in Wyoming Session Laws and Statute.

*According to the Wyoming Department of Education, \$3,761,430 was not expended by the school districts until SY 2003-04. This amount is \$331,430 more than what appears in 2001 Session Laws.

** According to the Wyoming Department of Education, this amount of funding was disbursed to districts for the Reading Assessment and Intervention Program. This is \$128,596 more than what appears in the 2004 Laws-Ch. 95, Section 205.

Program Funding After Recalibration

After recalibration however, which became effective in SY 2006-07, school districts no longer received categorical funding for the Program. Rather, funding was included within the Education Resource Block Grant Model (Model) through various at-risk resources, but also through other resources necessary to provide the educational program.

Overall, the Model provides Wyoming's school districts with funding for the necessary instructional and operational resources to provide each Wyoming student with an equal opportunity to receive a proper education. The funding that each district receives is a function of the components of the Model and the characteristics of the schools and students within a particular district. The Model determines the amount available to the district, but it does not determine how that funding is spent.

The overall strategy of the Model focuses on attainment of reading proficiency by the end of grade three (3), to continue thereafter. Strategy resources associated with reading proficiency (funded within the Model) include the following criteria:

- full-day kindergarten;
- smaller class sizes during elementary school;
- 90 minute blocks of reading instruction each day;
- an evidence-based reading curriculum balancing phonics;
- phonemic development;

- writing and comprehension;
- access to rigorous professional development; and
- individual and small group tutoring for struggling students.

Tables 2 through 4 illustrate the Model generated at-risk related resources, which could be used for implementation and continuation of a Reading Assessment and Intervention Program. For SY2006-07, SY2007-08, and SY2008-09 a total of \$194,138,818 was appropriated to Wyoming's school districts for at-risk related resources, as well as an additional \$505,378,256 of funding outside of the Model, which could be used for reading assessment and intervention.

Table 2
***Model Generated At-Risk Related Resources**
SY2006-07

Within Block Grant Model	Resource Amount
Additional Pupil Support	\$20,444,529
Tutor Funding	\$20,925,489
ELL Teacher Funding	\$1,933,522
Increase of ½ day to Full Day Kindergarten Funding	\$13,131,950
Additional Minimum Teacher Funding	\$4,526,003
Sub-Total	\$60,961,493
Other Funding Outside of Block Grant Model	Resource Amount
Special Education Reimbursement	\$116,442,547
Instructional Facilitator Funding	\$16,000,000
Summer School Extended Day	\$9,000,000
Sub-Total	\$141,442,547
Combined Total	\$202,404,040

Source: LSO, Education Finance Section.

*Resources which could be used for Reading Assessment and Intervention.

Table 3
*** Model Generated At-Risk Related Resources**
SY2007-08

Within Block Grant Model	Resource Amount
Additional Pupil Support	\$21,149,057
Tutor Funding	\$21,638,958
ELL Teacher Funding	\$2,021,838
Increase of ½ day to Full Day Kindergarten Funding	\$13,989,512
Additional Minimum Teacher Funding	\$4,283,439
Sub-Total	\$63,082,804
Other Funding Outside of Block Grant Model	Resource Amount
Special Education Reimbursement	\$144,630,235
Instructional Facilitator Funding	\$16,000,000
Summer School Extended Day	\$9,000,000
Sub-Total	\$169,630,235
Combined Total	\$232,713,039

Source: LSO, Education Finance Section.

*Resources which could be used for Reading Assessment and Intervention.

Table 4
*** Model Generated At-Risk Related Resources**
SY2008-09

Within Block Grant Model	Resource Amount
Additional Pupil Support	\$22,305,136
Tutor Funding	\$22,824,843
ELL Teacher Funding	\$2,614,515
Increase of ½ day to Full Day Kindergarten Funding	\$15,401,847
Additional Minimum Teacher Funding	\$6,948,180
Sub-Total	\$70,094,521

Other Funding Outside of Block Grant Model	Resource Amount
Special Education Reimbursement	\$157,461,168
Instructional Facilitator Funding	\$21,894,306
Summer School Extended Day	\$10,000,000
Food Service Assistance	\$4,500,000
Enrichment Pilot Funding	\$450,000
Sub-Total	\$194,305,474
Combined Total	\$264,399,995

Source: LSO, Education Finance Section.

*Resources which could be used for Reading Assessment and Intervention.

Organization and Operations

Organization and operation of the Program is the responsibility of Wyoming's 48 school districts. Not only are the districts responsible for implementation of their own Program, they are responsible for longitudinal reporting (grades 1-4) to the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE).

According to WDE, all 48 school districts report having implemented a reading assessment and intervention program; but WDE does not monitor districts with respect to their compliance with W.S. 21-3-401. It does provide various seminars and training programs, with respect to early literacy, indicators, assessments, and instruction. WDE also requires districts to fill out the *WDE-626: Early Literacy-Longitudinal* Data reports to gather information with respect to W.S. 21-3-401.

WDE is in the process of contracting with the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) to conduct a complete analysis of WDE-626 data, which according to WDE officials, will be available on or before October 30, 2009. This analysis will capture longitudinal data from identified students from Kindergarten through grade four (4), who are now reading proficient.

Current Issues

Legislative Concern and District Reporting

There is legislative concern that W.S. 21-3-401 is not being implemented or monitored appropriately at the district level. This concern is reflected in various legislation that was proposed (not passed) in 2006 (SF 89) and in 2009 (SF131), which would have estimated and/or studied compliance with W.S. 21-3-401.

Reports from WDE since SY 2004-05 support this concern, with respect to meeting statutorily established goals. As illustrated in Table 5, reporting from the school districts indicate that the ability to reach the reading assessment statutory goal of eighty-five percent (85%) proficiency for identified students, has not been met. In fact, the percent of reading proficiency among students has shown a dramatic decline for individual years.

As of now, there has been no exploration into the causes of these declining percentages. Also, until recently, there has been no effort to report longitudinal data for grades one (1) through four (4) towards reaching the goal of eighty-five percent (85%) of identified students being reading proficient, as required by W.S. 21-3-401 (b). As stated previously, WDE hopes to have longitudinal data available before or on October 31, 2009, with the help of NWREL.

Table 5
District WDE-626 Reporting
Decline in Percentage of Identified Students Reading Proficiency

Grade Level	School Year	*Students Place on IRP	Number of Identified Student Reading Proficient	Percentage of Identified Students Reading Proficient
1st Grade	SY2004-05	1,390	862	62.01%
	SY2005-06	1,397	835	59.77%
	SY2006-07	1,157	621	53.67%
	SY2007-08	1,476	605	40.99%
Subtotal		5,420	2,923	53.92%
2nd Grade	SY2004-05	980	502	51.22%
	SY2005-06	1,065	536	50.33%
	SY2006-07	1,110	416	37.48%
	SY2007-08	1,339	353	26.36%
Subtotal		4,494	1,807	40.21%
3rd Grade	SY2004-05	494	261	52.83%

Grade Level	School Year	* Students Place on IRP	Number of Identified Student Reading Proficient	Percentage of Identified Students Reading Proficient
	SY2005-06	846	343	40.54%
	SY2006-07	638	176	27.59%
	SY2007-08	1,001	211	21.08%
Subtotal		2,979	991	33.26%
4th Grade	SY2004-05	449	219	48.78%
	SY2005-06	784	370	47.19%
	SY2006-07	586	200	34.13%
	SY2007-08	630	167	26.51%
Subtotal		2,449	956	39.04%
** Grand Total		15,342	6,677	43.52%

Source: LSO from information provided by the Wyoming Department of Education based on WDE-626 reporting.
 *Adjusted number after subtracting students who left the district or who were moved to an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).
 **Is not a longitudinal percentage for grades one (1) through four (4).

Oversight of Expenditures

Prior to the 2005 recalibration, districts reported to WDE with respect to how the monies appropriated for reading assessment and intervention shown in Table 1 were expended. Table 6 illustrates a summary of revenue and expenditure information from districts prior to recalibration, which appears to have been primarily expended on salaries and benefits.

It should be noted, that expenditures during this time are \$1,902,303 short of revenues. According to a WDE official, *these monies could have been reported in another fiscal year not included in this data set*.

Table 6
District Appropriations and Revenues for Selected School Years

School Year	Direct Appropriation	Expenditures	Difference
SY2003-04	\$511,235.00	\$105,531.35	\$405,703.65
SY2004-05	\$3,810,579.17	\$2,922,787.45	\$887,791.72
SY2005-06	\$3,724,484.92	\$3,115,677.29	\$608,807.63
	\$8,046,299.09	\$6,143,996.09	\$1,902,303.00

Source: LSO from the Wyoming Department of Education.

Currently, districts are provided with block grant funding and are allowed to allocate resources consistent with local expectations. According to WDE officials, after recalibration when resources for the Reading Assessment and Intervention Program were incorporated into the Model, WDE “lost the ability to dictate or track expenditures specific to the reading assessment requirements”.

Post-recalibration, the issue raised relates to the inability of WDE to track expenditures related to the at-risk component within the Model. Given the low percentages of students obtaining the eighty-five (85%) statutory goal, it is counterintuitive that more accountability is not required for the Program. Additionally, and although a continuing effort is made towards examining district block grant expenditures and how expenditures align with educational strategies underlying various components, a specific focus is needed in the reading program.

Programmatic Effectiveness

Education Resource Block Grant means the level of funding which is to be made available to each district so that they are able to comply with the state uniform educational program standards imposed under W.S. 21-9-101 and 21-9-102 and the uniform state student content and performance standards prescribed by the state board of education under W.S. 21-2-304(a) (v).

To determine the adequacy of funding an “education basket” is specified for each school district to ensure all children in Wyoming have an equal opportunity to meet high learning goals. Constitutionally, recalibration of the school funding system must be completed at least every five years. The next recalibration will take place in 2010 and will be in effect for SY 2011-12.

The issue at hand is whether the reading assessment and intervention component, as specified pursuant to W.S. 21-3-401, should be broken out of the Model, for separate categorical funding. Especially, given that reading skills appear to be the primary element for students’ success in later years.

Federal Reading First Districts

According to the United States Department of Education, *Reading First State Profile*, Wyoming has also received \$15,353,723 in Reading First funds from 2002-2008. Reading First was created as part of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002. WDE officials state that these following districts, that received this additional federal funding, are “*very much in compliance with W.S. 21-3-401*”.

- o Albany county School District #1 (*Beitel Elementary, Rock River Elementary, and Velma Linford Elementary*);
- o Big Horn County School District #1 (*Burlington Elementary and Rocky Mountain Elementary*);
- o Fremont County School District #14 (eligible but not participating);

- o Fremont County School District #21 (*Ft, Washakie Elementary*);
- o Fremont County School District #25 (*Ashgrove Elementary, Jackson Elementary, and Lincoln Elementary*);
- o Fremont County School District #38 (*Arapahoe Elementary*);
- o Hot Springs County School District #1 (*Ralph Witters Elementary*); and
- o Natrona county School District #1 (*Grant Elementary, Midwest School, Mountain View Elementary, Willard Elementary; Southridge Elementary, and University Park Elementary*).

Table 7 below provides additional information on the Federal Reading First money that has been received by Wyoming.

Table 7
Federal Reading First Allocation(s) to Wyoming

Year	Funding
2002	\$2,158,750
2003	\$2,384,319
2004	\$2,451,604
2005	\$2,490,935
2006	\$2,469,053
2007	\$2,463,421
2008	\$935,641
Total	\$15,353,723

*Source: U.S. Department of Education, Reading First State Profile: Wyoming.

Possible Evaluation Questions

1. Given the Model, what are WDE's responsibilities to monitor statutorily required programs such as the Reading Assessment and Intervention Program?
 - Does WDE need additional authority to successfully monitor such programs?
2. For SY2003-04, SY2004-05, and SY2005-06, in the case where categorical appropriations appear not to have been fully expended by school districts (Table 6), how were those funds expended?
 - Are there reporting inconsistencies which caused expenditures to come up \$1,902,303 short of revenues for identified periods?
3. Why are school districts failing to meet the statutory goal of eight-five percent (85%) of identified students placed on IRPs to become reading proficient?
 - What strategies, standards, methods, curriculum, testing, training, etc., do districts use for implementation of W.S. 21-3-401?
 - How do districts specifically expend resources related to the at-risk component to comply with W.S. 21-3-401?
 - Are there successful programs?
4. Are other contiguous states doing a better job with respect to implementation of reading assessment or intervention programs? Also, do they have similar state requirements with respect to meeting certain goals, etc.?
5. Why has it taken until "*on or before October 31, 2009*", to work towards reporting and analyzing longitudinal data as required by W.S. 21-3-401 (2)?
 - What is the role of the NWREL in this process, and why does the State need this type of assistance to analyze WDE-626 data?
 - How much will this assistance cost?
6. Do the federal Reading First school districts shown above perform better with statewide assessment tests for reading in grades three (3) and four (4)? If so, are their strategies different from Wyoming's other school districts that did not receive federal Reading First monies?
7. Should statutorily created programs such as the Reading Assessment and Intervention Program become separately funded categorical components of the Block Grant? Also, should WDE have more authority to require additional expenditure and programmatic detail of at-risk related resources within the Model?