



Published: November 3, 2009

## Wisc. Teachers Couldn't be Fired Over Test Scores

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — Wisconsin schools could use student test scores to evaluate teachers, but they still couldn't use the information to discipline or fire them under a bill moving quickly through the Legislature.

[← Back to Story](#)

Lawmakers must remove a ban on using test scores in evaluations for Wisconsin to compete for about \$4.5 billion in Race to the Top stimulus money for education. Race to the Top is intended to improve student achievement, boost the performance of minority students and raise graduation rates.

Republicans and the Wisconsin Association of School Boards say Doyle and Democrats who control the Legislature are still giving teachers too much deference even as they work to qualify the state for the program.

Wisconsin and Nevada are the only states that don't allow test results to be used to evaluate teachers. A similar prohibition in New York expires next year, and California removed its ban earlier this year to compete for the federal stimulus money.

Doyle and Democratic lawmakers are moving quickly to get Wisconsin's ban removed with a vote this week. There is urgency because applications for the Race to the Top money will likely be due in a couple of months and the Legislature ends its session for the year on Thursday.

Doyle supports a proposal that would lift Wisconsin's restriction on tying test scores with teacher evaluations. However, it would keep in place a ban on using the scores to fire, suspend or discipline a teacher.

It also would require the creation of a teacher development plan to be part of the collective bargaining process between school districts and teachers.

Both the Doyle administration and the head of the state teachers' union told the Assembly Education Committee on Monday that the bill would qualify Wisconsin for Race to the Top money.

If it doesn't, the administration is prepared to return with a bill that would broaden how the student data could be used, including to discipline teachers, said Tim Casper, executive assistant with the state Department of Administration.

A blue rectangular graphic with the words "EDUCATION WEEK" in white, serif, all-caps font.

Should that happen, it would put Doyle and the powerful teachers union at odds.

The teachers union opposes using student test results to discipline teachers, said Mary Bell, president of the Wisconsin Education Association Council. The goal of the bill as it currently stands, as well as the Race to the Top program, is to find ways to improve teachers' performance, not punish them, she said after Monday's hearing.

But Sheri Krause, a lobbyist for the Wisconsin Association of School Boards, said preventing schools from using the information to remove ineffective instructors from classrooms goes too far in protecting teachers. She testified against the bill.

"We have no interest in setting up an evaluation system which, from the get go, would preclude the ability of the board to remove an ineffective teacher from the classroom," Krause said.

Test results should be allowed to be one of several factors in an evaluation that can lead to discipline, she said.

Two Republicans on the Assembly Education Committee, Reps. Stephen Nass of Whitewater and John Nygren of Marinette, said removing the ban will have little effect unless the data can be used to remove poor teachers.

Despite the opposition, there is a lot of momentum to get the bill and others passed quickly so Wisconsin can qualify for Race to the Top. Coincidentally, the Legislature is considering the bills the same week that President Barack Obama and Education Secretary Arne Duncan plan to visit Madison.

They are scheduled to speak Wednesday at a middle school about education reform.

Duncan didn't want to speak Monday about the specifics of Wisconsin's legislation but said Race to the Top is not intended to punish teachers.

"This isn't about punishing. It's about being really honest about where we're making a difference in students' lives," he said in an interview with The Associated Press. "There are places doing this in an extraordinarily innovative way."

He said states like Wisconsin should look to Louisiana, where officials can link student achievement to teachers and those teachers' performance to the colleges where they were educated.

"The goal is to create a cycle of continuous improvement and to create feedback," Duncan said.

---

Associated Press education writer Libby Quaid contributed to this report from Washington, D.C.

*Copyright 2009 Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed.*