

Legislative Days: How to be an Advocate in Changing Times

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2024 WITESOL
November 9, 2024





Goals of session

1. To discuss the meanings of advocacy
2. To share the purpose of WITESOL Legislative Days and how it works
3. To invite you to participate in Legislative Days and other advocacy events



Introductions

1. My name is...
2. My role as an educator is...
3. What does advocacy mean to me?
4. One thing I hope to learn today...

What does advocacy mean?

It has many meanings...

- Self-advocacy
 - School- or work-based
 - Political
 - Policy-based
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- **Advocacy** is organized action in support of an idea or a cause.
 - It involves establishing ongoing and trusting relationships and
 - Constituents educating elected officials on important issues.



How is advocacy related to TESOL's Initial PK-12 Teacher Preparation Standards?



STANDARD 5: PROFESSIONALISM AND LEADERSHIP

Candidates demonstrate professionalism and leadership by collaborating with other educators, **knowing policies and legislation and the rights of ELLs, advocating for ELLs and their families,** engaging in self-assessment and reflection, pursuing continuous professional development, and honing their teaching practice through supervised teaching.

Leading up to Legislative Days

- Purpose & background
- Policy Issue: Act 20



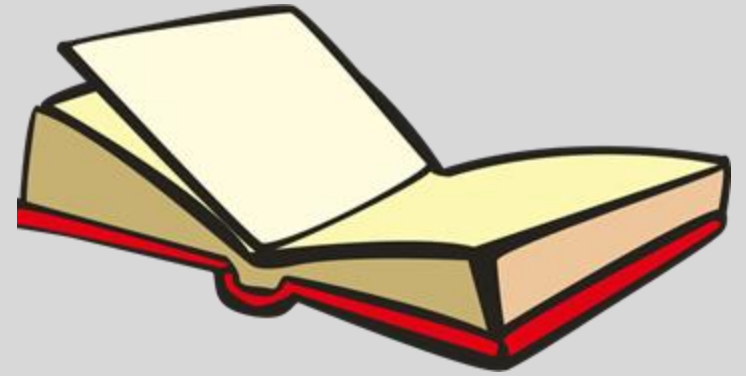
Advocating in a legislator's office

Purpose of Legislative Days

- Events where organizations bring constituents to meet with legislators
 - Emphasize the importance of policy issues
 - Build relationships with legislators
 - Provide information to legislators to help them make decisions
- Advocacy is more effective with a concentrated effort



Policy issue: Act 20



- What is Act 20?
 - Passed into law in June 2023
 - Created a Council on Early Literacy Curricula – 9 members with expertise in science-based early literacy instruction
 - Created the Wisconsin Reading Center
 - Requires additional literacy assessments for young learners
 - Established an Early Literacy Coaching Program
 - Prohibited certain teaching methods for reading (e.g. 3-cueing)
 - Additional requirements for teacher licensing and preparation

Steps for Legislative Days



Planning for Legislative Days



1. Determine the asks and establish a strong rationale for them.
2. Decide on dates for Legislative Days.

For this school year, note the dates: Jan. 14-16, 2025.

3. Match WITESOL members (constituents) with their state legislators.
4. Contact state legislators to set up a meeting.
5. Meet with state legislators.
6. Follow up the meeting with an email and reiterate next steps.

Step 1: Determine the asks

- What can be done?
 - More consideration for MLs
 - Increase flexibility for newcomers
 - Increase accuracy of assessments
 - Consider multiple languages
- Concrete & evidence-based



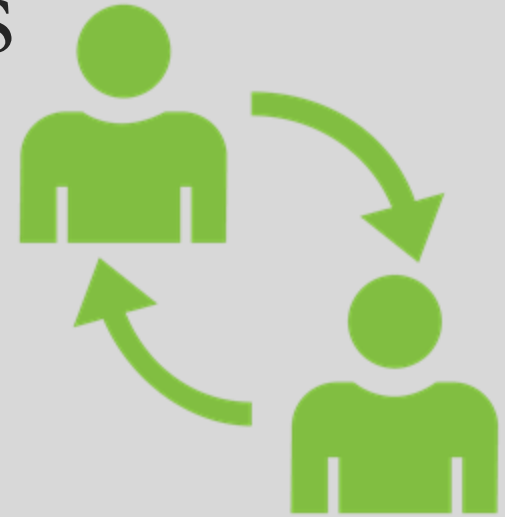
Step 2: Decide on dates



- Wisconsin State Legislature is in session (2-year cycle)
 - January – March (main Floorperiod)
 - April – May (limited Floorperiod + veto review)
 - March – January (interim + committee work)
- Best to meet early, while they are considering legislation
- Election timing
 - Inaugurated the first Monday in January after the election
- What times work for us?

Step 3: Matching with legislators

- Who is your State Assembly Representative?
- Who is your State Senator?
 - <https://legis.wisconsin.gov/>
 - wpr.org/election-results-2024-state-assembly
 - wpr.org/election-results-2024-state-senate
- Are they on the Education Committee?
- Meetings must be set by constituents, but we pair up advocates
 - You don't have to be a constituent to participate
 - You don't have to do it alone



Step 4: Contact Your Legislator



4. Contact state legislators to set up a meeting.



Step 5: Meet with Legislators



5. Meet with state legislators (virtually or in person).



Step 6: Follow up the meeting



6. Follow up the meeting with an email and reiterate next steps.



Why is advocating for changes in legislation important?

1. Because no piece of legislation is perfect.
2. Because MLs are generally not considered very much when drafting legislation.
3. Because educational legislation often increases teachers' already heavy testing burden with additional testing and monitoring requirements.



Multilingual Learners Not Served by Act 20



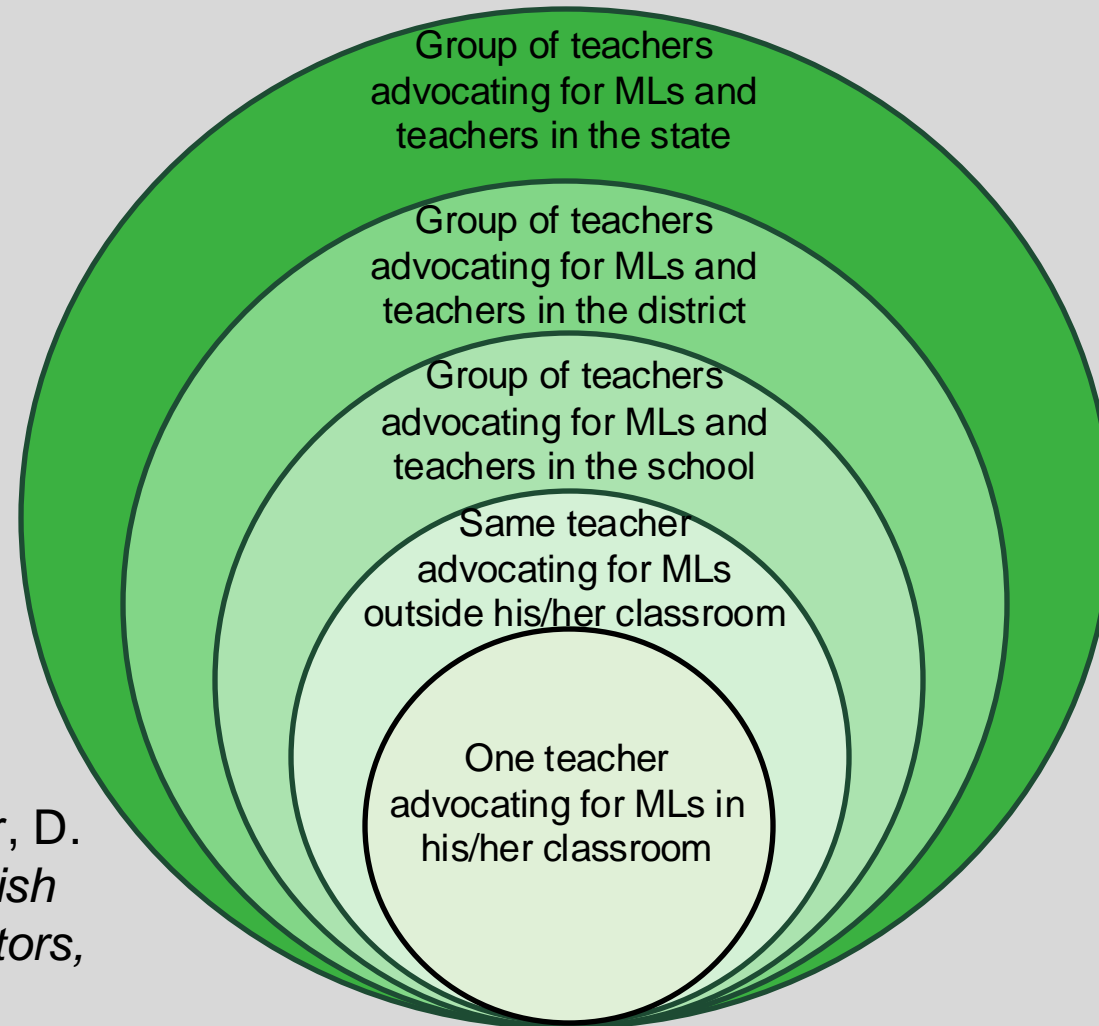
1. One screener test for all students, **available in English and Spanish** (aimswebPlus, from Pearson), not .*
2. If MLs score below 25th percentile on screener, they are administered a diagnostic reading test, **could be in a language other than English.***
3. If MLs score low on the diagnostic reading test, they are labeled **at risk, with consequences** (personal reading plan, required summer school) without necessarily considering literacy skills in home language.
4. Weak opt out criteria for newcomer ELs; same for dual language learners
5. Unknown status of BE/DL programs and their approach to teaching early literacy. DPI guidelines on Act 20 suggest some flexibility in how literacy is taught/assessed in these programs, but these are guidelines, not codified into law.

How can you advocate?

- Whether we like it or not, education is political.
- Become informed!
 - Stay current with legislative developments related to education and MLs (e.g., WASB, Legislative Update Blog, <https://wasb.org/legislative-update/>; DPI, Wisconsin Reads, <https://dpi.wi.gov/wi-reads>)
- Become involved!
 - Talk to your colleagues and ask questions.
 - Stay active in professional organizations (e.g., WITESOL, WIABE, WAFLT, WIDA)
 - Participate in Legislative Days (Jan. 14-16, 2025).
 - Join WITESOL Advocacy Book Club.
- Contact your state legislators with concerns.
 - <https://legis.wisconsin.gov/>



Ripple Effect of ML Advocacy



Adapted from Steahr Fenner, D. (2014). *Advocating for English Learners: A guide for educators*, p. 63. Corwin.

Selected Resources and References – Act 20

Department of Public Instruction. Act 20 FAQ.

<https://dpi.wi.gov/wi-reads/act-20-faq>

Department of Public Instruction. 13 September 2023. Wisconsin 2023 Act 20. Webinar sponsored by WASCD. “Understanding the Newly Passed Wisconsin Foundational Reading Law with DPI.”

Wisconsin Legislative Memo. (21 July 2023). Act Memo: 2023 Wisconsin Act 20.

<https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2023/related/lcactmemo/act020>

Questions



Sign up for WITESOL Legislative Days!

<https://forms.gle/2MRzE1zFwffvrgum6>





Thank you!

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2024 Legislative Days asks (Feb. 2024)

1. Amend Act 20 so that multilingual/dual language/English as a second language learners can have their literacy skills assessed in the language in which they are being instructed (e.g., Spanish).
2. Amend Act 20 so that new arrivals in Wisconsin K-12 schools have literacy screenings waived for at least one year.
3. Amend Act 20 so that a minimum of one member of the Council on Early Literacy is an expert on bilingual/dual language and/or English as a second language learning and education (as indicated by being licensed in ESL and/or Bilingual Education with at least 5 years of teaching experience).