

# WISCONSIN SOLUTION CENTER

INSTITUTE FOR REFORMING GOVERNMENT



## Policy Solution: Curriculum Transparency in K-12 Schools

**The Problem:** It is nearly impossible for parents and other concerned parties to fully engage in the education of their children if they don't know what is being taught in the classroom, what educational materials are being used, and what outside speakers and other content their children are being exposed to.

**Policy Solution:** Helping parents to engage fully in their child's education requires opening the school door so parents and any concerned citizens are able to know what is being taught in schools. That includes letting people see what learning materials are being used, as well as what educational activities are taking place.

IRG joins the [Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty \(WILL\) in calling](#) for curriculum transparency for K-12 public schools. **[Senate Bill \(SB\) 463](#) by Senator Stroebel (R-Saukville) and [Assembly Bill \(AB\) 488](#) by Rep. Behnke (R-Oconto) would help realize this principle. The proposals have their first committee hearing later today.**

**Committee Hearing ALERT:** Joint Committee on Education hearing for SB 463 and AB 488 at 10 am. [Watch here.](#)



*"This common-sense bill makes it easier for parents to know what's happening in the classroom, creating an opportunity for teachers and parents to work together to ensure student success."*

- Kristi [Koschkee](#), teacher, Kenosha Unified School District

### Talking Points:

1. Decades of research tell us that children are more likely to thrive in school and in life when their parents are active participants in their education, but it is increasingly difficult for parents to

know what is being taught in the classroom because of changing technology and an increased reluctance by schools to follow principles of open government.

**2.** As WILL has highlighted, attempts to gain access to teaching materials are often stonewalled by school districts, and come with a substantial price tag.

**3.** Ongoing debates about curriculum highlight that it's more important than ever for parents to know what is being taught at their child's school.

**4.** Wisconsin can do more to make academics more transparent, by requiring that parents receive curriculum and more online reporting of learning materials.

**Background:** A child's education will never be complete without active engagement by his or her parents. Decades of research tell us that children are more likely to thrive in school and in life when their parents talk and read to them and benefit even more when they do so early and often. Society expects parents to engage and support their child's education as they get older and, in fact, Wisconsin law demands that "parents and guardians of pupils enrolled in the school district share with the state and school board the responsibility for pupils meeting [educational] goals and expectations."

But when it comes to what children are actually learning in school, parents can only guess based on the materials that come home with them. This is further complicated by the fact that school lives more and more on electronic devices rather than textbooks and notebooks. COVID-19, which has made student-teacher communication more difficult, has also weakened communication between schools and parents.

Not only do parents need to know what is being taught in classrooms if they are to fully participate and assist in the education of their children, but today's parents also want to know what is being taught in the classroom more than ever before so they can engage with teachers and school boards to help direct what learning materials are used with their children. There is an exploding number of educational resources a school might choose from and not all of them are high quality, not to mention ongoing controversies over curriculum and the intermingling of politics and pedagogy.

SB 463 ([SB 463](#)) and AB 488 ([AB 488](#)) would require each school board in the state to place learning materials online, and to update the online listing at least twice per school year. SB 463/ AB 488 would also allow parents to bring action in court to compel a school board to comply with the requirements.

**What's next:** SB 463 is before the Senate Committee on Education. AB 488 is before the Assembly Committee on Education. The Committees have scheduled a joint public hearing for today, August 11 at 10:00 am in Madison.