

DISCUSSION/ACTION
August 8, 2008

HIGHER EDUCATIONAL AIDS BOARD

BOARD REPORT #09-08

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION PROPOSALS:

HIGH NEED TEACHER LOAN FORGIVENESS PROGRAM

MINORITY UNDERGRADUATE RETENTION GRANT



State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

July 25, 2008

Mary Jo Green, Chair
Connie Hutchison, Executive Secretary
Higher Educational Aids Board
131 W. Wilson Street
P.O. Box 7885
Madison, WI 53707-7885

Dear Chairwoman Green and Executive Secretary Hutchison:

A highly qualified teacher is one of the most important components, if not the most important component, in student learning. On behalf of students, future teachers, and public schools across the state, the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) requests that the Higher Education Aids Board (HEAB) partner with DPI in seeking funding for a new High Need Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program, and additional funding for the Minority Teacher Loan Program under s. 39.40, Stats., in the 2009-11 biennial budget.

Wisconsin has long been known for the high quality of our outstanding teaching workforce. However, an increasing number of Wisconsin teachers reach retirement age and a shortage of teachers in critical subject areas continues to grow. This growing challenge makes it more important than ever for Wisconsin's public schools to attract and retain exceptional, diverse individuals who have the talent and desire to improve educational opportunities for our children.

Recruitment and retention of highly qualified teachers is particularly important in Wisconsin's high poverty school districts. Districts with concentrated student poverty experience higher rates of teacher turnover and transfer, higher absenteeism, and fewer applications for open positions. All Wisconsin students, regardless of where they live or their economic circumstance, should have access to highly qualified teachers.

We believe that incentives like loan forgiveness can help to address these staffing shortages and promote high quality educational opportunities for Wisconsin students. To address the immediate need to recruit and retain qualified, diverse teachers, I will be including the following requests in my 2009-11 biennial budget request, and I respectfully request that HEAB consider inclusion of these programs in its biennial budget request:

1. **High Need Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program.** This program would be created to attract teachers to high poverty schools in the critical shortage subject areas of science, technology, math, world language, English as a second language (ESL) and bilingual programs, and special education. The program would have criteria similar to the Minority Teacher Loan Program. For instance, the borrower must be a Wisconsin resident junior, senior, or graduate student who is enrolled at least half-time in a program leading to teacher licensure at an independent or University of Wisconsin Institution. Other program features would include the following:

- Create an annual appropriation of \$500,000 GPR. This would fund 100 students per year at \$5,000 each.
 - Allow a maximum award of \$5,000 per year for a total of \$10,000.
 - Allow the borrower to have his or her loan forgiven if he or she teaches in a Wisconsin public school district in which at least 40 percent of the pupils enrolled are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch under 42 USC 1758 (b). In addition, the borrower must hold one of the following licenses issued by the Wisconsin DPI and be teaching in the subject area of the license held:
 1. A license in mathematics and assigned to teach in that subject at the middle or high school level.
 2. A license in a science subject and assigned to teach in that science subject at the middle or high school level.
 3. A license in technology education and assigned to teach in a technology education program at the middle or high school level.
 4. A license in English as a second language (ESL) and assigned to teach ESL at any developmental level.
 5. A bilingual-bicultural license and assigned to teach in a bilingual program at any developmental level.
 6. A special education license and assigned to teach in a special education program at any developmental level.
 7. A world language license and assigned to teach in that subject at any developmental level.
 - For each year the borrower teaches in an eligible subject area, school or developmental level, and school district, 25 percent of the loan is forgiven.
 - If the borrower does not teach in an eligible subject area, school or developmental level, and school district, the loan must be repaid at 5 percent.
2. **Minority Teacher Loan Program.** DPI would like to strengthen this program as a complement to the new program described below. This program is modified to:
- Increase the appropriation under s. 20.235 (1) (cr), Stats., by \$237,900 GPR for a total of \$500,000 GPR. This would fund 100 students per year at \$5,000 each.
 - Allow a maximum award of \$5,000 per year for a total of \$10,000 (opposed to the \$2,500 per year for a total of \$5,000 established under ch. HEA 11, Wis. Admin. Code).

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Having these proposals identified and supported in both the DPI and HEAB agency budgets will highlight their importance, visibility, and chances for success. If you have any questions, please contact Michael Bormett, Director, Policy and Budget, at 266-2804.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Burmaster
State Superintendent