

# ACT 20 in WI Charter Schools

100%

Wisconsin Act 20, a comprehensive literacy law, mandates “science-based” instruction, increased screening frequency, and intervention for 100% of students in grades PreK-3. This applies to all Wisconsin public schools, including independent and district-authorized charter schools.

“To learn to read is to light a fire; every syllable that is spelled out is a spark.”

— Victor Hugo

## Essential Guidance for Charter School Teachers:

*Navigating Core Requirements and Implementation*

### The Legal Framework

Act 20 mandates that charter schools transition to "science-based" instruction. This includes a strict prohibition of the "three-cueing" (MSV) method, which encourages students to guess words using meaning, structure, or visual cues rather than decoding them through letter-sound relationships. Core instruction for grades K–3 must now be systematic and explicit, covering phonological awareness, phonics, decoding, building background knowledge, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency.

### Charter School Requirements Workflow

| Requirement Area         | Mandatory Action   |
|--------------------------|--|
| Curriculum & Instruction | Implement systematic and explicit core instruction covering phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, and fluency. Use of "three-cueing" is prohibited.   |
| Mandatory Assessments    | Use the state-selected screener (aimswebPlus) for 4K (2x/year) and 5K–3 (3x/year). Diagnostic testing is required within 10 days for students scoring below the 25th percentile. If a parent or teacher suspects dyslexia and requests testing, schools must provide a diagnostic assessment within 20 days. |
| Personal Reading Plans   | Create a Personal Reading Plan (PRP) for any "at-risk" student (below 25th percentile). Plans must include skill deficiencies, goals, benchmarks, and intervention descriptions.   |

*This resource was developed by CESA 9 between 2023-2029 for educational purposes.*

*See [cesa9.org](https://cesa9.org) for more information.*

| Requirement Area         | Mandatory Action  |
|--------------------------|---|
| Professional Development | K–3 teachers, reading specialists, and principals must begin approved science-based training (e.g., LETRS) by July 1, 2025.   |
| Intensive Summer Program | Starting Summer 2026: Provide intensive science-based summer programming for 3rd graders who did not complete their PRP or did not score at grade level on the Reading Subtest of the Forward Exam. |
| Policies & Reporting     | Adopt a 3rd-grade promotion policy by July 1, 2025. Publish an Early Literacy Remediation Plan on the school website and submit annual literacy data to DPI by July 15.                             |

## Service Delivery & Collaboration

**Special Education:** Act 20 applies to all students, including those with IEPs. PRP elements could be incorporated directly into the student's IEP.

**Parental Notification:** Parents must be provided a copy of the PRP and must sign it and receive written progress updates every 10 weeks. Parents must be notified in writing if their child does not complete their PRP and a description of the specific summer services to be provided must be shared.

## Intensive Summer Reading Program

- **Eligibility:** Required for students finishing 3rd grade who are on a PRP and have not "completed" it (meaning they haven't met plan goals and haven't scored at grade level on the reading subtest of the Forward Exam).
- **Program Content:** Must be "intensive" and utilize science-based instruction. Services must continue each summer until the student reaches grade-level proficiency.
- **Good Cause Exemptions:** Schools are exempt from providing the summer program for:
  - English Learners with < 2 years of instruction.
  - Students with IEPs where state assessments are deemed inappropriate.
  - Students scoring proficient on a DPI-approved alternate assessment.
  - Students previously retained for 2 years who have received 2+ years of intensive intervention.

## Key Resources on the DPI Website:

- [Wisconsin Reads](#)