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[00:00:19] **Speaker 1** In state education news, Republican lawmakers want to change the way the Department of Public Instruction now scores standardized tests for third through eighth graders. That's because last year DPI changed the cutoff scores needed to be proficient in reading or math, resulting in scores in 2024 being about ten points higher than the year before. The new forward exam scoring also no longer aligns with the more difficult national test known as the nation's report card. A bill now before the legislature would require DPI to revert back to the previous scoring model. Chair of the Senate Education Committee, Republican Senator John Trigger, authored the bill. And thanks very much for being here.

[00:01:04] **Speaker 2** Thank you for having me.

[00:01:05] **Speaker 1** So why don't you like the new scoring methods on the statewide forward exam?

[00:01:11] **Speaker 2** For multiple.

[00:01:11] **Speaker 3** Reasons. I think it gives a false sense of what.

[00:01:15] **Speaker 2** Our kids are doing and where they're at.

[00:01:17] **Speaker 3** But, you know.

[00:01:18] **Speaker 2** The bigger picture point here is.

[00:01:21] **Speaker 3** It doesn't align. We have.

[00:01:23] **Speaker 2** No way of tracking data from previous years.

[00:01:26] **Speaker 3** Because and I admits this, that the way that they have blown up the scoring system, we can't go back and look, we can't see how the kids from the Covid pandemic, those those kids that were, you know, kindergarten, first grade. Are they catching up, the kids.

[00:01:42] **Speaker 2** More importantly, that are almost entering the workplace? The seventh graders who are now.

[00:01:46] **Speaker 3** High.

[00:01:46] **Speaker 2** School juniors and seniors, where are they? Have they caught up from that that last year? And we can't track that data anymore.

[00:01:53] **Speaker 3** And, you know.

[00:01:54] **Speaker 2** As I traveled around the new district, the new 13th Senate district picked.

[00:01:57] **Speaker 3** Up a ton of.

[00:01:58] **Speaker 2** Geographical territory. And that meant.

[00:02:00] **Speaker 3** A lot of new superintendents, a lot of new school districts.

[00:02:03] **Speaker 2** And the first thing I did was meet with law enforcement.

[00:02:05] **Speaker 3** And meet with my school.

[00:02:06] **Speaker 2** Superintendents.

[00:02:07] **Speaker 3** And.

[00:02:08] **Speaker 2** They were taken.

[00:02:08] **Speaker 3** Aback because they were not consulted. They had no idea this came.

[00:02:12] **Speaker 2** And here we are.

[00:02:13] **Speaker 3** They don't know if some of the innovation.

[00:02:15] **Speaker 2** They're doing with literacy programs are working and they have no way of going back and tracking.

[00:02:19] **Speaker 3** And then the easiest point is we should be expecting our kids to do better. We should set high standards.

[00:02:25] **Speaker 2** Not lower them.

[00:02:26] **Speaker 1** So Governor Tony Evers has also been critical of the new scoring, saying just that, that we should have the highest standards possible. But why should legislators decide on learning assessments over educators? And should new directives come with more funding, like the $50 million for phonics instruction?

[00:02:46] **Speaker 3** I don't think you can conflate the two issues of saying it should come with more funding. I mean, why should we get involved? Well, honestly, I wish we wouldn't have to. This was done in a closed situation where these.

[00:03:01] **Speaker 2** There was a list of just under a 100 administrators or school officials or people that.

[00:03:06] **Speaker 3** They talked to.

[00:03:07] **Speaker 2** For this process.

[00:03:08] **Speaker 3** But they they did this in a vacuum and it came out and it came out. You know, let's be honest.

[00:03:13] **Speaker 2** Politics is part of everything.

[00:03:15] **Speaker 3** Came out in a.

[00:03:16] **Speaker 2** Very weird.

[00:03:16] **Speaker 3** Time to roll back these standards, to make our.

[00:03:19] **Speaker 2** Kids look better, which in effect.

[00:03:21] **Speaker 3** It did in in.

[00:03:23] **Speaker 2** An election year for the superintendent.

[00:03:24] **Speaker 3** That's a little odd. But what.

[00:03:27] **Speaker 2** Perked my ear was my superintendent.

[00:03:29] **Speaker 3** Saying.

[00:03:30] **Speaker 2** We don't agree with this. We had we weren't part of this.

[00:03:33] **Speaker 3** We don't know where this came from. And then when you had.

[00:03:35] **Speaker 2** The governor first saying.

[00:03:37] **Speaker 3** Flat out, you know.

[00:03:38] **Speaker 2** Because those were his standards and he.

[00:03:39] **Speaker 3** Said she she didn't.

[00:03:41] **Speaker 2** They rolled back the Department of Public Instruction, rolled back the governor's standards.

[00:03:45] **Speaker 3** The education governor. So he caught my.

[00:03:48] **Speaker 2** Interest when he.

[00:03:48] **Speaker 3** Said we.

[00:03:49] **Speaker 2** Shouldn't be lowering, we.

[00:03:50] **Speaker 3** Should be expecting.

[00:03:51] **Speaker 2** High standards.

[00:03:52] **Speaker 3** And then he kind of pivoted a little bit to criticizing.

[00:03:55] **Speaker 2** The process.

[00:03:56] **Speaker 3** That it was done behind closed.

[00:03:57] **Speaker 2** Doors without any input from stakeholders. And he was right on both counts.

[00:04:02] **Speaker 1** Apart from the scoring, why does the bill also call to revert back to how the scores are described? For example, instead of below basic as previously to developing.

[00:04:15] **Speaker 3** Just to go back for consistency. And one of the things.

[00:04:17] **Speaker 2** That I had heard in an interview.

[00:04:18] **Speaker 3** Was, well, you know, if you tell a.

[00:04:21] **Speaker 2** Parent that.

[00:04:22] **Speaker 3** Their kid is below basic, that's that's.

[00:04:24] **Speaker 2** Harmful. That's that's hurtful.

[00:04:26] **Speaker 3** Language.

[00:04:28] **Speaker 2** That's I'm sorry.

[00:04:29] **Speaker 3** That's just weak source To me, That's, that's that's soft. As I said in the in the committee hearing, you know what? You know.

[00:04:36] **Speaker 2** What hurts a kid's.

[00:04:37] **Speaker 3** Social mental health.

[00:04:39] **Speaker 2** And hurts a kid.

[00:04:40] **Speaker 3** In the classes when he can't read. And we should be focusing.

[00:04:43] **Speaker 2** On that rather than what these labels.

[00:04:45] **Speaker 3** Say. And like I said, it goes back.

[00:04:47] **Speaker 2** That the reason.

[00:04:47] **Speaker 3** Why we went back is we it's almost.

[00:04:49] **Speaker 2** Like just a reset point. And unfortunately, we're going to lose this year's data.

[00:04:53] **Speaker 3** But I think.

[00:04:54] **Speaker 2** It's worth it to go back and create some.

[00:04:57] **Speaker 3** Consistency and also.

[00:04:58] **Speaker 2** Create it so we can compare ourselves.

[00:05:00] **Speaker 3** With Nape, the national standards and.

[00:05:03] **Speaker 2** See how we're doing.

[00:05:04] **Speaker 3** How do we possibly know when you're talking about investing billions.

[00:05:08] **Speaker 2** Of dollars in.

[00:05:09] **Speaker 3** Education, what.

[00:05:10] **Speaker 2** Is the return going our kids doing? How are.

[00:05:12] **Speaker 3** These educators using those dollars that we commit to.

[00:05:17] **Speaker 2** Make sure our kids can read?

[00:05:18] **Speaker 3** And the.

[00:05:19] **Speaker 2** The troubling part about.

[00:05:20] **Speaker 3** It is this whole issue about.

[00:05:22] **Speaker 2** Rolling back the standards came when the Nabe scores came out.

[00:05:24] **Speaker 3** This week, and it should be a shock for everybody. The numbers in Milwaukee are, you know, we're talking the.

[00:05:31] **Speaker 2** Worst scoring for fourth graders in.

[00:05:34] **Speaker 3** The nation. For black kids in Milwaukee, the achievement gap is.

[00:05:37] **Speaker 2** Still the lowest in the country.

[00:05:39] **Speaker 3** But the eighth grade, eighth grade.

[00:05:41] **Speaker 2** Kids are also.

[00:05:42] **Speaker 3** Just just floundering and and shouldn't be acceptable to anybody. And you cannot you know, the old line I was I was.

[00:05:49] **Speaker 2** Joking at Super Bowl week.

[00:05:50] **Speaker 3** You cannot can achieve perfection if you.

[00:05:52] **Speaker 2** Don't strive for.

[00:05:53] **Speaker 3** Excellence. You know.

[00:05:54] **Speaker 2** If you strive for and strive for perfection, you reach excellence. That's what Vince Lombardi always said.

[00:05:58] **Speaker 3** And I think.

[00:05:59] **Speaker 2** It's right on this call.

[00:06:00] **Speaker 3** We should be expecting more.

[00:06:03] **Speaker 1** On that racial achievement gap. 51% of Wisconsin white students overall tested proficient in math, 5% of black students. What responsibility, then, does the state have to narrow that gap?

[00:06:18] **Speaker 3** Well, we need to look at all in all sources.

[00:06:21] **Speaker 2** You know, where this is coming from, where the breakdown is.

[00:06:23] **Speaker 3** And in it is poverty. A lot.

[00:06:25] **Speaker 2** Of these numbers are driven.

[00:06:26] **Speaker 3** Down, quite honestly, by what's what's happening with maps and the maps scores out of Milwaukee. And you talk about a.

[00:06:36] **Speaker 2** School district in total disarray, in accounting disarray.

[00:06:40] **Speaker 3** A health situation, system.

[00:06:41] **Speaker 2** Disarray with it with the lead poisoning. News from this week, disarray from bringing in staff. The controller.

[00:06:48] **Speaker 3** Is gone.

[00:06:48] **Speaker 2** After three weeks disarray in.

[00:06:51] **Speaker 3** In just.

[00:06:51] **Speaker 2** About every aspect.

[00:06:53] **Speaker 3** That you can you.

[00:06:53] **Speaker 2** Can come from or.

[00:06:54] **Speaker 3** You can talk about it and it it doesn't.

[00:06:57] **Speaker 2** Surprise it shouldn't surprise.

[00:06:59] **Speaker 3** Anybody that.

[00:07:00] **Speaker 2** It's a disarray and failure of our kids.

[00:07:03] **Speaker 1** We need to leave it there. Senator John Straggler, thanks very much.

[00:07:07] **Speaker 2** Appreciate it.

[00:07:13] **Speaker 1** Thanks. Yeah, this is very interesting. Yeah. Thanks. We'll be following, of course.

[00:07:25] **Speaker 3** Okay. Yep.

[00:07:26] **Speaker 2** Appreciate.

[00:07:27] **Speaker 3** Any time. Any time. Like I said, next time I'll be. I'll be prompt. I apologize. I know how it is to be on the bottom of the.

[00:07:33] **Speaker 2** Phone or of the microphone.

[00:07:35] **Speaker 1** I'm sorry. No worries. We're not live. We're good. Thank you.

[00:07:40] **Speaker 3** Have a good weekend.

[00:07:40] **Speaker 1** You too.