

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE ZACK FIELDS

Fairview • South Addition • Government Hill • Downtown • North Star

House Bill 98 - Sponsor Statement

Alaska's decline in student proficiency raises questions about the health of our public education system and the future of our state. In particular, the issue of class size continues to dominate discussions surrounding student achievement and the effective allocation of educational resources. Over the last twenty years, the pupil-to-teacher ratio increased more than 20 percent in our state, and with it a decline in overall student learning outcomes. Decades of research consistently show that students perform better academically in small classes and that the long-term benefits extend beyond the classroom.

The Tennessee STAR (Student-Teacher Achievement Ratio), a randomized class-size experiment of over 11,500 students, 1,300 teachers, and 79 Tennessee elementary schools over a four-year period revealed compelling results. Briefly, the STAR study found that:

- Smaller classes in early grades (K-3) significantly improve student achievement.
- These benefits last, impacting students' later school years and even their adult lives.
- The positive effects are strongest for minority and low-income students.

While reducing class size has costs, the long-term gains—higher graduation rates, better economic outcomes—outweigh them. This bill seeks to enact a best-practices framework that cultivates scholastic achievement by prioritizing smaller class sizes, ensuring every student has the chance to succeed.