

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Interim:
716 West 4th Avenue
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
Phone: (907) 269-0216
Fax (907) 269-0218
Rep.Gabrielle.LeDoux@akleg.gov



Session:
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, Alaska 99801
Phone: (907) 465-4998
Fax: (907) 465-4419
Toll Free: (800) 698-4998

REPRESENTATIVE GABRIELLE LEDOUX
WWW.GABRIELLELEDoux.COM

Sponsor Statement

House Bill 197

"An Act requiring the establishment of a reading program in school districts for grades kindergarten through three; providing for student retention in grade three; and providing for a report on the reading program and on student retention."

Learn to Read - Read to Learn Act

Alaska school districts currently engage in the practice of social promotion. This means that children, regardless of academic abilities are passed from grade to grade simply to keep them with their peers. However, each year, many of them have failed to learn basic literacy skills in the developmentally critical grades. Rather than addressing these problems, a social promotion simply moves these students to the next grade level. This is especially destructive for children in the early grades. Learning to read does not get easier with age. As a result, illiterate 3rd graders move on to become illiterate 4th graders, and then 5th and 6th and 7th graders. Third grade is the year that students transition from "learning to read" to "reading to learn." Imagine a 5th grader, reading on a 2nd grade level, sitting in a science class. These students will not grasp the vocabulary and scientific concepts described in the textbooks because they cannot read – literally. Grade level material keeps increasing year after year, but these students cannot keep up because they cannot read. These students have been described as disruptive, restless and bored. They often do not finish school, let alone go on to college. We must take steps to change this outcome.

HB 197 clearly lays out that students in grade 3 who fail to meet the minimum reading requirements established by the department will be retained except for good cause. It establishes a reading literacy program for students in Kindergarten through grade 3. HB 197 requires regular assessments of students and eliminates social promotion. A student that is retained in third grade will have intensive interventions including; small group instruction, reduced pupil-teacher ratio, frequent monitoring, tutoring, transitional classes, incorporation of 4th grade core subjects, and intensive language and vocabulary instruction.

Alaska spends more per capita on education than almost any other state. Our 4th grade reading scores are amongst the lowest in the nation. We must take action to rectify this situation. We cannot continue with more of the status quo. HB 197 will ensure that Alaska's students have the literacy skills needed to be successful in life. I strongly believe that this will make a difference for our state and in the lives of young Alaskans. I request your support for House Bill 197.