

ALASKA LEGISLATURE

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Sectional Analysis

HB 157 – Language Immersion Schools/Teacher Certifications (version S)

Section 1 requires the charter contract between a school board and a language immersion charter school established under section 2 of the bill to contain provisions requiring compliance with section 2.

Section 2 provides for the establishment of language immersion charter schools, describes the purpose of immersion charter schools, and describes how they differ from regular charter schools.

- **Subsection (a)** requires that 50% of the instructional hours at each grade level in a language immersion charter school are provided in an indigenous or foreign language. The subsection also requires language immersion charter schools to comply with all other charter school laws, except as otherwise provided in the section.
- **Subsection (b)** requires that an application for a language immersion charter school identify the language(s) of instruction and describe the percentage of instructional hours that will be provided in that language.
- **Subsection (c)** allows individuals who are proficient speakers of the language taught at the charter school or who have substantial knowledge of the culture of the people who spoke that language to serve on the school's academic policy committee, in addition to parents and school employees.
- **Subsection (d)** requires a language immersion charter school that does not provide at least 50% of the school's instructional hours in an indigenous or foreign language to work with the Department of Education and Early Development to develop a plan for reaching that benchmark. The plan must be submitted to the Department for approval.
- **Subsection (e)** requires that teachers at a language immersion charter school hold either a teacher certificate issued under AS 14.20.015, 14.20.017, 14.20.020, or 14.20.022 and a language immersion endorsement issued under section 3; a limited teacher certificate issued under section 6; or a certificate issued by an Alaska Native tribe under section 7.
- **Subsection (f)** exempts teachers teaching classes in English at language immersion charter schools from the requirement to hold a language immersion endorsement.

Section 3 creates a language immersion endorsement. To receive a language immersion endorsement, a person must apply to the Department, hold a teacher certificate issued under AS

14.20.015, 14.20.017, 14.20.020, or 14.20.022, demonstrate ability to conduct classroom activities entirely in an indigenous or foreign language, and have completed a course or program of study in language immersion education. The course or program must be offered by an institute of higher education or be approved by the Department of Education and Early Development.

Section 4 amends the existing limited teacher certificate program (Type M in regulation). The section removes Alaska Native languages from the list of subjects certificate holders are eligible to teach and removes the state board of education's authority to require certificate holders to undertake academic training.

Section 5 further amends the existing limited teacher certificate program by making newly issued certificates valid for only one year. Upon certification by the school board of the district or REAA in which the person teaches that the certificate holder has demonstrated skills in classroom instruction, curriculum development, and student assessment, the certificate can be extended for an additional four years. It can be renewed afterwards in accordance with regulations. Section 5 also prohibits the state board from requiring additional academic training as a condition of certificate renewal.

Section 6 creates a new limited teacher certificate for teachers instructing in a language other than English. A certificate can be issued if the state board of education determines there are an insufficient number of certified teachers in the state capable of teaching in a language. A limited certificate is valid for teaching any subject in grades K-8, so long as the language of instruction is not English, and for teaching language classes at any grade level.

- **Subsection (b)** states that a limited certificate can be issued if:
 - A school board or the academic policy committee of a language immersion charter school requests issuance of the certificate;
 - The certificate applicant has demonstrated instructional skills sufficient to assure the public the person is competent as a teacher, as defined by regulation;
 - The applicant has demonstrated subject matter expertise, if teaching a class other than a language class in grades four through eight; and
 - The applicant has language proficiency sufficient to conduct classroom activities wholly in the non-English language.
- **Subsection (c)** prohibits the holder of a limited certificate under the section from teaching a subject other than the language itself unless the person has completed a course or program of study in language immersion education. The course or program must be offered by an institute of higher education or be approved by the Department of Education and Early Development.
- **Subsection (d)** provides that newly issued certificates are valid for only one year. Upon certification by the entity that requested the limited certificate that the holder has demonstrated skills in classroom instruction, curriculum development, and student assessment, the certificate can be extended for an additional four years. It can be renewed afterwards in accordance with regulations.

- **Subsection (e)** prohibits the state board from requiring additional academic training as a condition of certificate renewal.

Section 7 relates to teacher certificates issued by an Alaska Native tribe.

- **Subsection (a)** empowers the Department of Education and Early Development to recognize a teacher certificate issued by an Alaska Native tribe as valid for teaching in the state if:
 - The tribe submits a description of its certification procedures to the Department;
 - Those certification procedures include evaluations of language proficiency, subject matter knowledge, and instructional skills, including skills specific to immersion education;
 - A school board requests the certificate be recognized, if the teacher is teaching in a school that is not an Alaska Native language immersion charter school; and
 - The person submits fingerprints and fees in accordance with AS 14.20.020(c).
- **Subsection (b)** limits the validity of teacher certificates issued by tribes. A certificate issued by a tribe and recognized by the Department is valid for teaching in a language immersion charter school in which the language of instruction is an Alaska Native language. A certificate holder can teach in any public school, but only if the class is taught in an Alaska Native language and the school board requests the Department recognize certificates issued by the tribe.
- **Subsection (c)** prohibits the Department from recognizing tribally issued certificates if the person holding the certificate has been convicted of an offense under AS 11.41.410-460 (sexual assault and abuse crimes).
- **Subsection (d)** prohibits the Department from imposing requirements for tribally-certified teachers beyond those requirements imposed by the tribe.
- **Subsection (e)** defines “Alaska Native tribe” as a tribe recognized by the US Secretary of Interior under the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act of 1994.

Section 8 requires the Department of Education and Early Development to allow students in immersion programs to take statewide standards-based assessments in the language of instruction of the school if tests comparable to the English-language tests exist and if the Department can allow such testing without violating federal law.