

ALASKA LEGISLATURE

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Sectional Analysis

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

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 be provided in a foreign or indigenous 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 each 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 charter 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 a foreign or indigenous language to work with the Department of Education and Early Development (“Department”) to develop a plan for reaching that benchmark. The plan must be submitted to the Department for approval.
- **Subsection (e)** makes explicit that a language immersion charter school shall hold its students to the same state performance standards as students at any other public school, including standards for English, math, and other subjects.
- **Subsection (f)** 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 (g)** 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.

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, allows the academic policy committee of a charter school to request issuance of a limited certificate, and removes the state Board of Education's ("Board'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 verification by the school board or academic policy committee that requested the certificate that the certificate holder has demonstrated skills in classroom instruction, curriculum development, and student assessment, the certificate can be extended. It can be renewed afterwards in accordance with regulation. 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 specifically for teachers instructing in a language other than English. A certificate can be issued for a particular language if there is an insufficient number of certified teachers in the state capable of teaching in that language.

- **Subsection (a)** states that a limited certificate authorized by this section may be issued only upon request of a school board or charter school academic policy committee. The certificate is only valid in the requesting district or school. The certificate is valid for teaching language classes at any grade level, and for teaching other subjects in grades pre-K through eight if the language of instruction is a foreign or indigenous language. A person teaching a subject other than the language must have completed a course in language immersion education and demonstrate subject matter expertise.
- **Subsection (b)** states that the Department may issue a limited certificate if:
 - The certificate applicant demonstrates instructional skills sufficient to assure the public the person is competent as a teacher, as defined by regulation;
 - The applicant demonstrates subject matter expertise (for the purposes of this demonstration, the person may not be required to hold a specific degree; nor may a non-English speaker be required to take an English-language test); and
 - The applicant has language proficiency sufficient to conduct classroom activities wholly in the non-English language.
- **Subsection (c)** 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. It can be renewed afterwards in accordance with regulation.

- **Subsection (d)** prohibits the 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)** allows a person who has been certified as a teacher by an Alaska Native tribe to teach classes taught in an Alaska Native language
 - in a language immersion charter school or
 - in another public school in the state, upon approval of the relevant school board, if the tribe's certification program complies with the provisions of the section.
- **Subsection (b)** requires that a tribe's certification program include evaluations of language proficiency, subject matter knowledge, and instructional skills (including skills specific to immersion education). It also requires the tribe to submit a complete description of its certification program to the Department, and notify the department when a person is certified or when a person's certification status changes. If the tribe does not comply with these requirements, teachers certified by the tribe may not teach in any public school.
- **Subsection (c)** makes publicly available the description of the tribal certification program submitted to the Department.
- **Subsection (d)** requires that a person certified by a tribe pass a background check and submit fingerprints and fees in the same manner as any other certified teacher in the state.
- **Subsection (e)** gives the Department authority to prohibit graduates of a tribal certification program from teaching in public schools if the program does not meet the requirements of the section.
- **Subsection (f)** 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 gives the commissioner of the Department or the Professional Teaching Practices Commission the authority to prohibit a teacher certified by a tribe from teaching in a public school for the same reasons that any other teacher could have their teaching certificate suspended or revoked under AS 14.20.030.

Section 9 describes the administrative review procedures available to tribes and teachers certified by tribes in the case that the Department or the Professional Teaching Practices Commission prohibits the use of the tribal certificate in public schools.

Section 10 provides for a transition period from the current limited teacher certificate statutes to the new limited teacher certificate statutes. This section is only relevant to limited certificates for teaching Alaska Native languages. Under this section, limited certificates for teaching Alaska Native languages are valid until they expire. If the limited certificate expires before July 1, 2017, it can be renewed under law as it stood on this bill's effective date.