

Education Transformation Bill

Increasing Virtual Education and Administrative Efficiencies

Sponsored by the Senate Education Committee

Every Alaskan student matters and deserves a high quality education. This bill seeks to help districts provide that education by giving them the tools to do more with less. The goal of this bill is to create better schools in Alaska and improve the academic outcomes for our students. Included in the bill are the following provisions:

- Increases access to high quality education by creating a virtual education consortium to allow students to take virtual classes offered by other school districts. The consortium will also require teachers to receive training specific to virtual teaching. Professional development for teachers will also be offered virtually for teachers at no cost to districts.
- Incentivize districts to pool resources by providing grants for cooperative agreements with other districts, other government agencies, businesses, and non-profit organizations. These grants are available when districts can realize savings in areas including shared administrative services, student transportation and nutrition, shared facilities, virtual education, and health insurance pooling.
- Creates incentives for school districts to lower pupil transportation costs and keep school buildings at full capacity. Districts can waive credit requirements for gym, art, and music courses, which can include cultural activities. Districts will also be able to retain additional savings each year.
- Restructures the Education Trust Fund to make additional funds available for education.
- Consolidates duplicative administrative functions within the Department of Education and Early Development. Also, requires teacher certification test scores to be increased when they are lower than other states.
- Requires districts to report on the ratios of administrative employees to students and administrative employees to teachers. These ratios will be reported to the Legislature and available to the public.

Alaska has a large achievement gap among students resulting in among the lowest graduation rates and testing scores in the country, yet our per student spending level is one of the highest. Overall spending in schools does not correlate with better academic results, but direct spending in the classroom does. This bill will help districts reduce administrative and overhead costs in order to focus money on the classroom.

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