

January 26, 2017

Representative Drummond
House Education Committee
Capital Building
Juneau, AK 99801

Senator Hughes
Senate Education Committee
Capital Building
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Support for SB 27 and HB 64 for a Reading Proficiency Task Force

Dear Senator Hughes and Representative Drummond,


Please consider my support for new bills SB 27 and HB 64 that create(s) a legislative task force to recommend changes that will create a sustainable and scalable plan for improving reading for all Alaska's students and addresses the specific needs of students with dyslexia. I believe that the(se) bills are the first step in a process that will raise the academic reading proficiency of Alaska's public school students.

I want to thank you for all of the work that you've done on behalf of Alaska school children and I want to give you a dose of optimism about Alaska's ability to achieve the goal of increased reading proficiency. I have not always been optimistic. However, Changes in our knowledge about reading and reading instruction have been so dramatic in the last few years that I am now fully optimistic for our state. Those changes are due to advancements in the scientific studies of reading. We now know more about how to teach reading than ever before. I say with confidence that with your strong leadership and the scientific knowledge we have we can ensure that 95 to 98% of all Alaskan students can become proficient readers.

Creation of a Reading Proficiency Task Force can translate the scientific knowledge into actionable planning and implementation to empower teachers to do what they do best, that is teach. If you recall, Senator Wielechowski invited me to present at a Lunch and Learn in Juneau on April 4, 2016 as a member of the Alaska Reading Coalition. In that [presentation](#), I explained the difficulty in translating the scientific knowledge of reading into the classrooms because of academics silos in teacher preparation programs and in professional development. This is a core problem in the low reading proficiency in Alaska and across our nation that legislative leaders like yourself are trying to mitigate.

Briefly, college professors, professional development educators, and teachers simply cannot teach what they do not know. Further, to quote Dr. Nancy Mather, Professor of Learning Disabilities at University Of Arizona said at the 2014 International Dyslexia Association conference, "We know how to teach reading. We're just not doing it." With your strong educational leadership, willingness to have crucial and difficult conversations, and the good people of Alaska we can change her quote to "Alaska knows how to teach reading. Alaska is going to do it."

Sincerely,



Posie Boggs

December 12, 2014

Good morning. I appreciate the UA Board of Regents for listening to the voices of Alaskans. Thank you. Further, I would like to thank Vice President Thomas and education Deans Lo, Mo|rot|ti, and Ryan and I'm sure many more people for their hard work on two Documents: Shaping Alaska's Future Theme II, Data Summary and The Plan for Revitalizing Teacher Education in Alaska.

My name is Posie Boggs I represent my family. I volunteer intensely for three organizations highly concerned about literacy in Alaska. They are Literate Nation Alaska Coalition, the Alaska Branch of the International Dyslexia Association, and Decoding Dyslexia Alaska. (50").

"We know how to teach reading. We're just not doing it."
A decade of reading failure, as evidenced by dismal NAEP 4th and 8th grade reading proficiency levels, can be cured by a decade of commitment to the science of reading and reading instruction. It is incumbent upon our UA system to ensure that our pre-service teachers via preparation and our current teachers via professional development are highly knowledgeable and skilled teachers of reading the minute they hit the ground in any classroom.

How do we know if the UA departments of education programs are preparing teachers well to teach reading? By adding, a laser focused metric assessing the reading and literacy courses mentioned on page 6 of the progress report On Productive Partnerships with Alaska

Schools so that you, they UA Board of Regents have a quality measure.

Our UA pre-service teachers must pass a Basic Reading Instruction Competence Teaching Assessment (BRICA) such as the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure MTEL Foundations of Reading (90) test with flying colors. Such a competency exam is the embodiment of the fact that “We know how to teach reading to 95-98% of children. We’re just not doing it.”

Alaska’s decade of reading failure cannot be cured without a rigorous outcome metric to ensure pre-service teachers graduate qualified and ready to teach reading on their first day of hire. “We know how to teach reading. We’re just not doing it.”

LNAKC

Literate Nation Alaska Coalition
Anchorage, Alaska - Posie Boggs, Alaska State Team Captain

September 17, 2015



Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development
801 West 10th Street, Suite 200
PO Box 110500
Juneau, AK 99811-0500

Re: Proposal to Eliminate Reading and Writing as State Standards Terms in 4 AAC 06

Dear State Board Chair and Board Members,

We strongly disagree with replacing the terms “reading and writing” with the term “English language arts” in 4 AAC 06.

What LNAKC wants

Literate Nation Alaska coalition once the state regulations to continue requiring the department to report each student's respective reading and writing scores separately on the statewide test.

Why We Want Reading and Writing Reports to report each student's respective reading and writing scores separately on the statewide test.

The state of Alaska has a historical credibility problem in the reporting of reading proficiency and in setting very low standards in reading for our students. Rolling up reading and writing into English Language Arts (ELA) does not repair Alaska's credibility problems. Transparency does.

Parents are watching carefully.

Parents simply want to know their students reading, writing, and oral language achievement reported separately. English Language Arts has always been an incomprehensible term to parents. Parent want *solid* separate information on reading, writing, and oral language. In fact, they may even want the component skills broken down into subskills such as decoding, fluency, and comprehension so that they can communicate to tutors they must likely hire due to Alaska's low reading achievements. A similar case exists for writing.

More critically, parents with students being evaluated for special education under the IDEA law will not have the de-aggregated empirical scores to establish eligibility. ELA is not a standard term on the evaluation tests given to such students. Reading levels based on age or grade are.

Parents with students in special education with reading, writing, and oral language goals will not have true data comparable to evaluate if their students are making progress on those goals. IEP teams will need specific data to back up their progress measures on a state level to gauge if they are meeting student goals.

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LNAKC

Literate Nation Alaska Coalition

Anchorage, Alaska - Posie Boggs, Alaska State Team Captain

Reporting only ELA scores to teachers, schools, districts, and the state legislature means that no empirical measurements are available to know if programmatic or instructional changes are needed or have been effective. Teachers would not know whether they are effective teachers of reading or teachers of writing.

Innovating districts will not have the data needed to evaluate empirically the outcomes of those innovations.

Given that the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reports separate reading and writing data, Alaska would have no direct comparison to other states. Without a direct comparison reported, Alaskan families, as has been the case in the past from previous Alaska SBA results, would have no way to compare their students reading and writing achievement to students in other states. Again, should parents have to leave the state for work they may think their student is proficient in ELA and find out their student does not meet proficiency standards in another state.

In a climate that demands transparency, it does not bode well for the State of Alaska to roll up reading and writing into ELA. It must be transparent that enough test items are in the AMP to produce an empirically independent data point for reading and writing achievement in our state.

Reading achievement must be revealed independently because it is extremely important for the legislature to understand the costs of low reading levels that impact the economics of Alaska. Reading levels are correlated directly to the number of welfare participants, correction inmates, and health care costs in Alaska. For the legislature to have an understanding of the cost of poor reading levels is one of the most critical data points in these difficult economic times.

Sincerely,



Posie Boggs

Alaska State Team Captain

Literate Nation Alaska Coalition

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Cc: NAACP
Governor Walker
Chair, Senate Education Committee
Chair, House Education Committee

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December 10, 2015

Dear Alaska State School Board:

However important this change in regulation is, we believe we have a larger problem in Alaska. That is, the facts surrounding teacher preparation in reading instruction in our state and nation is weak. One such factor is the Peter Effect which is based on the biblical story of the Apostle Peter, who when asked for money by a beggar replied that he could not give what he himself did not have (Acts 3:5). Referencing the work on the Peter Effect as applied to the notion of teacher preparation by Binks-Cantrell et al the following statistics and facts are alarming:

- 54.3 % of 195 teacher candidates were classed as unenthusiastic about reading
- Only 25.2% of teacher candidates reported unqualified enjoyment of reading
- Poor classroom instruction is due to poor teacher knowledge of the essential components of early reading instruction and is a major cause of reading failure.
- Teacher educators who lack an in-depth understanding of the essential components of early reading instruction were unable to give this knowledge to their teacher candidates. (Binks-Cantrell et al, 2015)

- Even In states that require passage of a Reading instruction competency exam for initial licensure, only about 60% of the teacher candidates pass the exam on the first try. This indicates that even in states with high expectations of entry teacher's reading instruction knowledge, university programs are not preparing the candidates well.
- Teacher educators who they themselves received professional development in professional development programs geared to research-based reading instruction for a minimum of three years were significantly better at passing on this knowledge to their teacher candidates.

We want the State of Alaska Board of Education to show us how Alaska is going to address the above teacher preparation n factors and ensure that every Alaskan child has a highly knowledgeable and skilled teacher of reading in K-3rd grade and reading specialists teaching those older students who are not proficient whether the children have disabilities or not. We want to see a plan that moves reading instruction in Alaska forward by providing teachers and teacher educators with what they need to be highly knowledgeable and skilled teacher of reading and reading specialists. We cannot

rely on the preparation of the many colleges of education outside of Alaska who prepare over 60% of our teachers and we can only encourage wait the University of Alaska system to catch their teacher educators up in reading science so they can pass that knowledge on to Alaskan prepared teachers. It may be revealing to have a random sample of University of Alaska prepared newly graduated teachers sit for the exams that Mass. and Connecticut require of K-3 teachers of reading if there is not an understanding of UA's teacher preparation programs.

We believe one-step forward is to place in regulations the definitions of the terms dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia so teacher educators and teacher candidates in Alaska know the importance of these terms. We also know that teacher educators and teachers who can teach these children to read will likely have the knowledge level to teach any Alaskan child to read.

We believe that until teacher educators and their candidates, teacher professional development educators and their educators are all equally prepared to be highly knowledgeable and skilled teacher of reading and reading specialists then teacher

evaluation for pay or position are invalidly measured by any test of student outcomes such as the new AMP measures. Teachers simply cannot teach what they themselves do not know. Teacher educators cannot pass on the incredibly important scientific knowledge of reading instruction to teacher candidates if they too simply do not know. Further teachers who are not enthusiastic about reading and reading instruction cannot pass on to Alaskan children the importance of and love of reading that they need to be successful in our state.

March 16, 2016

Good morning, my name is Posie Boggs. I'm involved now in six advocacy groups focused on reading proficiency for Alaskan children for example Literate Nation Alaska and the Alaska Branch of the International Dyslexia Association.

I would like to testify on SCR 1 and HB 156.

First, I would simply like The Civics Education Task Force to know a couple of little details that I think are important to their work. I would like them to know the grade level reading required for the United States original or founding documents. The Declaration of Independence requires a 12th grade reading ability, the Federalist papers require an 18th grade, college graduation reading ability, and the Constitution of the United States requires a 17th grade reading ability. Given that only 30% of Alaskan students graduate high school able to read at the 12th grade level, I think we have a little bit of a problem. School districts are not meeting the needs of our students.

Second, I would like to testify on HB 156. However, my testimony can also be related to HB 102. You just heard from a mother on HB 102 and the effects of low reading proficiency on mental health.

In HB 156, I'm very much in support of item number five, line 6 in page 2.

That states the methodology used to assign the state public school system of performance designation that compares the state public school system to public school systems in other states and countries. I believe that this the most important drivers that can in proof Alaska's dismal reading proficiency levels. Rep. Keller thank you very much for supporting matching the rigor of National standards because we can do it. I would further recommend that on page 3, line 23 be changed to assess English language arts that reports reading proficiency as a unique and separate result. What the heck is English Language Arts anyway is the question asked by parents.

However, on page 2 line 16 where it gives preference to measures that increase local control,

I have some concerns. My main concern is that reading instruction is scientifically evidenced but our teachers and *their own educators* often do not have this knowledge because the research about reading occurs outside of education. Many do not even know that it exists. If we continue to leave reading instruction up to local control this means that a school or district or school board can continue choosing to ignore and discount scientific evidence from over 35 National Institutes of Health reading research centers for over 40 years. If we do allow schools, districts, and school boards to continue current practices, Alaskan children are doomed to ridiculously low reading proficiency levels. I want the legislature to make a plan to uphold their responsibility per the Moore Case to ensure our children are proficient readers.

My masters is in Educational diagnostics and Section 8 taking a break is a good idea however, in the mean time I would also recommend that there are quick standardized reading assessment tools that schools and districts could give to students that would provide a very accurate reading proficiency score so that parents know while this transition period happens. They are low cost and group administered.

Thank you very much for your time and all that you do on behalf of our children.

Hello,

Thank you for taking public comment before starting your meeting. It is greatly appreciated that Alaska State Board of Education is eager to hear from Alaskan citizens.

My name is Posie Boggs and I am a long time Alaskan with four adult children who participated in public school, private school, and homeschool.

I also represent to nonprofit organizations, Literate Nation Alaska Coalition, The Alaska Branch of the International Dyslexia Association, and a grassroots organization named Decoding Dyslexia Alaska.

I would like to speak to teacher quality and the need for teacher certification exams that reflect highly qualified teachers of reading, especially in K-3rd grade but also across content areas.

Alaskans cannot tolerate the serial failures in literacy decade after decade. Being literate seems to me to be a right of all Alaska students and the knowledge to teach literacy, especially reading to our students seems to me a basic right for our teachers. Teachers should have a right to the foundational reading knowledge and skills that produce a literate child. According to Doctor Roche Chet see, Harvard a highly skilled kindergarten teacher justifies a salary of \$320,000 per year and it reflects a deep knowledge of reading development, reading literacy, and a highly skilled and respected professional.

Reading failure directly drives dropout rates and our statistics that the cost of one cohort of one year of dropouts is in the millions.

As you know in 2000 the national reading panel identified five imperative research research-based concepts that drive literacy and reading. You know they are phonemic awareness, deep knowledge of the alphabetic principle, fluency with text, vocabulary, and comprehension.

I also understand that the State of Alaska plans or is considering using ETS' Praxis I and II, test numbers 5038 English language arts content and knowledge elementary ad, 5039, 5041, and 5044.

I was curious if these tests covered the big five who said" I emailed Dr. Sandra Stotsky. Who agreed with me that "I do not believe there is more than approximately a 5% content match that reflects how to teach reading based on the proposed or past Alaska Standards?"

I want teachers in Alaska to be well supported in undergraduate and via PD to be able to pass and reading instruction exam as rigorous as the MTEL

5 minutes

Chair Cox, Commissioner Hanely, and Members of the AK School Board, thank you for taking my testimony today. For the record, this is Posie Boggs and I am testifying today as a Dyslexia specialist in private practice with a Masters of Science in educational diagnostics and over 20 years of experience teaching Alaska's children and adults who struggle to read and have a variety of educational experiences to read, write, spell, and do math.

I am testifying on regulation 4 ACC 06.713, Early Literacy Screening in regards to allowing the Commissioner of education to grant a to waive the early literacy screening requirements if the school or program seeking the waiver operates under an instructional model that makes early literacy screening in kindergarten or first grade inappropriate and has a formal policy adopting this instructional model.

I strongly encourage the Alaska state school board to deny this change for the following reasons:

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- first, without such early literacy screening schools, teachers, and parents do not have a complete basis to make relevant recommendations for an initial evaluation under The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, specifically under their obligation to fulfill The Child Find requirement in Section 1412(a)(3). "Child Find must include: Children who are suspected of being a child with a disability ONE CAN NOT Suspect without screening
- Second, as we all know early identification of children who struggle to learn to read for any reason is of the utmost importance and dare I say moral obligation that trumps any educational philosophy. One only has to search the US national Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health with keywords reading and early identification to see the results of 104 scholarly articles demonstrating the importance of early identification. Similarly, a simple search in the ERIC database reveals over 400 articles about the importance of early identification of children who struggle to learn to read. At the Office of Special Education Programs website, it is explicitly clarified there are 153 results discussing Child Find and early identification.
- Third, the office of special education program website reveals a summary of "comprehensive child find system" that includes **pre-referral procedures literacy screening is imperative.**
- **I have great concerns about how this regulation change would intersect with the results of the Moore case and the Moore Settlement**
- **Finally, a more Genuine and honest regulation would be to provide parents the results of the screenings so that children can be identified as missing some basic foundational reading skills to obtain resources that they can use to intervene early for their child. I realize that this must be navigated under the IDEA law, however; now there are early intervention virtual reading coaches that a school can inexpensively provide that identified or at-risk child.**
- **The most severe cases of older children struggling in reading that I have recently had are from schools that do not teach reading until quite late and use methods that**

are based on philosophy and not the science. As I have said before in other testimony, I do not want to see another non-reading 14 year old in Alaska who if they had early intervention would never had to had 1:1 privately paid tutoring for over 120 hours at a minimum. This is unethical in my view to encourage any practice that refuses screening to identify these at-risk children.

- **Parents who choose to go to this type of school should not give up their right to early identification that their child has strong indicators of reading acquisition struggles.**