

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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CS for Senate Bill 79 (EDU) Version S *Education Transformation Act*

EXPLANATION OF CHANGES FROM VERSION U to VERSION S April 14, 2019

1. Intent Language -- was deleted.
2. Staff : Student Ratios -- In the sections pertaining to annual reporting, (new section 4-5), the word “classroom” teacher was added for specificity, and a subsequent definition for “classroom teacher” was provided consistent with existing regulation and industry norms.
3. Cooperative Arrangement Grants – (CAGs) were set up in the 1990’s to give incentive for districts to find cost efficiencies by collaborating and sharing administrative or educational services. DEED distributes these grants, which are currently capped at \$100,000. SB79 expands CAGs to include not only district to district cooperations, but also between districts and businesses, non-profits, and other state government agencies. It also increases the CAG cap to \$200,000.
 - a. adds new requirements for CAG eligibility, including that if two school districts enter into a cooperative grant, at least one must be a rural district.
 - b. establishes that if a cooperative grant is used for health insurance pooling with the State, the grant can only be used to pay for the costs of transferring district employees to the State insurance plan, not for the cost of participating in the new insurance policy;
 - c. allows a school district to carry forward the savings realized by a CAG during the first three years after the grant is awarded. The savings will not be counted towards the fund balance limit established in AS 14.17.505(a) [Section 8 below];
 - d. defines “rural school district” consistent with use of the phrase elsewhere in statute, and defined in AS 14.11.025(c).
4. Unreserved Fund Balance: A school district’s unreserved (“emergency”) fund balance is currently capped in statute at 10% of its operating budget. The original bill increased the cap to 25%. The CS (version S) increases the cap to 15%.
5. PRAXIS Scores – this section was rewritten to describe a regimented process for the state board to evaluate and adjust minimum passing scores on required competency exams for persons to qualify for teacher certification.

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SB 79 (version S) Explanation of Changes From “U” to “S” *continued*

6. Virtual Education Consortium – this section was significantly rewritten and consolidated to maximize the flexibility for DEED and school districts to develop the program.
 - a. It was expanded to include online learning resources for any grade level, not just from grades 6-12
 - b. It includes resources for both student and teachers, including professional development resources and other training for online / virtual course delivery methodology.
 - c. A fee structure may be adopted by DEED by regulation to charge participating districts, limited to a prorated amount relative to the costs associated with maintaining the consortium database.
7. District Reading Intervention Program (Read By 9) – This is comprehensive language detailing ways to identify, intervene and focus on students struggling with reading, with the goal being to ensure all students are reading at or above grade level by the end of third grade.
8. Consortium Task Force -- Sets up a temporary Virtual Education Task Force, led by the DEED Commissioner, and comprised of leaders in education technology to assemble one year prior to the effective date of the bill, who are charged with developing the initial structure and functionality of the Virtual Education Consortium described in Section 12 of the bill.