

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Interim – May-December:
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Anchorage, AK 99503
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Session – January-April:
State Capitol, Rm. 403
Juneau, AK 99801
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SPONSOR STATEMENT

Sponsor Substitute for House Bill 108, Version O

"An Act requiring the establishment of a reading program in school districts for grades kindergarten through three; providing for student retention in grade three; and providing for a report on the reading program and on student retention."

Sponsor Substitute for House Bill 108 offers a comprehensive grade K-3 reading policy and establishes reading intervention programs for students to ensure their ability to read at grade level by the end of their third grade. This bill eliminates the practice of "social promotion," with the intention of providing intensive reading intervention programs to assist students in demonstrating grade level reading skills before reaching the fourth grade. In the event a grade three student has not met the minimum reading standards and does not qualify for a good cause exemption under Sec. 14.30.765(b), during the last 45 days of the school year, the school shall hold a conference with the student's teacher and parents or guardian to discuss retention of the student in grade three.

Initially, within the first 30 days of the K-3 school year, all students will undergo a screening and diagnostic assessment. Within fourteen days of a school district's receipt of the results of students identified with reading deficits, the school district will share the results with the student's teachers and parents. Within four weeks of a school district's receipt of the results identifying students with reading deficits, it shall provide the student with an individual reading improvement plan, and every two weeks provide an update of the student's progress toward grade level reading to the parents or guardian.

Clearly, involving parents from the beginning is critical to their student's success. Under SSHB 108, parents participate heavily in reading intervention programs to support their student in becoming a successful lifelong reader. In that endeavor, a school district will provide the parents with a home reading plan in the context of a contract which includes their participation in parent training workshops, and regular parent-guided reading at home. The school district will provide the teaching methodologies necessary to assist the student in progressing to the next grade level in reading.

A monitoring plan will be developed by the teachers, parents or guardian, and other pertinent education persons for each student identified with a significant reading deficiency. The plan will include language requiring that the intensive reading intervention continue until the student no longer has a reading deficiency. The district reading program must provide for retention of students in grade three who fail to meet the minimum reading standards, unless the student demonstrates sufficient reading skills for promotion to grade four by completing a test-based portfolio or alternative reading assessment or demonstrates good cause.

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test scores, Florida moved from twenty-eighth place in the nation in 2003, to first place in 2009, 2013, 2015 and 2017, after implementing its comprehensive reading reform to include retention; Indiana moved from sixteenth place in 2009, to third place in 2017; Colorado moved from thirty-first place in 2009, to third place in 2017; and North Carolina moved from thirty-fifth place in 2009, to twelfth place in 2017. When considering these statistics, we see that there is good reason for the Alaska State Legislature to emulate the reading reform strategies in these states.