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## House Bill 164 – Early Ed Programs; Reading; Virtual Ed

### Sectional Analysis

*"An Act relating to early education programs provided by school districts; relating to school age eligibility; relating to early education programs; establishing a parents as teachers program; relating to the duties of the Department of Education and Early Development; relating to certification of teachers; establishing a reading intervention program for public school students enrolled in grades kindergarten through three; establishing a reading program in the Department of Education and Early Development; relating to a virtual education consortium; and providing for an effective date."*

**Section 1** – Establishes this Act as the Alaska Reads Act.

**Section 2** – Amends AS 14.03.060 by redefining the definition of elementary school to include a Department of Early Education and Development (DEED) approved early education program and a head start program operating under 42 U.S.C. 9831-9852c.

**Section 3** – Amends AS 14.03.072 by aligning terminology and by requiring districts to provide information regarding the importance of early reading to parents and guardians of students including information about reading intervention services authorized by Section 18 of this bill.

**Section 4** – Amends AS 14.03.078 which directs DEED to include in their annual report to the legislature information collected under AS 14.03.120, Parent as Teachers, and AS 14.30-760 – 14.30.775, the Alaska Reads Act, including how districts use their professional service days for culturally responsive professional development in reading instruction.

**Section 5** – Amends AS 14.03.080 by directing school districts to offer a waiver process to parent(s) or guardian(s) who would like their child to start kindergarten at an age earlier than what is currently established in state statute.

**Section 6** – Amends AS 14.03.080 by adding new subsection which changes the date a child is eligible to enter a public early education program.

**Section 7** – Amends AS 14.03.120 by adding new subsection which establishes annual reporting requirements for school districts to report student performance metrics in grades K-3.

**Section 8** – Amends AS 14.03 by establishing a statewide early education grant program to provide a cyclical early education grant program to all school districts. The early education grant program includes financial support, professional training, and technical assistance to school districts to develop or improve their high-quality, locally designed, culturally responsive, universal voluntary pre-K program.

Over six fiscal years, all school districts will be offered the opportunity to participate in the grant program, with the lowest performing 10% of school districts eligible in the first year. At any time, a school district may apply to the DEED to have their pre-K program approved. Once a pre-K program is approved, the school district is authorized to include their pre-K students in their Average Daily Membership (ADM) count.

Participation in the grant program is not required and school districts are not mandated to establish a pre-K program.

AS 14.03.420 codifies the Parents As Teachers (PAT) program as a program of the state within DEED and specifies criteria for PAT to demonstrate its efficacy in supporting school districts with pre-K education.

**Section 9** – Amends AS 14.07.020 and directs DEED to supervise all early education programs, approve those early education programs established under AS 14.03.410, establish a new reading program AS 14.07.065, and offer reading intervention programs to participating schools AS 14.30.770.

**Section 10** – AS 14.07.020 is amended to define an early education program as a pre-K program for students three to five years old if its primary function is educational.

**Section 11** – Amends AS 14.07.050 to permit DEED to purchase supplemental reading textbooks and materials for school districts related to the reading intervention services established AS 14.30.760.

**Section 12** – Amends AS 14.07.165 by directing the Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development (state board) to establish regulations for a high-quality, locally designed, evidence-based, culturally responsive early education program (pre-K) for children who are four and five years of age.

**Section 13** – Amends AS 14.07.180 by directing the state board to establish standards for reviewing and approving early education through grade 3 language arts curricula based on the five components of evidence-based reading as identified by the National Reading Panel.

**Section 14** – Amends AS 14.17.500 by adding new subsection which counts a student participating in a DEED-approved early education program as half (0.5) a student in a school district's Average Daily Membership (ADM) calculations.

**Section 15** – Amends AS 14.17. 505 by increasing the limit a school district is allowed to retain in its unreserved fund balance from 10% to 25% of district expenditures. This section also allows for savings realized from a cooperative grant under AS 14.14.115 to not count towards the 25% limit.

**Section 16** – Amends AS 14.17.905 to include students in early education programs approved by DEED in the definition of an elementary school.

**Section 17** – Amends AS 14.17.905 by adding new subsection to avoid letting school districts count pre-K students twice in Foundation Formula Average Daily Membership (ADM) calculations.

**Section 18** – Amends AS 14.20.015 to ensure teaching certificate reciprocity for teachers moving to Alaska and adds that such teachers must complete at least three credits or equivalency in evidence-based reading instruction to be eligible for an Alaska teaching endorsement in elementary education.

**Section 19** – Amends AS 14.20.020 by adding new subsection to require all teachers to complete at least three credits or equivalency in evidence-based reading instruction to be eligible for an endorsement in elementary education.

**Section 20** – Establishes Article 15, Reading Programs and Article 16, Virtual Education.

Establishes AS 14.30.760, which directs DEED to adopt a culturally responsive statewide reading assessment and screening tool to assist in identifying students with any reading deficiencies based on recommendations from the Dyslexia Task Force or another formalized reading proficiency task force; support early education educators in monitoring student progress in reading proficiency; provide training to early education educators and school district staff in reading intervention tools; and, establish a waiver process for school districts to adopt an alternative evidence-based reading screen or assessment tool.

Establishes AS 14.30.765, which directs school districts to offer culturally responsive intensive reading intervention services to K-3 students who do not meet grade level proficiency requirements on the statewide screening tool or alternative. Intensive reading intervention services must include a high amount of communication between teachers, parents, administrators, and the student. This section contains clear parental notification requirements for if and when a student fails to progress toward reading proficiency that may result in the student not advancing to the next grade level.

Establishes AS 14.30.770, which directs DEED to establish a statewide reading program to assist the lowest performing 25 percent of school districts serving K-3 students in providing reading intervention services. DEED employed reading specialists will assist school districts in implementing their intensive reading intervention services; train and mentor district early education educators; and conduct an independent review of the efficacy and success of the statewide reading program. DEED will also make complementary reading proficiency tools and resources to school districts available.

DEED will convene an annual panel of educators, school administrators, and parents to review the effectiveness of reading intervention programs established under Article 15 Reading Programs.

This section also contains a detailed account of qualifications required for DEED employed reading specialists and support reading specialists and inclusive definitions for “district,” and “parent ‘or’ guardian.”

Establishes AS 14.30.800, a virtual education consortium operated by DEED in collaboration with school districts. The consortium will have a database of virtual education courses available to all districts for students in grades 6-12 and provide training for teachers instructing in virtual settings and professional development for all teachers in the state. New definitions for the terms: “asynchronous”, “base student allocation”, “blended”, “host district”, “synchronous”, and “virtual education” or “virtual instruction” are established under this article.

**Section 21** – Directs early education program staff to be included in those organizations required to report evidence of child abuse.

**Section 22** – Repeals AS 14.03.410, the early education grant program, in 11 years once all school districts have had the opportunity to participate.

**Section 23** – Establishes a July 1, 2023 deadline for when DEED must make virtual education courses available.

**Section 24** – Provides applicability language relating to endorsements in elementary education issued on or after the effective date of this act.

**Section 25** – Is transition language, directing the department to use 2019-20 school accountability rankings for purposes of determining the first cohort of lowest performing schools, to identify their pre-K grant eligibility for FY 22.

**Section 26** – Establishes an effective date of July 1, 2021.