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CS for House Bill 164 Version I – Sectional Analysis for Sections 14 and 35

Section 14 – Adds a new section under AS 14.03, Article 4. Early Education.

This section directs DEED to provide training and assistance to school districts that do not have a high-quality, locally designed, culturally responsive early education program and provides financial aid to districts through three-year early education grants, with additional support years possible if a district is unable to get approval for their program after three years. Based on performance rankings, DEED will prioritize grants to school districts that have an insufficient number of children enrolled in other types of high-quality, locally designed, culturally responsive early education programs. Unless the legislature chooses to appropriate a different amount, grants awarded to school districts may not exceed \$3,000,000 each fiscal year.

Districts that already have a high-quality, locally designed, culturally responsive early education program that meets the requirements established under AS 14.07.165 may have their early education program approved by DEED, which will allow their early education students to be included in their Average Daily Membership (ADM) counts. ADM counts determine foundation formula funding. Approved early education programs may be reviewed by DEED to ensure compliance with the standards established under AS 14.07.165.

DEED is directed to establish a statewide program to support a parent/guardian in evidence-based early education for children under five years of age. Community Parent as Teachers (PAT) programs must meet DEED guidelines and help prepare children for school and support parents in understanding child development and developmental milestones.

Section 35 – Adds new section under AS 14.30, Article 15. Reading Intervention and Article 16. Virtual Education Consortium.

Directs DEED to support school districts in adopting an evidence-based reading assessment tool to help kindergarten through third-grade classroom teachers identify students struggling to learn to read.

Students will be assessed in the fall, and if a student is determined to be learning to read, the student will no longer be assessed that year.

If a student is struggling to read, an individual reading improvement plan must be developed and implemented to help the student learn to read. Two more additional assessments will assist in ascertaining whether reading intervention strategies are working, provide clear insight into where a student may be struggling, and permit the department to provide additional, targeted support.

DEED is directed to provide training to school district staff in a reading assessment tool and train school district staff in evidence-based reading interventions.

Districts are asked to identify which early education program a student attended (if attended) and report to the department reading proficiency.

Districts may choose to adopt the reading assessment tool provided by DEED or use their own reading assessment tool if it is evidence-based and approved by DEED. In determining the type of reading assessment, DEED must consider the time it takes to administer the assessment, when assessment results may become available, how the assessment may be integrated into the classroom, recommendations from taskforces that studied reading deficiencies, and ensuring the assessment is culturally responsive.

Districts are directed to offer help to a K- 3rd grade student who is struggling to read by offering individualized reading intervention services. Interventions must be in addition to core reading instruction and be provided (when practical) by or under the supervision of a reading teacher, be rooted in evidence-based methods that are proven to help a student learn to read within a single school year,

provide clear instruction and detailed explanation to the student, be individualized, be offered outside the regular school day, provide assistance and support to parents/guardians, and support opportunities to parents/guardians to learn about resources for adult literacy.

Individual reading improvement plans must be implemented at least 30 days after a student is assessed to be struggling, and a student's classroom teacher and district support staff must be involved in the evidence-based interventions.

Progress on individual reading improvement plans must be culturally responsive and be monitored, and adjustments may be made. Parents/guardians must be kept updated on the progress of their students, and additional resources to support individual reading improvement plans at home must be provided to parents/guardians.

Once a student is identified as a struggling reader, a family member must be notified within 15 days. Notification must include a clear description of what an individual reading plan entails and how the district plans to support the student. Explanations of what evidence-based reading interventions entail and what may happen if a student continues to struggle to read must be included in the initial notification. Parents/guardians must also be told what evidence-based reading strategies may be implemented at home and a detailed explanation of which future retention/progression options, waivers, and good cause exemptions may apply. Parents/guardians must also receive information on how mid-year progression works within the district. At 45 days (or before), if a student continues to struggle to read, a parent/guardian must meet with a student's classroom teacher and district staff to discuss grade progression.

A classroom teacher and district staff must clearly explain the situation the student faces and how retention may impact the student's future academic and social performance. At the end of the conversation, the parent must make a decision on whether to approve retention and sign a waiver if they chose to

progress their student against the recommendation of the classroom teacher and district staff.

Parents/guardians may request a good cause exemption for a student with an individualized education plan, a student who has received at least two years of intensive reading intervention services, a student who has previously been retained, and a student whose first language is not English.

For students who are retained, school districts must provide individual reading improvement plans, evidence-based intensive reading intervention strategies, supplemental tutoring, increased time focused on reading, and a plan for home-based reading interventions.

DEED must also develop a district reading program that offers direct support to at least 5 low-performing schools that serve K through 3rd grade students. State funding will provide direct support to school districts for the implementation of a district reading program that assigns a DEED supported reading specialists who will assist district teachers and staff in learning evidence-based reading strategies. Reading Specialists will coach, support, train, monitor, and lead districts teachers and staff in evidence-based reading instruction. DEED will provide any support materials, pay for any associated costs like travel, and assist in building professional development plans for district staff in reading instruction.

Reading Specialists will work with district staff and community members to build reading capacity and provide annual reports to the community on the effectiveness of the district reading program.

An annual panel of educators, parents, and classroom teachers will provide feedback to DEED on program implementation.

This section includes a detailed job description for a reading specialist that requires the educator to have experiential and academic experience in evidence-based reading instruction.