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MEMORANDUM

Date: May 2, 2021

To: Members of the House Education Committee

From: Löki Gale Tobin, Office of Senator Tom Begich

RE: **Notes for the reading intervention sectional analysis**

(Page 2, line 29) Section 5: Amends AS 14.03.072 to require all districts to provide information regarding the importance of early reading and adult literacy to parents and guardians of students in grades K through 3.

(Page 3, Line 11) Section 6: Repeals references to reading intervention services made in Section 5 on June 30, 2034. Reading intervention services, including culturally responsive individual reading plans, parent/guardian/family member notification, and evidence-based reading intervention strategies established under AS 14.30.765 are also repealed on June 30, 2034.

(Page 3, line 23) Section 7: Amends AS 14.03.078 by directing DEED to include in their annual report to districts and the legislature information on the implementation process of the statewide reading intervention program established under AS 14.30.760-14.30.775. Section 8 repeals this provision on June 30, 2034.

(Page 7, starting on Line 18) Section 13: Creates a new section under AS 14.03.120 asking districts to report aggregate data to DEED on K-3rd grade reading program metrics, including student-teacher ratios, reading assessment performance, and retention metrics.

(Page 10, starting on Line 31) The next six pages pertain to Sections 15 & 16: Amends AS 14.07.020 by authorizing DEED to provide direct support to school districts for the successful implementation of a K-3rd grade evidence-based reading program. Section 16 repeals this provision on June 30, 2034.

(Page 16, line 6) Section 18: Amends AS 14.07.050 to allow DEED the ability to purchase supplemental textbooks in support of evidence-based reading intervention strategies. For clarity, a district may request DEED purchase supplemental textbooks, and these textbooks are in addition to any materials a district already employs. Section 19 repeals this provision on June 30, 2034.

(Page 19, starting on line 7) Section 23: Amends AS 14.07.180 by directing the state board of education to establish, in regulation, standards for evidence-based language art curricula for grades K-3.

Please note that Commissioner Johnson has affirmed, on the record, his and the department's practice and continued commitment to engaging stakeholders when designing regulations.

There are many sections that direct DEED and the state board to establish new regulations. This allows for stakeholder engagement, ensures a public comment

period on any new regulations, and allows for nimbleness to respond to changing needs and dynamics.

(Page 22, line 13) Section 31 & (and on page 24, line 2) Section 34: Amends AS 14.20.015 to require out-of-state teachers moving to Alaska to have meet requirements established in regulation by DEED and the state board that shows the educators have a working understanding of evidence-based reading. Section 32 and 40 repeal these requirements for out-of-state teachers on June 30, 2034.

(Page 24, Line 10) Section 35. Adds new section under AS 14.30, Article 15. Reading Intervention.

(Page 24, line 15) Directs DEED to support school districts in adopting an evidence-based reading assessment tool to help kindergarten through 3rd-grade classroom teachers identify students struggling to learn to read.

(Page 24, Line 26) 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.

(Page 25) 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.

(Page 25) 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.

(Page 26, starting on Line 5) Section 35 establishes AS 14.30.765 – Reading intervention services and strategies.

For any K- 3rd-grade student who is struggling to read, districts must offer individualized reading intervention services to the maximum extent possible. This ensures local control and flexibility.

Interventions are in addition to core reading instruction. They should 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 a detailed explanation to the student, be individualized, be offered during or outside the regular school day, provide assistance and support to parents/guardians at home, and support opportunities for parents/guardians to learn about resources for adult literacy.

(Page 27, Line 10) Individual reading improvement plans must be implemented at least 30 days after a student is assessed to be struggling. Individual reading improvement plans must be culturally responsive and be monitored regularly to allow for adjustments. Parents/guardians/family members must be kept updated on their student's progress, and additional resources to support individual reading improvement plans at home must be provided to the family.

(Page 28, Line 2) Once a student is identified as a struggling reader, a family member must be notified within 15 days.

This notification, which can be verbal or written, must include a clear description of how the student was identified as a struggling reader and details of individual reading plans. Districts are asked to provide information on what future retention/progression options, waivers, and good cause exemptions may apply if the student continues to struggle to read. 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, districts are asked to have a parent/guardian/family member conference to discuss grade retention/progression and its potential impacts on the student – both academically and socio-emotionally.

Teachers and district staff will explain the student's situation and how retention may impact the student's future academic and social performance. At the end of

the conversation, if all the parties are not in agreement as to what is the best course of action, the parent makes the final decision.

Parents/guardians/family members may request a good cause exemption for students 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 who is an English Language Learner.

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.

As Commissioner Johnson has noted on the record: There is a lot of evidence that promoting a student who cannot read has consequences. At the same time, there is mixed/indecisive evidence that retaining a child has sustained positive consequences. What is known with certainty is that every student identified as a struggling reader should receive effective reading interventions. This legislation is not a retention bill; it is a reading bill, which means, as described above, this legislation focuses on effective interventions and accountability.

Effective means meeting commonly accepted standards of evidence-based practices.

Intervene means accurately and routinely identifying students who are struggling.

Accountable means establishing in statute the expectations of the legislature in reporting.

(Page 32, Line 29) Section 35 establishes AS 14.30.770, department reading program.

DEED will develop and offer a direct support reading-intensive intervention program. The lowest-performing 25% of schools that serve K-3rd grade students are eligible, and DEED may select up to 5 schools.

DEED must provide direct support to school districts to implement a district reading program that includes a DEED-supported reading specialist to assist teachers and staff in learning evidence-based reading strategies.

(Page 33, starting on Line 17) there is a detailed description of the job responsibilities of the assigned reading specialist. These responsibilities include coaching, mentoring, training, facilitating, and leading district teachers and staff in evidence-based reading instruction methodologies and data analytics.

DEED is also required to work with assigned reading specialists in developing progress reporting and measurable success metrics. DEED must purchase additional reading support materials, pay for any associated costs like travel, and assist in building professional development plans for district staff in evidence-based reading instruction.

Reading specialists will work with district staff and community members to improve school reading skills. Reading specialists must provide annual reports to the community on the effectiveness of the district reading program.

(Page 34, lines 18-22) DEED will convene an annual panel of educators, parents, and classroom teachers to provide feedback to DEED on the implementation of Section 35. The intent is for DEED to use this feedback in adjusting or augmenting the implementation of this section.

(Page 34, line 25) AS 14.30.770 provides additional guidance for districts and DEED on implementing the department reading program to ensure a collaborative approach.

(Page 35, line 28) Section 35 includes a detailed job description for a reading specialist that requires the educator to have experiential and academic experience in evidence-based reading instruction.

(Pages 36-37) Section 35 includes definitions for the district, evidence-based reading instruction, and an inclusive definition of parent and guardian.

(Page 38, lines 24-27) Section 37 includes a definition for culturally responsive.

(Page 39, starting on line 11) Section 42 adds applicability language for teachers who begin teaching on or after the effective date of this act - pertaining to previous sections on educator coursework in evidence-based reading.

(Page 39) Section 43 describes a comprehensive report due to the 38th Alaska State Legislature on the effectiveness of reading programs described in Section 35.

(Page 40) Section 45 adds transition language authorizing DEED to begin work on associated regulations, and Section 47 establishes an effective date of July 1, 2022.