

From: [Valerie Brooks](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: SB111
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Having followed the progression of this and other bills intended to address literacy skills in pre-K and early grades, I write again to comment on SB111.

The following from the bill does not reflect current educational research-
"(8) explain that a student in grade three should demonstrate sufficient
24 reading skills to progress to grade four under (e) of this section, unless the student
25 receives a waiver under (f) of this section, receives an exemption under (h) of this
26 section, or has previously not progressed to the next grade;
27 (9) explain the process and deadline to request"

Even when we assure that specific reading instructional interventions are funded and provided by trained and credentialed specialists, we cannot hold that every student will be a proficient reader at the end of grade 3.

There is no need for retention at grade 3 when we consult research on grade retention and its ineffectiveness in impacting students' ability to access learning and address skills deficits. Indeed, my own doctoral research demonstrated that a Response to Instructional Intervention (RTI) approach allows us to meet students at their instructional levels, acknowledge that not all grade 3 students will demonstrate identical skills, and if we address individual academic needs we observe greater learning acquisition and student academic success.

I urge you to fully fund and make possible early education opportunities for all Alaskan students. This will increase early childhood learning skills success and increase school readiness. This in turn ensures that students in grade K-3 can more consistently find success, and those students who demonstrate literacy/reading skills deficits can be identified, at the beginning of their school years, can be provided specific instruction in small group settings, and thus make progress toward proficiency.

Retention is not the answer. In order to assist student learning we need to focus on instruction at academic level and for specific skills identified as below proficient according to agreed upon diagnostics.

Funding is necessary for early childhood education, for DEED supports for literacy instruction, for hiring qualified instructors/teachers, and to make training and materials available to allow for appropriate instruction for all students at their current learning level.

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*I gratefully acknowledge I am living and working on the ancestral land of the
Tlingit - the Taant'a Kwa'an and Sanyaa K̓wáan.*

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