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House District 6

Sectional Analysis CS HB 256(EDC) VERSION U Intervention & Improving Instructional Practices

Section 1- Department annual report:

Amends the requirements of the Department of Education & Early Development's annual report:

- Removes the reference to schools having a designation of "in crisis" since that term is not defined;
- Replaces the term "intervention", with restoration – as that is the goal of efforts to assist local schools or districts to improve instructional practices.
- Adds a requirement that the Department report the reasons for turnover in certificated personnel and superintendents, not just report the numbers and percentages. This is linked to a change in teacher contracts, requiring teachers leaving a district to complete the Department's exit survey (Section 8).

Section 2- School and district accountability:

Requires the Department to give technical assistance to a public school or district that receives a low performance designation. This is in recognition that smaller districts may not have the technical capacity to devote the appropriate resources to developing a district improvement plan.

Section 3:

Adds a Department accountability section. This section sets up a process for superintendents to evaluate the Department as to:

- Whether the staff were supportive of the district;
- Description of the support received and an evaluation of the support;
- Quality of the level of contact the district had with the Department;
- Its reporting requirements; and
- How the Department may improve services to the district.

These evaluations would be summarized to protect individual identities and provided to the Governor, Legislature, and Commissioner of Education.

Section 4- Duties of the department (*The Department shall*):

Amends the duties of the department to include more cooperative opportunities for the department and school districts.

- Includes opportunity for school and district personnel to participate in the Department's review of the needs of Alaska's public schools toward the goal of improving the schools.
- In adopting or recommending plans for improvements, the plans must incorporate appropriate cultural standards that must be included in instructional practices in districts in which 50% or more of the students are Alaska Native.
- The plans must
 - Identify intensive learning opportunities for each district.
 - Analyze community involvement and methods for improving it.
 - Address teaching capacity, retention and development and provide for technical assistance to teachers.
 - Ensure districts develop and maintain elective and career and technical courses.
 - Notify a district of a low performance designation, offer technical assistance consisting of predictable, research-based strategies tailored to Alaska before beginning state restoration activities.
 - Describe research-based strategies that target educational performance.
- The Department has to employ qualified personnel to provide advisory/consultative services to districts. However, these services must be consistent with AS 14.07.030(14), which is amended in this bill. Restoration activities do not include hiring a trustee.
- Regulations relating to restoration of a school or district must specify the criteria under which a low performing school or district may improve instructional practices. These regulations must include a notice to the school and district of the deficiencies and the instructional practice changes proposed by the Department and must provide an end date for the restoration activities.
- Removes the requirement that student proficiency be tied solely to standards-based assessments. The district must demonstrate three consecutive years of improvement or measures identified as indicators of student success and achievement under AS 14.03.123(f) and may request a fourth year of restoration services.

(Page 6, beginning at Line 25):

When a school is designated as low performing, the rest of Section 4 sets out a collaborative, rather than punitive process for the Department and the district to work together to improve school performance.

- After being designated a low performing school for the first year,
 - Year 1: Selection of one independent expert by August 15. District Superintendent and Commissioner select. Expert will have evaluated the school in the areas requested. Expert's site visit will not exceed seven days.

- Expert produces a written report by October 15 and distributes. A summary is posted on the Internet.
- By November 15, the Superintendent and the Department will select a qualified coach, and the local school board and the Department will select a qualified coach. These coaches will advise the district for not more than 20 days total regarding the needs identified in the evaluation.
- On June 1 provide to the department, parents, legislature and post on the Internet a summary of progress of these efforts and the observations and recommendations of the coaches.
- YEAR 2: Not later than September 15, mandatory selection and hiring of two additional qualified coaches to advise the district. One selected by superintendent and one selected by the local school board, after input from the Association of Alaska School Boards. The coaches will advise the district for not more than 20 days total regarding the needs identified in the evaluation.
 - By June 1, provide to the State Board of Education, department, parents, legislature and post on the Internet a summary of the progress of these efforts.
- YEAR 3: Requires the Department maintain frequent consultation with staff at the low performing school and the school superintendent.
 - Requires the Department establish a School Improvement Team to advise the commissioner on restoration activities.
 - The School Improvement Team will evaluate the school for best practices applicable in Alaska relating to major areas of school administration, governance, instructional practices and for implementation of Alaska State Cultural Standards.
 - Team develops a three-year plan to restore the school. During the three-year plan, the Team may redirect funding in the district budget to improve instruction.
 - Superintendent implements the plan.
 - Team evaluates and adjusts the plan as necessary at the end of each school year.

Section 5 - Powers of the Department (*The Department may*):

Specifies that regulations adopted by the Department related to restoration of a school or district must be consistent with federal and state law and the superior court's findings, dated February 4, 2009, in *Moore v. State of Alaska*, including:

- Directing use of appropriations under this title for distribution to a district (consistent with the school improvement team's recommendations).
- Providing training and other support as necessary to implement a school or district improvement plan.
- Providing for regular monitoring, evaluation and modification of improvement efforts tailored to the strengths and weaknesses of the school or district.
- Providing for the availability of courses and remedial programs necessary for students in these schools to meet state standards for graduation in the expected time frame.

Section 6 - Powers of the Department:

Before the Department may redirect public school funding for a low performing school, the department must:

- Assemble a school improvement team and that team must have requested funding to be redirected for a specified purpose related to improving instructional practices.
- Provide notice to the legislative committees with jurisdiction over education.
- Provide notice to the district and provide an opportunity for the district to respond.
- Establish a timeline for redirecting the funding back to the district after the team determines improvement has occurred.

Section 7 - State Board of Education Duties:

Requires the State Board of Education to review the Department's compliance with its statutory responsibilities related to school monitoring, improvement and restoration.

Requires the Board to provide the Superintendent and local school board who are the subject of an item for consideration on the Board's agenda to be provided notice that the item is on the agenda and an opportunity to respond.

Section 8 – Employment and Tenure:

Contracts for teachers must require a teacher leaving employment to complete the Department's exit survey.