



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

Department of Education
& Early Development

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

333 Willoughby Ave., 9th Floor, SOB
P.O. Box 110500
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0500
Main: 907.465.2800
TTY/TDD: 907.465.2815
Fax: 907.465.2806

March 26, 2025

The Honorable Löki Tobin
Chair, Senate Education Committee
Alaska State Capitol, Room 115
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Chair Tobin,

This letter serves as a response to questions addressed to the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) during the Wednesday, March 19, 2025, Senate Education Committee meeting on the presentation of fiscal notes for the Rules Committee Substitute of House Bill (HB) 69 as amended.

1. Do we expect improved scores from the reading incentive grants or are they just a funding mechanism?

Providing Reading Proficiency Incentive Grants to K-6 can directly impact student learning by providing targeted financial support to districts, which can be used in various ways to enhance literacy instruction and intervention. The Alaska Reads Act requires that districts create a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) plan that outlines specific intervention strategies to increase student outcomes in reading. The MTSS utilizes three levels of support ranging from instruction provided to all students to individualized interventions to the students who need it most. This evidence-based model, when paired with strong evidence-based intervention strategies, provides structure to reading programs. In order to enhance existing programs districts can utilize these funds in several ways:

1. Expanding Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction
 - Funds can be used to purchase high-quality reading curricula aligned with the Science of Reading
 - Schools can invest in additional literacy materials, such as decodable texts, intervention kits, or classroom libraries, ensuring students have access to appropriate reading resources
2. Supporting Intervention and Tutoring
 - Districts can use funds to expand intervention programs for students who need additional support beyond core instruction
 - Tutoring services (in-person or online) can be provided for struggling readers, offering more personalized learning opportunities
3. Enhancing Teacher Training and Professional Development

- Funds can cover training costs for educators in structured literacy practices, such as UFLI (University of Florida Literacy Institute), Heggerty, LETRS (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling), or other research-backed programs
- Teachers can receive stipends for completing professional development or extra training outside of contract hours
- 4. Increasing Student Engagement and Motivation
 - Schools can create student recognition programs to celebrate reading growth, fostering motivation and confidence
 - Additional resources for family literacy nights and take-home reading programs can strengthen home-school partnerships
- 5. Expanding Reading Support Staff
 - Incentives can be used to hire reading specialists, paraprofessionals, or interventionists to provide more individualized support
 - Schools can reduce student-to-teacher ratios in reading instruction, ensuring more focused guidance
- 6. Strengthening Data-Driven Decision-Making
 - Funds can be invested in progress monitoring tools (e.g., mCLASS DIBELS 8, MAP Growth in preparation for the AK STAR) to track student growth and adjust instruction as needed
 - Districts can use incentives to train educators on data literacy, improving how they use assessment results to inform instruction, and strengthen progress monitoring

2. Could the department provide a breakdown of the 48,847 students by district?

The attached document titled *Growth and Proficiency by District HB69.pdf* provides the total number of students by district who were either considered proficient on a state level assessment or experienced growth towards proficiency. The chart also includes preliminary reading incentive grant amounts. Please note that the number of students in the HB69 fiscal note differs from the number if broken out by school district because of a students' movement. Students who move to a different district will automatically be dropped from the district count, but they will still be counted if they stay within the state.

3. The Committee would like the home school district of students in correspondence school programs. For example, how many students who reside in the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District boundaries attend a statewide correspondence school program? If possible, can that be broken out into the specific correspondence school program?

Attached is preliminary information, titled *DEED Correspondence Enrollment by Community and Home District*. To complete your final dataset, we needed to find the student's home district. We recognize this does not fulfill your request, but we thought the information might be of interest.

From the attached dataset DEED will be reporting the statewide correspondence enrollment from each district by statewide correspondence school. We anticipate fulfilling your request by the close of business on March 27, 2025.

Senator Tobin
Senate Education Committee March 19, 2025, Follow-Up
March 24, 2025
Page 3 of 3

If you have further questions relating to HB 69 that the Department can provide information for, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Deena Bishop", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Deena Bishop, Ed.D.
Commissioner

Enclosure: Growth and Proficiency by District HB69
 DEED Correspondence Enrollment by Community and Home District

cc: Jordan Shilling, Director, Governor's Legislative Office