



OFFICE OF INSTRUCTION

April 5, 2018

Dear Senator MacKinnon:

Thank you for your service and commitment to the students of Alaska, and for this opportunity to support SB 104 on behalf of the Mat-Su Borough School District.

As the second largest district in Alaska, it may seem we have little to benefit from this legislation. However, I assure you that if this passes, especially with provisions for pilot curriculum implementations being evaluated around the state, it will increase student learning in the Mat-Su. The basis of effective instruction is a guaranteed and viable curriculum. We need to ensure that all students have a robust and rigorous core curriculum as the foundation of what we teach. In these times of budget deficits, our curriculum department in a district of 19,000 students consists of one Executive Director, and one Curriculum Coordinator. I understand this is two more than some very small districts, but it is far from adequate to do the research, adoption, professional development, and evaluation of all the curriculum in a district our size. To get the work done we rely on teams of teacher experts that serve on content specific committees. The downside of this model is teachers are out of the classroom when they are working on curriculum teams, and often the meetings stop once the curriculum is adopted. What is missing in the process is the evaluation and refinement of the implementation. Adopting great curriculum is easy compared to really tracking and analyzing why or why not the curriculum is generating the results expected.

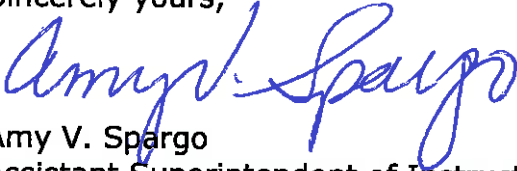
SB104 makes DEED an active partner with districts in research, dissemination of best practices, and evaluation of results. In the Mat-Su we have successes to share with the state with regards to literacy achievement, and conversely, lessons to learn with regards to math achievement. Participating in a math curriculum pilot with on-going evaluation and statewide collaboration is just the kind of opportunity we would benefit from.

In addition, we have a couple suggestions for regarding this legislation:

1. Please consider evaluating curriculum that is available through Open Educational Resources, not just those traditional programs in place in the Big 5 districts. This would be an economic efficiency for all. When personalizing learning, student achievement is accelerated through prescriptive and adaptive digital curriculum.
2. Please include a longitudinal evaluation of effectiveness as part of the expectation of this legislation. Too often public education jumps from one initiative to another; when it comes to curriculum, it takes time to generate measureable results.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to offer support for SB 104 on behalf of the Mat-Su Borough School District. I understand that your time is limited, but I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Sincerely yours,



Amy V. Spargo
Assistant Superintendent of Instruction

