



Representative Andi Story

Alaska State Legislature

Sponsor Statement
House Bill No. 183 Version A
(34-LS0888\A)
April 23, 2025

“An Act relating to district-wide early education programs; and providing for an effective date.”

Student learning is highly valued and desired in Alaska. One key-way to gain strategic momentum is by investing in voluntary, early learning pre-k programs for our four and five year old children. Pre-k programs improve children’s language, literacy, social and emotional skills, math, and executive functioning at kindergarten entry. Coming to school kindergarten-ready allows children to thrive in their learning environments and eliminates the costly expense of remediation efforts in education.

According to the Department of Education and Early Development, the 2024 statewide Alaska Developmental Profile (ADP), for preschoolers, approximates only 31 percent of our children in Alaska come ready for kindergarten. This is one of the lowest in the nation. However, our state has had proven success in helping prepare our children for kindergarten. Data from the Department of Education and Early Development in doing evaluations on our state sponsored pre-schools, found that children in preschool entered more prepared for kindergarten than their peers who did not attend preschool. Other Alaska school districts with preschool programs also report seeing this success.

The Alaska Reads Act, passed in 2021, set out to build on this momentum and increase the ability of more districts to offer voluntary pre-k programs. However, the goal has fallen short. Currently, only three school district’s pre-k programs are approved for annual funding through the Foundation Formula. House Bill 183 seeks to remove limits on the number of pre-k children and district pre-k programs that can be funded in a year. Currently it caps the spending for state funded pre-school at 3 million a year. This bill also seeks to change the calculation of the Average Daily Membership (ADM) to count pre-k children as full-time rather than one-half time. This will allow more districts to afford to implement and expand pre-k programs. Importantly it gives families who want access to a quality pre-school programs for their children this opportunity. Research shows that positive learning effects are even greater for children from low-income families who attend pre-k programs. Reports show many families want access but are not able to find affordable, quality preschool programs.

The Alaska Reads Act requires high quality early learning standards, early educator training, and evaluations to be in place for approval to receive state funding for pre-k programs. It is critical to have quality early childhood programs to get higher learning results. Our children are the most precious resource we have. Investing in their early learning sets Alaska up for future success.

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