



Representative Scott Jiu Wo Kawasaki

Alaska State Legislature

District 9 Fairbanks

House Bill 59 Sponsor Statement

"An Act providing for the establishment of a statewide early childhood education plan and guidelines"

Alaska remains one of the only states that do not provide pre-Kindergarten (pre-K) education to its children on a statewide basis. HB 59 seeks to add Alaska to the ranks of states that recognized that children benefit from early education. Children who participate in early education programs earn more money as adults, enter the job market in much larger numbers, obtain college education in higher numbers, and remain off public assistance in greater numbers.

Alaska has a responsibility to provide the best education possible for its children. Currently, outside of few school district classrooms, the state only provides pre-K education through Head Start programs and through the Best Beginnings partnership. Head Start is only available to the poorest students, and which is underfunded (state funding has only marginally risen since 2002). Due to underfunding, the Alaska Head Start Association estimates that more than 50% of the children who qualify cannot receive Head Start education. Our Head Start program has consistently lagged far behind its need. Providing early public education opportunities is a crucial stepping stone to brightening the future of the young Alaskans.

Extensive research shows that a child's intellectual development is especially important before age six. A study by the National Institute for Early Education research in 2004 found that children who attended state-funded pre-kindergarten programs demonstrated improvements in vocabulary 31% greater than those who did not participate, and 44% greater in math. Young children who receive high quality early education do better in school academically and are more likely to stay in school, graduate, and go on to attend college.

The beneficial impact of early education also extends to the economy with multiple studies showing that funds invested in early education pay dividends in the long run. Every dollar invested in high quality pre-kindergarten programs saves Alaskans from paying for remedial and special education and public assistance. An ongoing study of 40-year old adults in Michigan who participated in the 1962 Perry Pre-Preschool Project found that adults with pre-K were more likely to be employed and earned 33 percent higher average income than their peers who did not have state funded early education.

Additionally, a study prepared for the University of Alaska Southeast, states that 87% of Alaska residents think it is important for state government to provide financial support for early education and child care.

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CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 59()

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY

Offered:

Referred:

Sponsor(s): REPRESENTATIVES KAWASAKI, GARA, TUCK, AND PETERSEN

A BILL

FOR AN ACT ENTITLED

1 **"An Act providing for the establishment of a statewide early childhood education plan**
2 **and guidelines."**

3 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

4 *** Section 1.** AS 14.07.020(a) is amended to read:

5 (a) The department shall

6 (1) exercise general supervision over the public schools of the state
7 except the University of Alaska;

8 (2) study the conditions and needs of the public schools of the state,
9 adopt or recommend plans, administer and evaluate grants to improve school
10 performance awarded under AS 14.03.125, and adopt regulations for the improvement
11 of the public schools;

12 (3) provide advisory and consultative services to all public school
13 governing bodies and personnel;

14 (4) prescribe by regulation a minimum course of study for the public

1 schools; the regulations must provide that, if a course in American Sign Language is
2 given, the course shall be given credit as a course in a foreign language;

3 (5) establish, in coordination with the Department of Health and Social
4 Services, a program for the continuing education of children who are held in detention
5 facilities in the state during the period of detention;

6 (6) accredit those public schools that meet accreditation standards
7 prescribed by regulation by the department; these regulations shall be adopted by the
8 department and presented to the legislature during the first 10 days of any regular
9 session, and become effective 45 days after presentation or at the end of the session,
10 whichever is earlier, unless disapproved by a resolution concurred in by a majority of
11 the members of each house;

12 (7) prescribe by regulation, after consultation with the state fire
13 marshal and the state sanitarian, standards that will assure healthful and safe
14 conditions in the public and private schools of the state, including a requirement of
15 physical examinations and immunizations in pre-elementary schools; the standards for
16 private schools may not be more stringent than those for public schools;

17 (8) exercise general supervision over pre-elementary schools that
18 receive direct state or federal funding;

19 (9) exercise general supervision over elementary and secondary
20 correspondence study programs offered by municipal school districts or regional
21 educational attendance areas; the department may also offer and make available to any
22 Alaskan through a centralized office a correspondence study program;

23 (10) accredit private schools that request accreditation and that meet
24 accreditation standards prescribed by regulation by the department; nothing in this
25 paragraph authorizes the department to require religious or other private schools to be
26 licensed;

27 (11) review plans for construction of new public elementary and
28 secondary schools and for additions to and major rehabilitation of existing public
29 elementary and secondary schools and, in accordance with regulations adopted by the
30 department, determine and approve the extent of eligibility for state aid of a school
31 construction or major maintenance project; for the purposes of this paragraph, "plans"

1 include educational specifications, schematic designs, and final contract documents;

2 (12) provide educational opportunities in the areas of vocational
3 education and training, and basic education to individuals over 16 years of age who
4 are no longer attending school;

5 (13) administer the grants awarded under AS 14.11;

6 (14) establish, in coordination with the Department of Public Safety, a
7 school bus driver training course;

8 (15) require the reporting of information relating to school disciplinary
9 and safety programs under AS 14.33.120 and of incidents of disruptive or violent
10 behavior;

11 (16) establish by regulation criteria, based on low student performance,
12 under which the department may intervene in a school district to improve instructional
13 practices, as described in AS 14.07.030(14) or (15); the regulations must include

14 (A) a notice provision that alerts the district to the deficiencies
15 and the instructional practice changes proposed by the department;

16 (B) an end date for departmental intervention, as described in
17 AS 14.07.030(14)(A) and (B) and (15), after the district demonstrates three
18 consecutive years of improvement consisting of not less than two percent
19 increases in student proficiency on standards-based assessments in math,
20 reading, and writing as provided in AS 14.03.123(f)(2)(A); and

21 (C) a process for districts to petition the department for
22 continuing or discontinuing the department's intervention;

23 (17) notify the legislative committees having jurisdiction over
24 education before intervening in a school district under AS 14.07.030(14) or redirecting
25 public school funding under AS 14.07.030(15);

26 **(18) devise a statewide early childhood education plan for students**
27 **three and four years of age that**

28 **(A) incorporates the early learning guidelines adopted by**
29 **the board under AS 14.07.165(6);**

30 **(B) provides for the most effective and efficient**
31 **coordination with or expansion of pre-elementary programs operating in**

1 the state, including Head Start and programs and centers approved by the
2 Department of Health and Social Services, to the extent permitted by law.

3 * Sec. 2. AS 14.07.165 is amended to read:

4 **Sec. 14.07.165. Duties.** The board shall adopt

5 (1) statewide goals and require each governing body to adopt written
6 goals that are consistent with local needs;

7 (2) regulations regarding the application for and award of grants under
8 AS 14.03.125;

9 (3) regulations implementing provisions of AS 14.11.014(b);

10 (4) regulations requiring approval by the board before a charter school,
11 state boarding school, or a public school may provide domiciliary services;

12 (5) regulations implementing the secondary school student competency
13 examination provisions of AS 14.03.075, including the criteria and procedure under
14 which a governing body uses a waiver to grant a diploma to a student; criteria
15 regarding granting a waiver must include provisions that a waiver may only be granted
16 for students who enter the system late or have rare or unusual circumstances meriting
17 a waiver;

18 (6) early learning guidelines that support an effective, cost-
19 efficient, and optional pre-elementary program provided under a statewide early
20 childhood education plan approved by the department.

21 * Sec. 3. The uncoded law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to
22 read:

23 REPORT: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PLAN. On or before January 15,
24 2010, the Department of Education and Early Development shall prepare and submit a report
25 to the legislature on the early childhood education plan devised under AS 14.07.020(a)(18),
26 added by sec. 1 of this Act.

HOUSE BILL NO. 59

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY REPRESENTATIVES KAWASAKI, GARA, TUCK, AND PETERSEN

Introduced: 1/20/09

Referred: Education, Finance

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Alaska State Legislature

District 9 Fairbanks

HB 59: Alaska Pre-Elementary Program

Sectional Analysis

- Section 1. Defines pre-elementary program as one provided by a school district for students 3 through 4 years of age.
- Section 2. Established age of eligibility (3 – 4 year olds)
- Section 3. Department of education shall devise and implement a statewide early education plan that incorporates early learning guidelines adopted by the education board and coordinates with Head Start.
- Section 4. Defines pre-elementary program.
- Section 5. Board of education shall adopt early learning guidelines that support an effective and cost-efficient optional pre-elementary program provided under a statewide early childhood education plan approved by the department.

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