

Alaska State Legislature



Interim:
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Session:
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Senator Kevin Meyer
Senate District O

Senate Bill 199

"An Act relating to the vocational and technical instruction funding factor for public school funding."

Research shows that voc-tech programs have consistently increased graduation rates nationwide and here in Alaska's schools. The ideal high school curriculum needs to incorporate both academic rigor and cutting-edge career preparation. Last year, as Co-Chair of the Senate Education Committee, I helped ensure that SB 84 created a steady, secure stream of funding for vocational-technical programs in Alaska's high schools. The implementation of SB 84, which the Governor signed into law last summer, has been a resounding success in schools across the state. I hear time and again from districts that schools must offer both college-preparatory requirements and challenging professional and technical knowledge grounded in industry standards – and that these courses should be offered and supported in middle school as well.

Now, with Senate Bill 199, districts will have more flexibility in providing technical and other career programs, in high schools *and* middle schools, that focus on hands-on workplace training for jobs that don't necessarily require a college degree. By allowing the funding to be used in 7th and 8th grades, in addition to 9th through 12th grades, we can capture more of the students who are losing interest in their education prior to high school. Not only will these voc-tech programs better engage Alaska's youth and increase our graduation rates, they will also help develop a dynamic and diverse workforce for our state.