

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



SENATOR JOE THOMAS

## **SB 197**

### **"An Act establishing a grant program in the Department of Education and Early Development for achieving excellence in public schools."**

Improving academic performance in our schools is a complicated process, and there is no one approach that will fix all our problems. Commitment to positive change requires a variety of initiatives, which must often be uniquely designed to work within specific districts.

Senate Bill 197 provides districts with the tools they need to make substantial progress toward improving student achievement by providing competitive grants for schools that have innovative programs for raising the bar.

The grants must address known causes of low academic performance in a school, and must apply research-based solutions based on best practices. The programs that are funded must have measurable goals. The districts will have to demonstrate that the programs will be sustainable beyond the initial grant period, and they will have to supply on-going progress reports.

If a program is not producing desired results that lead to improvements in student achievement, the program will be discontinued. There are allowances for successful programs to continue to receive funding, but they must show proven, measurable results first.

If a district chooses to use their grant to run a pre-kindergarten program, they have to maintain the same standards as the pilot pre-k program currently run by the department.

Total funding for the grant is based on the number of dropouts in the state. As the number of dropouts decreases, the amount of money in the grant fund also decreases.

I urge your support of SB 197.