

Letter in support of HB 197 Learn to Read; Read to Learn

As a longtime advocate for improving public education, HB 197 is the number one priority for legislation that I'm supporting in Juneau this year. Early childhood literacy is at crisis proportions in Alaska. In the 2013 NAEP test scores for low-income kids we dropped to 51st (behind low-income kids in DC) in 4th grade reading. Our upper and middle income kids are not doing much better. In 2013 they dropped to 49th in NAEP testing when we were 44th just 10 years ago.

I have attended dozens of K-12 education conferences all over the US and I have not come across a more effective method of improving student outcomes than legislation setting the standards for minimum 3rd grade literacy.

Large quantities of research indicate that when kids do not attain basic literacy by age 9 or 10 they are unlikely to catch-up later. Social promotion of illiterate students at the critical transition of using reading skills to learn is not doing any favors to those children.

Nearly identical legislation is already in effect in a dozen states and it has been producing fantastic results. Florida, was the first to try this legislation back in 2002. In the 2003 NAEP testing Florida was 28th in low-income 4th grade reading. By 2013 they were 1st.

According to 2013 NAEP test scores, low income Hispanic 4th graders in Florida read at a higher comprehension level than the average Alaskan 4th grader.

It's interesting to note that according to the latest NEA publication, *Rankings and Estimates*, Alaska was 1st in per capita K-12 funding in 2010 and Florida was 48th.

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Our kids are bright;
Our teachers are dedicated;
Our parents are loving;
There's no reason we can't do better.

Bob Griffin

Anchorage School District
Budget Advisory Commission
Chairman