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Senate Bill 79 – Virtual Education Consortium

Sectional Analysis

Section 1 – Page 1, Line 8

Creates uncodified law for legislative findings regarding virtual education, education spending, quality teachers, and classroom instruction.

Section 2 – AS 14.03.073(a) – Page 2, Lines 11

Makes technical amendments to add references to specific subsections within these sections due to a new subsection added in Section 4 of this bill.

Section 3 – AS 14.03.073(b) – Page 2, Line 18

Makes technical amendments to add references to specific subsections within these sections due to a new subsection added in Section 4 of this bill.

Section 4 – AS 14.03.073 – Page 2, Line 25

Adds new subsection (e), requiring school districts to allow course credit for career and technical education, physical education, music, or art classes for an activity, including a cultural activity, outside of school hours that meets the educational or physical activity requirements of the course.

Section 5 – AS 14.03.078(a) – Page 3, Line 2

Is amended to add a requirement that the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) submit the annual report that they provide to the legislature to the school districts as well. The DEED report will need to include a summary of categories of administrative employees for each school district which includes the ratio of the administrative employees in each category compared to the number of teachers and to the number of students in the district, and the ratio of the number of teachers to the number of students.

Section 6 – AS 14.03.078 – Page 4, Lines 5

Is amended to add new subsections, requiring each school district to post the portion of the report that pertains to the school district for the public on the district's or community's website or through another easily accessible method. Defines the term "administrative employee".

Section 7 – AS 14.17.505(a) – Page 4, Lines 13

Is amended to increase the limit that a school district is allowed to retain in its unreserved fund balance from 10% to 25% of district expenditures. This section also allows for savings realized from a cooperative grant under AS 14.14.115 to not count towards the 25% limit.

Section 8 – AS 14.20.020(i) – Page 4, Line 21

Is amended to require the State School Board to periodically adjust the minimum score needed to pass the Praxis exam so that Alaska has the highest testing standards for teacher certification among the 50 states.

Section 9 – AS 14.20.380 – Page 5, Line 6

Adds a new subsection to require DEED to provide administrative support services to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC).

Section 10 – AS 14.20.460 – Page 5, Line 9

Is amended to require the PTPC to use administrative support services provided by DEED.

Section 11 – AS 14.30 – Page 5, Line 23

Creates a new section titled “Virtual Education Consortium” which also creates a new article titled “Article 15. Virtual Education”. The subsections of which AS 14.30.760 consists are the following:

- Subsection (a) establishes the virtual education consortium under DEED. The consortium will have a database of virtual education courses available to all districts for students in grades 6-12. The consortium will also provide training for teachers instructing in virtual settings and professional development for all teachers in the state. A school district or third-party vendor may offer courses on the database if it is approved by DEED.
- Subsection (b) will require DEED to review each course to ensure it meets state standards and is appropriate for students in grades 6-12. This subsection also requires that each course has the following information: the title, subject, and description of the course, the district providing the course, method of virtual education delivery, samples of the curriculum, a video introduction by the instructor, and if a synchronous course, a video of the instructor teaching.
- Subsection (c) requires the consortium to provide training for teachers before they are allowed to teach a course that is included in the database. A waiver may be granted if the consortium finds that the teacher has the experience and skills necessary to teach in a virtual setting.
- Subsection (d) requires that the consortium provide professional development courses for all teachers in the state. Any district that has adequate broadband access to participate in the trainings shall require its teachers to participate in any necessary trainings. The consortium may also require participating districts to adopt the same in-service days for training.
- Subsection (e) sets a fee structure for students that take a course offered virtually by a school district that is not the student’s home district. The student’s district shall calculate the fee by multiplying the base student allocation by the proportion of classes that the student is taking in the district offering the virtual course. The student’s district shall pay this fee to the district offering the course.

- In subsection (f), the consortium is allowed to charge a fee to any school district that offers a course in the database under (b) of this section. DEED will be able to set the fee in regulation and can adjust it as necessary annually. The fees must be set in such a manner that by June 30, 2020, the fees paid by districts will approximately equal any administrative costs of the consortium.
- Subsection (g) allows the consortium to require districts that provide courses or have students taking courses through the consortium to adopt a shared calendar and a shared bell schedule for at least a portion of the school day.
- Subsection (h) creates definitions for the terms: “asynchronous”, “base student allocation”, “blended”, “host district”, “synchronous”, and “virtual education” or “virtual instruction”.

Section 12 – Page 8, Lines 2

Creates uncodified law by adding a new section regarding: Virtual Education Availability
Deadline of this Act on or before July 1, 2020.

Section 13 – Page 8, Line 7

Provides for an effective date for Sections 5-12 of this Act take effect immediately under AS
01.10.070(c).

Section 14 – Page 8, Line 8

Provides for an effective date, except as provided in sec. 13 of this Act, this Act take effect July
1, 2020.