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SB 6: Alaska Reads Act Explanation of Changes

CS Sponsor Substitute Senate Bill 6 (EDU)

Version: 31-LS0159\O

Section 1.

Establishes this Act as the Alaska Reads Act.

Section 2.

Amends AS 14.03.060(e) to include an Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (the department) approved early education program, including head start, as part of an elementary school.

Section 3.

Amends AS 14.03.072(a) to include reading intervention services in addition to intervention strategies for early literacy.

Section 4.

Amends AS 14.03.078(a) which directs the department to include information collected under AS 14.03.120, Parent as Teachers, and AS 14.30-760 – 14.30.775, the Alaska Reads Act, including data on how districts use their professional service days, in their annual report to the legislature.

Section 5.

Amends AS 14.03.080(d) by changing the date a student is eligible to enter kindergarten and establishes an eligibility waiver process.

Section 6.

Amends AS 14.03.080 by adding new subsection (g) which changes the date a child is eligible to enter a public early education program.

Section 7.

Amends AS 14.03.120 by adding new subsection (h) which establishes annual reporting requirements for school districts regarding student performance metrics in grades K-3. This includes data relating to class size, the number and percentage of students in K-3 who are proficient at grade-level skill reading, and number and percentage of students who are retained from advancing in grades K-3.

Section 8.

Creates AS14.03.410 which codifies a statewide pre-K program, providing a stair-step, three-year grant program to provide training and assistance to school districts in developing their local pre-K program. Over six fiscal years, all school districts are offered the opportunity to participate.

AS 14.03.420 codifies the Parents As Teachers (PAT) program as a program of the state within the department, and specifies criteria for PAT to demonstrate its efficacy in supporting school districts with pre-K education.

Section 9.

Amends AS 14.07.020(a) and directs the department to supervise all early education programs, approve those early education programs established under AS 14.03.410, establishes a new reading program, AS 14.07.065, and reading intervention programs of participating schools, AS 14.30.770.

Section 10.

AS 14.07.020(c) is amended to define an “early education program” as a pre-K program for students three to five years old if its primary function is educational. The 3-year-old students are not included in the program this bill proposes but are included to ensure they are not excluded from existing State and Federal programs.

Section 11.

Amends AS 14.07.050 to allow the department to supply supplemental reading textbooks and materials related to intervention services established under AS 14.30.765 and AS 14.30.770.

Section 12.

Amends AS 14.07.165(a), relating to the duties of the state Board of Education and Early Development, by adding to those duties a requirement to establish regulations for pre-K standards and pre-K teacher certification requirements.

Section 13.

Amends AS 14.17.500 by adding new subsection (d) that establishes an early education student shall be counted in the school district’s average daily membership (ADM) as a half day student once the early education program has been approved by the department.

Section 14.

Amends AS 14.17.905(a) to include students in early education programs approved by the department in the definition of an elementary school.

Section 15.

Amends AS 14.17.905 by adding new subsection (d) to avoid letting school districts count pre-K students twice in Foundation Formula ADM calculations.

Section 16.

Amends AS 14.20.015(c) to ensure teaching certificate reciprocity for teachers moving to Alaska from out-of-state and adds that such teachers must complete at least three credits or equivalency in evidence-based reading instruction in order to be eligible for an Alaska teaching endorsement in elementary education.

Section 17.

Amends AS 14.20.020 by adding new subsection (l) that requires all teachers to complete at least three credits or equivalency in evidence-based reading instruction in order to be eligible for an endorsement in elementary education.

Section 18.

Establishes Article 15, Reading Intervention Programs.

Establishes AS 14.30.760, which directs the department to establish a statewide reading assessment and screening tool to identify students with reading deficiencies; assist teachers in monitoring student progress in reading proficiency and provide training to teachers in reading intervention tools.

Establishes AS 14.30.765, which directs each school district to offer intensive reading intervention services to K-3 students exhibiting a reading deficiency. Services must be implemented in a manner to include a high amount of communication between teachers, parents, administrators and the student. Considerable detailed attention, including written and verbal parental notification is given under this section for instances when a student failing to progress toward reading proficiency that may result in the student not advancing to the next grade level.

Establishes AS 14.30.770, which directs the department to establish a statewide reading program, specifically to assist school districts in a variety of ways to affect the reading intervention services described in AS 14.30.665, above. The department shall employ and deploy reading specialists to districts, in addition to making complementary tools and resources to districts in addressing student reading proficiency.

AS 14.30.775 aligns use of the word “district” in this Act with the definitions given elsewhere in statute when referring to a school district.

Section 19.

Directs early education program staff to be included in those organizations required to report evidence of child abuse.

Section 20.

Repeals AS 14.03.410, the early education grant program, in 11 years once all school districts have had the opportunity to participate.

Section 21.

Establishes a Teacher Retention Working Group as a new uncodified law of the State of Alaska.

Section 22.

Is applicability language, relating to endorsements in elementary education issued on or after the effective date of this act.

Section 23.

Is transition language, directing the department to use 2018-19 school accountability rankings for purposes of determining the first cohort of lowest performing schools, to identify their pre-K grant eligibility for FY 21.

Section 23.

Establishes an effective date of July 1, 2020.