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House Bill 164 – Early Ed Programs; Reading; Virtual Ed

Sectional Analysis

"An Act relating to the duties of the Department of Education and Early Development; relating to public schools and school districts; relating to early education programs; relating to funding for early education programs; relating to school age eligibility; relating to reports by the Department of Education and Early Development; relating to reports by school districts; relating to certification and competency of teachers; relating to assessing reading deficiencies and providing reading intervention services to public school students enrolled in grades kindergarten through three; relating to textbooks and materials for reading intervention services; establishing a reading program in the Department of Education and Early Development; relating to school operating funds; relating to a virtual education consortium; and providing for an effective date."

Section 1 – Establishes this Act as the Alaska Academic Improvement and Modernization Act.

Section 2 – Amends AS 14.03.040, Day in session, to clarify the length of a school day for grades 4 – 12.

Section 3 – Amends AS 14.03.060 to permit the Department of Early Education and Development (DEED) the ability to approve and supervise a district early education program. Changes to this section are repealed on June 30, 2034 (*Section 4*).

Section 5 – Amends AS 14.03.072 by aligning terminology and requiring all districts to provide information regarding the importance of early reading and adult literacy to parents and guardians of students. Portions of the changes to this section are repealed on June 30, 2034 (*Section 6*).

Section 7 – Amends AS 14.03.078 by directing DEED to include in their annual report to the legislature information collected under AS 14.03.120. School districts shall provide a description of the resources provided to each school and school district for coordinated school improvement activities and staff training. The annual report must also include a progress report for aligning curriculum to state

standards and a detailed summary of the number of administrative staff and teachers for each school and school district. The annual report must also include the progress made to implement the reading intervention programs established under AS 14.30-760 – 14.30.775. Portions of the changes made to AS 14.03.078 are repealed on June 30, 2034 (*Section 8*).

Section 9 – Amends AS 14.03.078 requiring each school district to make available to the public the portion of the annual report to the Alaska State Legislature that pertains to the school district. The information must be posted in a prominent location on the school district’s or local community’s website or by another easily accessible method.

Section 10 – Amends AS 14.03.080 to allow under-school-age children to attend publicly provided early education programs. Changes to this section are repealed on June 30, 2034 (*Section 11*).

Section 12 – Amends 14.03.080 to add a new subsection allowing a child who is five years of age on or before September 1 following the beginning of the school year and who is under school age to enter a public school kindergarten. This section will take effect on June 30, 2034 (*Section 39*)

Section 13 – Amends AS 14.03.120 by adding a new subsection that establishes annual reporting requirements for school districts to report student performance metrics in grades K-3. This subsection is repealed on June 30, 2034 (*Section 40*).

Section 14 – Amends AS 14.03 by adding a new section establishing a statewide early education grant program. The early education grant program includes financial support, professional training, and technical assistance to school districts to develop or improve their high-quality, locally designed, culturally responsive, universal voluntary pre-K program.

Participation in the grant program is not required, and school districts are not mandated to establish a pre-K program.

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

AS 14.03.410 and AS 14.03.20 are repealed on June 30, 2034.

Section 15 – Amends AS 14.07.020 and directs DEED to supervise all early education programs, approve those early education programs established under AS 14.03.410, establish a new reading program AS 14.07.065, and offer reading intervention programs to participating schools AS 14.30.770. Changes to this section are repealed on June 30, 2034 (*Section 16*).

Section 17 – AS 14.07.020 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.

Section 18 – Amends AS 14.07.050 to permit DEED to purchase supplemental reading textbooks and materials for school districts related to the reading intervention services established AS 14.30.765 and 14.30.770. Changes to this section are repealed on June 30, 2034 (*Section 19*).

Section 20 – Amends AS 14.07.165 by directing the Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development (state board) to establish regulations for a high-quality, locally designed, evidence-based, culturally responsive early education program for children who are four and five years of age. This section is repealed on June 30, 2034 (*Section 40*).

Section 21 – Amends AS 14.07.168 directing the state board to include information and analysis collected under AS 14.30.800 in the annual report to the Alaska State Legislature. Changes to this section are repealed on June 30, 2034 (*Section 22*).

Section 23 – Amends AS 14.07.180 directing the state board to establish standards for reviewing and approving early education through grade 3 language arts curricula based on the five components of evidence-based reading.

Section 24 – Amends AS 14.14.115 to encourage school districts to engage in cooperative agreements to reduce administrative costs.

Section 25 – Amends AS 14.17.500 by adding new subsections on how a student participating in a DEED-approved early education program is counted under a school district’s Average Daily Membership (ADM) calculations. Changes made to this section are repealed on June 30, 2034 (*Section 26*).

Sections 27 and 28 – Amends AS 14.17.505 by increasing the unreserved fund balance a school district may carry forward into a new fiscal year.

Section 29 – Amends AS 14.17.905 to include students in early education programs approved by DEED in the definition of an elementary school. Changes to this section are repealed on June 30, 2034 (*Section 30*).

Section 31 – Amends AS 14.20.015 to ensure teaching certificate reciprocity and teaching proficiency for teachers moving to Alaska. Changes to this section are repealed on June 30, 2034 (*Section 32*).

Section 33 – Amends AS 14.20.020 by directing the state board to assess and establish passing scores on teaching competency examinations.

Section 34 – Amends AS 14.20.020 by adding a new subsection to require all teachers to complete at least three credits or equivalency in evidence-based reading instruction to be eligible for an endorsement in elementary education. Changes to this section are repealed on June 30, 2034 (*Section 40*).

Section 35 – Establishes Article 15. Reading Intervention.

Establishes AS 14.30.760, which directs DEED to establish a culturally responsive statewide reading program and support school districts in implementation.

Establishes AS 14.30.765, which directs school districts to offer culturally responsive intensive reading intervention services to K-3 students who are identified as struggling readers.

Establishes AS 14.30.770, which directs DEED to establish a statewide reading program to assist the lowest-performing 25 percent of school districts serving K-3 students in providing reading intervention services.

Section 36 – Establishes Article 16, Virtual Education.

Establishes AS 14.30.800, a virtual education consortium operated by DEED in collaboration with school districts.

Section 37 – Amends AS 14.60.010 to provide a definition of “culturally responsive.”

Section 38 – Directs early education program staff to be included in those organizations required to report evidence of child abuse.

Sections 40 and 46 – Repeals AS 14.03.080(d) and amended statutes under this Act.

Section 41 – Establishes a July 1, 2023 deadline for when DEED must make virtual education courses available.

Section 42 – Provides applicability language relating to endorsements in elementary education issued on or after the effective date of this Act.

Section 43 – Directs DEED to provide a detailed analysis of this Act to the Alaska State Legislature no later than the 30th day of the First Regular Session of the 38th Alaska State Legislature.

Section 44 – Is transition language that prohibits DEED from approving more than \$3,000,000 in state aid for early education programs for FY 23 above the previous fiscal year.

Section 45 – Is transition language that permits DEED to begin adopting the regulations needed to actualize this Act prior to the effective date of the legislation.

Section 46 – Repeals sections 4, 6, 8, 11, 12, 16, 19, 22, 26, 30, 32, and 40 effective June 30, 2034.

Section 47 – Establishes an effective date of July 1, 2022.