

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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Alaska Reads Act Sectional Analysis

Senate Bill 8 (EDU)
Version: 32-LS0099\A

Section 1.

Establishes this Act as the Alaska Reads Act.

Section 2.

Amends AS 14.03.060(e) by redefining the definition of elementary school to include a Department of Early Education and Development approved early education program and a head start program operating under 42 U.S.C. 9831-9852c.

Section 3.

Amends AS 14.03.072(a) by aligning terminology and by requiring districts to provide information regarding the importance of early reading to parents and guardians of students including information about reading intervention services authorized by *Section 18* of this bill.

Section 4.

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

Section 5.

Amends AS 14.03.080(d) by directing school districts to offer a waiver process to parent(s) or guardian(s) who would like their child to start kindergarten at an age earlier than what is currently established in state statute.

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 to report student performance metrics in grades K-3. This includes K-3 student-teacher ratios, the number and percentage of students in K-3 who are proficient or perform below expected grade-level skills on the statewide screening tool or alternative, number and percentage of students who are retained from advancing in grades K-3, and the number and percentage of students in grade 3 who are advanced based on good cause exemptions.

Section 8.

Amends AS 14.03 by adding a new section AS 14.03.410 which codifies a statewide pre-K program by providing a stair-stepped, three-year early education grant program to all school districts over the course of six years. The grant program includes financial support, professional training, and technical assistance to school districts to develop or improve their locally designed, culturally responsive, universal voluntary pre-K program.

Over six fiscal years, all school districts will be offered the opportunity to participate in the grant program, with the lowest performing 10% of school districts being eligible in the first year of the grant program. At any time, a school district may apply to the Department of Early Education and Development (the department) to have their pre-K program approved. Once a pre-K program is approved, the school district is authorized to include their pre-K students in their Average Daily Membership (ADM) count.

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

The department is authorized to approve up to \$5,000,000 in foundation formula funding each year for newly approved pre-K programs.

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 of Early Education and Development to supervise all early education programs, approve those early education programs established under *Section 8* (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).

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. Three-year-old students are not included under *Section 8* of this bill; however, three-year-old students are included in this

amended definition of an early education program to ensure those students remain eligible to be included in existing State and Federal head start and other early education programs.

Section 11.

Amends AS 14.07.050 to permit the Department of Early Education and Development to purchase supplemental reading textbooks and materials for school districts related to the reading intervention services established under *Section 18* of this bill.

Section 12.

Amends AS 14.07.165(a) by directing the state Board of Education and Early Development (the state board) to establish regulations for a locally designed, evidence-based, culturally responsive early education program (pre-K) for children who are four and five years of age.

Section 13.

Amends AS 14.07.180(a) by directing the state Board of Education and Early Development to establish standards for reviewing and approving early education through grade 3 language arts curricula based on the five components of evidence-based reading as identified by the National Reading Panel.

Section 14.

Amends AS 14.17.500 by adding new subsection (d) which counts a student participating in a Department of Early Education and Development approved early education program as half (0.5) a student in a school district's Average Daily Membership (ADM) calculations.

Section 15.

Amends AS 14.17.905(a) to include students in early education programs approved by the Department of Early Education and Development in the definition of an elementary school.

Section 16.

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

Section 17.

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

Section 18.

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 19.

Establishes Article 15, Reading Programs.

Establishes AS 14.30.760, which directs the Department of Early Education and Development (the department) to adopt a culturally responsive statewide reading assessment and screening tool

to identify students with any reading deficiencies based on recommendations from the Dyslexia Task Force or another formalized reading proficiency task force; support early education educators in monitoring student progress in reading proficiency; provide training to early education educators and school district staff in reading intervention tools; and, establish a waiver process for school districts to adopt an alternative evidence-based reading screen or assessment tool.

Establishes AS 14.30.765, which directs school districts to offer culturally responsive intensive reading intervention services to K-3 students who do not meet grade level proficiency requirements on the statewide screening tool or alternative. Intensive reading intervention services must include a high amount of communication between teachers, parents, administrators and the student. This section contains clear parental notification requirements for if and when a student fails 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 and assist the lowest performing 25 percent of school districts serving K-3 students in providing reading intervention services. The department shall employ and deploy reading specialists to support school districts in implementing their intensive reading intervention services; train and mentor district early education educators; and conduct an independent review of the efficacy and success of the statewide reading program. The department will also make complementary reading proficiency tools and resources to school districts available.

The department will convene an annual panel of educators, school administrators, and parents to review the effectiveness of reading intervention programs established under Article 15 Reading Programs.

This section also contains a detailed account of qualifications required for department employed reading specialists and support reading specialists and inclusive definitions for “district,” and “parent ‘or’ guardian.”

Section 20.

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

Section 21.

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

Section 22.

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

Section 23.

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

Section 24.

Is transition language, directing the department to use 2019-20 school accountability rankings for purposes of determining the first cohort of lowest performing schools, to identify their pre-K grant eligibility for FY 22.

Section 23.

Establishes an effective date of July 1, 2021.