



ALASKA GATEWAY SCHOOL DISTRICT

PO BOX 226, TOK, AK 99780

Ph: 907.883.5151 Fax: 907.883.5154

Scott MacManus – Superintendent of Schools

March 23, 2022

The Alaska Legislature
Senate Education Committee, 32nd Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

Dear members of the Senate Finance Committee,

This letter is submitted in strong support of the Alaska Reads Act, SB111. This support is framed by three decades of what I have seen work, and not work, in Alaska's classrooms, and is based on the most current science of reading research available. The Alaska Reads Act supports needed preschool literacy skills, supports effective reading curriculum combined with instructional training, provides for local formative assessment, and importantly, it assists in building the instructional capacity of those who can make this happen for our children.

We know that in Alaska many students start their school careers in Kindergarten already 2 to 3 years behind their peers nationally in terms of their basic literacy. The Alaska Reads Act proposes sustainable pre-K programs that will better prepare our students for success when they enroll in regular school.

Our teachers, experienced and new, need to learn more about the science of reading instruction. This will require a coordinated effort between school districts, DEED, and our University system, to create an in-state cadre of teachers and para-pros who have the skills to do what we need of them. Our University will play a critical role in addressing this need, and will create multiple avenues that support teachers in acquiring the skills that support students learning to read for both teachers and para-pros.

We know that we have a problem with staff retention and turnover in Alaska and across our nation. In the face of this very real and urgent national teacher shortage, we also know that one of the main reasons teachers are leaving is because they are frustrated, and feel that they are not making a difference for kids. The support provided in the Alaska Reads Act will help our teachers to make a real difference in meeting the needs their students, and by extension, encourage them to remain in a profession where they are so desperately needed.

The Alaska Reads Act was developed the right way, by doing the ground work...by meeting with key stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and administrators, and educational experts... and using what they learned. The Reads Act intends to bridge a known gap by ensuring that our students are ready for Kindergarten, by getting our teachers and para-pros the skills they need to be successful, and making sure that how we assess student attainment is appropriate. There is little question about what works. The only real question is, do we have the will to do it? I very much hope we do, and that you will support the Alaska Reads Act, as I do.

Sincerely and hopefully,

Scott MacManus, Superintendent

“Educating all students to reach their full potential as responsible citizens”

DotLake 907-882-2663 Fax: 907-882-2112	Eagle 907-547-2210 Fax: 907-547-2302	Mentasta 907-291-2327 Fax: 907-291-2325	Northway 907-778-2287 Fax: 907-778-2221	Tok 907-883-5161 Fax: 907-883-5165	Tanacross 907-883-4391 Fax: 907-883-4390	Tetlin 907-324-2104 Fax: 907-324-2114
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