



ALASKA GATEWAY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Scott MacManus – Superintendent of Schools

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

Dear members of the Senate Education 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 by the most current science of reading research available. The Alaska Reads Act includes needed preschool literacy, supports effective reading curriculum combined with instructional training, provides for local formative assessment, and importantly, it targets building the capacity of the staff 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. We need a coordinated effort to create an in-state cadre of teachers and para-pros who have the skills to do what we need them to do. In the face of a very real and urgent national teacher shortage, our University will play a critical role in creating multiple avenues that support the acquisition of skills that support students learning to read for both teachers and para-pros, so that this will change.

We know that we have an issue with staff retention and turnover. We also know that one of the main reasons teachers leave a school is because they are frustrated, and feel that they are not making a difference for kids. They will and are, simply exerting their voice with their feet, either out of the state, or out of the profession.

The Alaska Reads Act was developed the right way, 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 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 these bills, as I do.

Sincerely and hopefully,



Scott MacManus, Superintendent

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

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