

SENATE BILL NO. 103

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-FIRST LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY SENATORS LINCOLN, Ellis

Introduced: 3/13/99

Referred: HESS, Finance

A BILL

FOR AN ACT ENTITLED

1 "An Act relating to a curriculum for Native language education; and providing
2 for an effective date."

3 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

4 * **Section 1.** SHORT TITLE. This Act may be known as the Native Language Education
5 Act.

6 * **Sec. 2.** FINDINGS. The legislature finds that

7 (1) Alaska's indigenous Native cultures and languages are unique, essential
8 elements of Alaska's heritage;

9 (2) Alaska's indigenous Native languages are an integral part of Alaska Native
10 people's culture and well-being;

11 (3) knowledge of one's indigenous language is important for the development
12 of social skills and self-esteem; it further contributes to the development of the individual and
13 the ability to communicate;

14 (4) translations from a Native language into English result in the loss of

1 context and deprivation of the full range of social and cultural understanding necessary to
2 function in the individual's environment;

3 (5) when Native children are proficient in their primary indigenous language,
4 they are more likely to do well in school; they also develop a higher degree of proficiency in
5 English;

6 (6) historically, Alaska Native children first learned their Native language in
7 their homes and communities, but, with the passing of Native elders and with a current
8 generation of parents who are not fluent in their Native language, younger generations are less
9 knowledgeable about their language and culture;

10 (7) the loss of indigenous Native languages dates back to the late 1800's when
11 mainstream American missionaries enforced federal policies that forbade the use of Native
12 languages, punished children for speaking their own language, and urged parents to speak only
13 English to their children;

14 (8) the continuation of "no Native language" policies in federal, territorial, and
15 state school systems between 1910 and 1970 resulted in the loss of many Native languages;

16 (9) the fact that only two of the 20 Alaska Native languages are fluently
17 spoken by children today is an indicator of the impending extinction of Native languages;

18 (10) unless action is taken, by the year 2055 only five of the 20 Alaska Native
19 languages will be spoken by anyone, and soon thereafter the Native languages of Alaska may
20 vanish.

21 * **Sec. 3.** AS 14.03.120(d) is amended to read:

22 (d) Annually, before the date set by the district under (e) of this section, each
23 public school shall provide, in a public meeting of parents, students, and community
24 members, a report on the school's performance and the performance of the school's
25 students. The report shall be prepared on a form prescribed by the department and
26 must include

27 (1) information on accreditation;

28 (2) results of norm-referenced achievement tests;

29 (3) results of state standards-based assessments in reading, writing, and
30 mathematics;

31 (4) a description, including quantitative and qualitative measures, of

1 student, parent, community, and business involvement in student learning;

2 (5) a description of the school's attendance, retention, dropout, and
3 graduation rates as specified by the state board; [AND]

4 (6) the annual percent of enrollment change, regardless of reason, and
5 the annual percent of enrollment change due to student transfers into and out of the
6 school district; **and**

7 **(7) if Native language education is provided, a summary and**
8 **evaluation of the curriculum described in AS 14.30.420.**

9 * **Sec. 4.** AS 14.30 is amended by adding a new section to article 6 to read:

10 **Sec. 14.30.420. Native language education.** (a) A school board in a district
11 in which a majority of the students are Alaska Natives shall establish a local Native
12 language curriculum advisory board for each school in the district in which a majority
13 of the students are Alaska Natives. If the local Native language curriculum advisory
14 board recommends the establishment of a Native language education curriculum for
15 a school, the school board may initiate and conduct a Native language education
16 curriculum within grades K through 12 at that school. The program, if established,
17 must include Native languages traditionally spoken in the community in which the
18 school is located. Each school board conducting a program of Native language
19 education shall implement the program as a part of regular classroom studies and shall
20 use

21 (1) instructors who are certified under AS 14.20.020 or 14.20.025; and

22 (2) to the extent possible

23 (A) instructors and instructional materials available through the
24 University of Alaska; and

25 (B) audio-visual, computer, and satellite technology.

26 (b) In this section,

27 (1) "district" has the meaning given in AS 14.17.990;

28 (2) "Native" means a person of one-fourth degree or more Alaskan
29 Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut blood.

30 * **Sec. 5.** This Act takes effect July 1, 1999.