

**SENATE BILL NO. 27**

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

**BY SENATORS DUNLEAVY, Gardner, MacKinnon, Giessel, Costello, Hughes, Wilson, Stevens, Begich, Meyer**

**Introduced: 1/20/17  
Referred: Education**

**A BILL**

**FOR AN ACT ENTITLED**

1 **"An Act relating to the establishment of the Task Force on Reading Proficiency and**  
2 **Reading Instruction for All Students and on the Effects of Dyslexia on Some Students."**

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

4 \* **Section 1.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section  
5 to read:

6 LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS. The legislature finds that

7 (1) approximately 47,000 students in the state do not meet Alaska English  
8 Language Arts standards as indicated by the Alaska Measures of Progress test, and reading  
9 proficiency scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress for students in the  
10 state were stagnant from 2003 through 2015;

11 (2) the results on student assessments demonstrate that the state is not meeting  
12 the needs of struggling readers;

13 (3) dyslexia, the most common specific learning disability, affects between  
14 three and 17 percent of the student population and accounts for approximately 80 percent of

1 all specific learning disabilities;

2 (4) the scientific consensus is that, when learning to read, typical and atypical  
3 learners have overlapping instructional needs, including the need for highly knowledgeable  
4 and skilled reading teachers to improve reading proficiency outcomes; and

5 (5) the residents of this state hold the legislature, the governor, and the state  
6 Board of Education and Early Development accountable for student reading proficiency  
7 outcomes because the legislature, the governor, and the state Board of Education and Early  
8 Development are responsible for developing and implementing strongly justified education  
9 budget proposals and for leading reforms of the state's public education system.

10 \* **Sec. 2.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to  
11 read:

12 TASK FORCE ON READING PROFICIENCY AND READING INSTRUCTION  
13 FOR ALL STUDENTS AND ON THE EFFECTS OF DYSLEXIA ON SOME STUDENTS.

14 (a) The Task Force on Reading Proficiency and Reading Instruction for All Students and on  
15 the Effects of Dyslexia on Some Students is established as a joint task force of the Alaska  
16 State Legislature. The purpose of the task force is to

17 (1) evaluate and make recommendations regarding reading instructional  
18 practices for all public school students in the state and the diagnosis, treatment, and education  
19 of children affected by dyslexia; and

20 (2) examine how current statutes and regulations affect reading proficiency  
21 outcomes.

22 (b) The task force established under (a) of this section shall

23 (1) examine

24 (A) the effects of dyslexia on reading proficiency outcomes in the state  
25 and in other jurisdictions;

26 (B) dyslexia education practices and laws in other jurisdictions;

27 (2) evaluate and recommend methods to

28 (A) improve reading proficiency and reading instruction for all public  
29 school students in the state;

30 (B) increase, within three years, the

31 (i) percentage of students who meet the Alaska English

1 Language Arts standards to greater than 50 percent of students;

2 (ii) statewide average reading proficiency scores of public  
3 school students in the state by one grade level;

4 (C) fund legislative changes and measures the task force recommends;

5 (D) mitigate the effects of dyslexia on reading proficiency, including  
6 (i) early screening, early identification, and early intervention  
7 for students in preschool through grade three;

8 (ii) screening, identification, and intervention for students in  
9 grades four through 12;

10 (iii) training all relevant educational staff in the use of  
11 evidence-based screening and identification instruments; and

12 (3) identify evidence-based, multi-sensory, direct, explicit, structured, and  
13 sequential approaches to instructing students affected by dyslexia.

14 (c) The task force shall complete interim and final reports summarizing the findings  
15 and recommendations of the task force, including proposed legislation for the Alaska State  
16 Legislature to consider. The task force shall submit to the governor, the state Board of  
17 Education and Early Development, and the senate secretary and chief clerk of the house of  
18 representatives an interim report not later than January 31, 2018, and a final report not later  
19 than January 31, 2019, and notify the legislature that each report is available.

20 (d) The task force consists of 15 members as follows:

21 (1) three members of the house of representatives appointed by the speaker of  
22 the house of representatives, including at least one member of the minority organizational  
23 caucus;

24 (2) three members of the senate appointed by the president of the senate,  
25 including at least one member of the minority organizational caucus;

26 (3) the commissioner of education and early development, or the  
27 commissioner's designee, who serves as a nonvoting member; and

28 (4) eight members of the public to be appointed jointly by the speaker of the  
29 house of representatives and the president of the senate as follows:

30 (A) one member who is an active or retired teacher in kindergarten  
31 through grade three with significant experience teaching reading to students

1 developing typically and atypically in the state;

2 (B) one member representing the Association of Alaska School Boards  
3 who is knowledgeable about reading instruction and dyslexia;

4 (C) one nonvoting member who is a judge or representative of the  
5 judicial branch of state government and is familiar with relevant federal education  
6 laws;

7 (D) one member representing the University of Alaska who, for both  
8 typically and atypically developing students, is a highly knowledgeable and skilled  
9 teacher of reading and demonstrates the ability to pass this knowledge and skill on to  
10 student teachers, or if a candidate meeting the criteria in this subparagraph is not  
11 available, one member who is a nationally recognized expert in teaching reading to  
12 both typically and atypically developing students who demonstrates the ability to pass  
13 this knowledge and skill on to student teachers; and

14 (E) four members recommended by the member organizations of the  
15 Alaska Reading Coalition or designees of the selected members.

16 (e) The members of the task force shall select a chair from the voting members of the  
17 task force. The task force meets at the call of the chair and shall meet at least six but not more  
18 than 10 times annually. A majority of the members of the task force constitutes a quorum.

19 (f) A vacancy on the task force shall be filled in the same manner as the original  
20 selection or appointment. If a member has a conflict of interest with respect to a matter before  
21 the task force, the member may not take action on that matter. The remaining members of the  
22 task force shall consult with an expert regarding the matter before the task force.

23 (g) The task force may request data and other information from the Department of  
24 Education and Early Development, school districts, and other state agencies.

25 (h) The staff of the legislative members of the task force shall provide administrative  
26 and other support to the task force.

27 (i) Public members of the task force serve without compensation. The task force shall  
28 meet telephonically. Members of the task force are not entitled to per diem or travel expenses.

29 (j) The task force expires on January 31, 2019.

30 (k) In this section,

31 (1) "relevant educational staff" includes school psychologists, special

- 1 education teachers, other teachers, principals, and superintendents; and
- 2 (2) "task force" means the Task Force on Reading Proficiency and Reading
- 3 Instruction for All Students and on the Effects of Dyslexia on Some Students.