

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 26, 2020

8:07 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Harriet Drummond, Co-Chair  
Representative Andi Story, Co-Chair  
Representative Grier Hopkins  
Representative Chris Tuck  
Representative Tiffany Zulkosky (via teleconference)  
Representative DeLena Johnson (via teleconference)  
Representative Mike Prax

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT**

Senator Tom Begich

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :

Board of Education & Early Development

Keith Hamilton - Soldotna  
Lorri van Diest - Palmer

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

Professional Teaching Practices Commission

Lem Wheelles - Anchorage

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

University of Alaska Board of Regents

Cachet Garrett - Fairbanks

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

HOUSE BILL NO. 153

"An Act relating to early education programs provided by school districts; relating to funding for early education programs; and relating to the duties of the state Board of Education and Early Development."

- HEARD & HELD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HB 153

SHORT TITLE: PRE-ELEMENTARY PROGRAMS/FUNDING

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) DRUMMOND

05/07/19	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
05/07/19	(H)	EDC, FIN
03/09/20	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
03/09/20	(H)	Heard & Held
03/09/20	(H)	MINUTE(EDC)
03/11/20	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
03/11/20	(H)	Heard & Held
03/11/20	(H)	MINUTE(EDC)
03/14/20	(H)	EDC AT 1:00 PM DAVIS 106
03/14/20	(H)	Heard & Held
03/14/20	(H)	MINUTE(EDC)
03/25/20	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
03/25/20	(H)	Scheduled but Not Heard
03/26/20	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

**WITNESS REGISTER**

CACHET GARRETT, Student Regent Appointee  
University of Alaska Board of Regents  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as student regent appointee to the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

HEIDI TESHNER, Director  
Finance and Support Services Division  
Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** During the hearing of HB 153, reviewed the five fiscal notes accompanying the bill.

LOKI TOBIN, Staff  
Senator Tom Begich  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** During the hearing of HB 153, answered questions and provided a revised sectional analysis for Version U, the proposed committee substitute.

MICHAEL JOHNSON, Ph.D., Commissioner  
Department of Education and Early Development  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** During the hearing of HB 153, answered questions.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[8:07:07 AM](#)

**CO-CHAIR HARRIET DRUMMOND** reconvened the House Education Standing Committee meeting at 8:07 a.m. [The meeting was recessed on 3/25/20.] Present at the call back to order were Representatives Johnson (via teleconference), Hopkins, Zulkosky (via teleconference), Tuck, Story, and Drummond. Representative Prax arrived as the meeting was in progress.

**CONFIRMATION HEARING(S):**  
**Board of Education & Early Development**  
**Professional Teaching Practices Commission**  
**University of Alaska Board of Regents**

[8:07:55 AM](#)

**CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND** [announced that the first order of business would be continuation of the confirmation hearings for the governor's appointees to the state Board of Education & Early Development, the Professional Teaching Practices Commission, and the University of Alaska Board of Regents.]

**CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND** specified that the confirmation hearing for Keith Hammond and Lorri van Diest, appointees to the state Board of Education & Early Development, had been finished.

**CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND** said the confirmation hearing for Lem Wheelles, appointee to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission, had mostly been finished. She asked whether members had any further questions of Mr. Wheelles. She noted there were no questions.

**CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND** stated that the committee would continue hearing from Cachet Garrett, student regent appointee to the

University of Alaska Board of Regents. She offered her belief that Ms. Garrett had completed her testimony.

[8:08:47 AM](#)

CACHET GARRETT, Student Regent Appointee, University of Alaska Board of Regents, confirmed she had completed her testimony, but said she would like to add a thought to her testimony. She explained that in a normal budget year she would prioritize supporting the strong programs at the University of Alaska and the student services that the university offers in order to meet the needs of the state. In this current fiscal atmosphere those priorities do not change, she noted, but working through the multitude of crises the university faces at this time is exactly what the board is doing.

[8:11:18 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY said the committee has reviewed the qualifications of the governor's appointees to the Board of Education & Early Development and recommends that [the nominations of] Keith Hamilton and Lorri van Diest should be forwarded to a joint session of the legislature [for confirmation or rejection]. She stated that the committee has reviewed the qualifications of the governor's appointee to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission and recommends that [the nomination of] Lem Wheelles should be forwarded to a joint session of the legislature [for confirmation or rejection]. She further stated that the committee has reviewed the qualifications of the governor's appointee to the University of Alaska Board of Regents and recommends that [the nomination of] Cachet Garret should be forwarded to a joint session of the legislature [for confirmation or rejection]. She explained that this does not reflect intent by any of the members to vote for or against these individuals during any further sessions for the purposes of confirmation.

[8:12:11 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:12 a.m. to 8:15 a.m.

**HB 153-PRE-ELEMENTARY PROGRAMS/FUNDING**

[8:15:51 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND announced that the next order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 153, "An Act relating to early education

programs provided by school districts; relating to funding for early education programs; and relating to the duties of the state Board of Education and Early Development." [Before the committee was the proposed committee substitute (CS) for HB 153, Version 31-LS0928\U, Caouette, 3/4/20, adopted as a working document during the House Education Standing Committee meeting on 3/9/20.]

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND stated that HB 153, Version U, The Alaska Reads Act, is a large, complex bill. She reminded members that the five fiscal notes reviewed at the bill's last hearing were draft notes at that point. She requested Ms. Heidi Teshner to re-address the fiscal notes starting from the beginning.

[8:17:43 AM](#)

HEIDI TESHNER, Director, Finance and Support Services Division, Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), began her review of the five fiscal notes for HB 153. She first addressed the fiscal note for the Foundation Program, Office of Management & Budget (OMB) Component Number 141. She pointed out that the Foundation Program fiscal note and the Public Education Fund fiscal note go hand in hand. She explained that no costs are seen in the Foundation Program fiscal note because the funding mechanism for the Foundation Program is a general fund transfer from the Public Education Fund.

[8:18:33 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY offered her understanding that OMB Component 141 starts in fiscal year 2021 (FY 21).

MS. TESHNER confirmed the Foundation Program fiscal note starts in FY 21 but explained that the initial cost underneath the Foundation Program and the Public Education Fund doesn't come in until FY 24. She pointed out that these fiscal notes do not reflect any immediate costs for those districts that could qualify that have an existing pre-kindergarten (pre-K) program that could go straight to the state Board of Education & Early Development for approval once the standards are adopted.

[8:19:47 AM](#)

MS. TESHNER resumed her review of the fiscal notes. She drew attention to the fiscal note for the Public Education Fund, OMB Component Number 2804, and said it relates to the Early Education Grant. She stated that after [districts] go through a

three-year grant process they would, with approval, then flow into the foundation formula. She explained that the average cost per average daily membership (ADM) was calculated by dividing the total amount of projected state aid by the total number of the ADM. Students would be funded at half time through under the Foundation Program, with an estimated cost per student of \$4,685. [The department] assumed that those [districts] starting the three-year grant process in 2021 would get their program approved and would flow into the foundation formula in 2024. The initial cost for the initial group is a little over \$1.7 million in FY 24.

[8:21:28 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked whether she is correct in understanding that [the fiscal note] is moving to the out years, the section on reading proficiency.

MS. TESHNER replied that these grants are the early education grants, so these are for four- and five-year-olds. "The Pre-K component fiscal note addresses those three-year grants," she said, "so these are those after that three-year grant process and they've moved into the formula, so just the early education grant portion of ... the bill."

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND stated that the grants would be talked about in another fiscal note. She inquired whether she is correct in understanding that FY 24 is when those first grant groups are incorporated into the foundation formula and it will be at half an average cost per student.

MS. TESHNER responded correct.

[8:22:45 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND requested clarification on why half cost is \$4,685 since the base student allocation (BSA) is about \$6,000.

MS. TESHNER answered that what was looked at was not the BSA. Drawing attention to the third paragraph of the analysis section, she explained that the calculation was done by dividing the projected FY 21 State Aid Entitlement of just over \$1.2 billion by the projected FY 21 ADM of 128,923.91 to arrive at an average cost per student overall of \$9,370, which was then divided in half to arrive at \$4,685.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND offered her understanding that that average cost is based on the adjusted ADM according to the foundation formula, not on the actual ADM or number of bodies.

MS. TESHNER replied it is not on the adjusted, it is on the total projected average daily membership; so, it is being looked at before going through all the adjustments.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND said she is somewhat confused because it sounds like the BSA has grown significantly if this number is \$9,370.

MS. TESHNER responded that \$9,370 is just an average cost per student across the state. Responding further she confirmed it is the average cost for the pre-K. The average cost per student is [\$9,370], she continued, so half of that student is \$4,685 and that is for the increase that is going to be seen in the foundation formula for those pre-K programs that get approved.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked why it is half.

MS. TESHNER answered that the bill states they are to be run through as a half time.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND offered her understanding that the average cost for pre-K is under the grant program.

MS. TESHNER replied that DEED is using the average cost when determining the grant program cost, which will be reflected in another fiscal note that will be discussed. But, for this case, this is just what DEED is estimating for those students once they've gone through that grant program.

[8:26:03 AM](#)

MS. TESHNER returned to her review of the fiscal notes. She directed attention to the fiscal note for Student and School Achievement, OMB Component Number 2796, which reflects the cost associated with the school improvement reading program and the comprehensive reading intervention program. She said DEED would provide direct support and intervention to districts and school reading programs. During year one, she explained, up to 10 low performing districts would each be served directly by reading specialists employed by the department, and up to 20 districts would be served in year two and beyond. In the initial year, FY 21, there would be 24 total position control numbers (PCNs), with 20 reading specialists included in that total. Depending

on the school size and the need, there would be either one or two reading specialists assigned per school. Ms. Teshner added that this fiscal note also reflects the department chargeback cost of \$9,600 per person, one-time cost of \$5,000 for supplies and equipment per person, and an additional one-time cost of \$6,000 for legal services associated with developing the regulations around the school improvement reading program.

MS. TESHNER stated the final cost associated with this reading program is the purchase of supplemental reading textbooks and materials for school districts, which DEED won't purchase if they aren't needed. To correct what she stated in a previous meeting, she said that the cost per student when adopting a new reading curriculum is \$250. At approximately 10,000 students per grade level in Alaska schools, there would be a total of 40,000 students in kindergarten through third grade (K-3). In the 2019-2020 school year, 391 schools served K-3. Dividing 40,000 students by 391 schools equals 102 K-3 students per school on average. Ten schools times 102 K-3 students per school times \$250/student comes to a cost of \$255,000 for the supplemental reading textbooks and materials.

[8:29:11 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND recalled there was confusion here during the last meeting as to whether it was thousands or hundreds of dollars. She drew attention to the last page of the fiscal note and the line for commodities, and said she assumes that commodities are the supplies and materials to the schools, which ordinarily is done by the schools or the school district. She asked whether she is correct in understanding that in this case it is being done by the department.

MS. TESHNER replied yes, it's to provide additional supplemental materials to help.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND offered her understanding that the reading specialists are hired and directed by the department and at the start they will be sent to the 10 lowest performing schools and the travel costs will be covered by the department.

MS. TESHNER responded correct.

[8:30:29 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY offered her understanding that ideally the reading specialists would be hired from and living in the school community.

MS. TESHNER answered yes; it would be ideal if somebody could be found in a community where one of the starting schools was identified.

[8:31:10 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX brought attention to page 3 of fiscal note 2796 and asked whether specialists would be hired per school or per school district.

MS. TESHNER replied that ideally the department would like to have one or two reading specialists that are in that school in that district providing the services directly to the student alongside all the teachers in that school and district.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX stated the numbers don't appear to increase proportionately. He said it seems the numbers would have to increase roughly the same amount every year given the number of schools is increasing over the years.

MS. TESHNER responded that the fiscal note reflects hiring up to 20 reading specialists in FY 21 and then adding 5 additional reading specialists each year through 2025 to get to a maximum of 40 reading specialists that would be serving the students and districts each year. The department only intends to hire up to 40 reading specialists to help implement this program and serve the students.

[8:34:28 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS observed under personnel services that 20 reading specialists would be hired the first year at a cost of \$2,680,000. He offered his hope that they would be people in the community who are familiar with the school and trusted advisors there. He inquired whether the 20 initial reading specialists on up to 40 reading specialists in the end would be school district employees or department employees.

MS. TESHNER answered that they would be department employees.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked whether the reading specialists would be dedicated to that specific school for the life of that reading program or whether they would also go to other schools.

MS. TESHNER replied that they would be dedicated to that school and helping that school get through this process.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS inquired whether the reading specialists would hop around within a district or would stay at a school.

MS. TESHNER deferred to Loki Tobin to answer the question.

[8:36:32 AM](#)

LOKI TOBIN, Staff, Senator Tom Begich, Alaska State Legislature, responded that this school improvement program is dependent on the district to apply for that support, however that individual will be dedicated to the school that is most in need. The district can choose to utilize that person's services however the district requests, but particularly that person is assigned to the lowest performing school within that district. The [reading specialist] will be a DEED employee and the district has the purview to utilize the specialist in whatever fashion it chooses, but [the specialist's] focus will be on that school. Responding further to Representative Hopkins, she confirmed it would be one person per district. She pointed out that there is additional language in the bill that allows for an additional support person in case that individual needs additional support.

[8:37:26 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS offered his understanding that the \$355,000 for commodities is for the supplemental material that would be purchased for the school district.

MS. TOBIN answered that language in the bill allows for supplemental materials if the school district so chooses to utilize them.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked whether districts get other funds to help purchase new reading material before the supplemental material comes for them. For example, he continued, whether there is still local opportunity to utilize funds to purchase material the district feels most effective, such as a rural school district to develop culturally relevant curriculum versus the supplemental material that will go to Fairbanks, Anchorage, and Juneau as well.

MS. TOBIN replied she doesn't know the dollar amount for any sort of additional supplemental materials that are specific to

creating curriculum. She deferred to Ms. Teshner to provide an answer.

8:38:30 AM

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked Ms. Teshner whether there is funding for original reading material for the lowest 10 percent performing school districts to purchase and develop their own culturally relevant curriculum or whether there is only funding for reading improvement curriculum supplemental material that is identical statewide.

MS. TESHNER responded that the only funds included [in the fiscal notes] are for supplemental materials. She said the department would hope that the districts already have the reading curriculum on site.

8:39:10 AM

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND drew attention to the fiscal note for Pre-Kindergarten Grants, OMB Component Number 3028, and noted that this first year is targeted at approximately 368 students. She said the point is to be focused and intense.

8:39:31 AM

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX posited that rural districts only have a few schools per district, while the Anchorage district might have 100 schools and Fairbanks several dozen. He said the way this is structured is confusing but what matters is that the department has it figured out and has addressed the problem of it not working out the same per district, it's going to work out more per school. For example, he continued, there might be a couple hundred students in grades one through three in a Fairbanks school district as opposed to only four or five in a rural school district, so a rural school should be figured on the per student. He allowed he is stumbling here.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND agreed that this is "hard to get your arms around." While she would like for every one of the K-3 students to be addressed all at once, she said there isn't the capacity to do that. The department is going to have trouble hiring that many reading specialists and specialists will be hard to find in small rural communities. The goal is to work with each district and ensure that they have the appropriate assistance. She requested Ms. Tobin to address this.

MS. TOBIN clarified that the early education grant program and the school improvement program are two separate programs. The early education grant program will be serving 100 percent of districts, she explained, which is represented in fiscal notes OMB 141, 3028, and 2804. The school improvement program will not be serving 100 percent of districts; it is focused on the lowest performing 10 percent of districts. The program that talks about the reading specialists is focused on those lowest performing school districts and those do not necessarily include "the big five" - Anchorage, Juneau, and the Matanuska-Susitna (Mat-Su) Valley. She pointed out that rural school districts are very large in their service areas - the Bering Strait School District has something like 60 schools within its purview.

[8:43:10 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND noted that in five or six years it will expand to include "the big five."

MS. TOBIN replied correct.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND said it is starting with the lowest performing 10 schools in the state and there are just over 500 schools in the state. It starts too slowly, she opined, but the state cannot afford to do them all at once. The early education piece will be giving all those four-year-olds a leg up and help them get started early, which is good.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX stated that he will let this go for now, but that he will perhaps talk to the department more about the cash demands and being more flexible than what he sees right now.

[8:44:21 AM](#)

MS. TESHNER continued her review of the fiscal note for Student and School Achievement, OMB Component Number 2796. She moved to the portion of the fiscal note related to the comprehensive reading intervention program. She explained that DEED would manage and operate this program and provide direct support and training for all K-3 teachers on the use of the statewide screening and assessment tool. Staff needed to accomplish and provide support for this program would include one education administrator, two education specialists, and one education associate. The salary and benefits costs for those four positions are in the fiscal note, she said, and staff will also be required to participate and present at statewide professional development conferences and provide direct support to district

staff concerning the statewide screening or assessment tool. Within this there is a travel budget of \$3,000 annually, so \$1,000 per trip for three of the positions. In addition are department chargeback costs of \$9,600 per person and a one-time cost of \$5,000 per person for supplies and equipment.

MS. TESHNER related that the comprehensive reading intervention program would also require the adoption and administration of a statewide screening or assessment tool to help identify students in K-3 with reading deficiencies. With about 4,000 students in K-3, the statewide screener would cost approximately \$8 per student, resulting in an annual cost of \$320,000. Lastly, she said, the program includes grants for one staff member from each of the 53 districts to attend the statewide screening and assessment tool training, so at \$1,000 per person the total estimated cost is \$53,000.

MS. TESHNER stated that, overall, the estimated cost in FY 21 is \$4,221,700 to begin implementation of both the school improvement reading program and the comprehensive reading intervention program.

[8:47:22 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND surmised the statewide screening or assessment tool training could be done remotely given [the current COVID-19 pandemic].

MS. TESHNER replied correct. She added that DEED would do everything it could to provide remote training as often as possible to support districts.

[8:48:15 AM](#)

MS. TESHNER drew attention to the fiscal note for Early Learning Coordination, OMB Component Number 2912. She explained that this fiscal note goes back to the early education grant program. It shows the costs associated with operating that early education grant program as well as providing the training and support to grantees. It is estimated that this will require two education specialists and one education associate to operate the program and provide the training and support. In addition to the salary and benefits for these three positions, there is a department chargeback cost of \$9,600 per position and one-time cost of \$5,000 per position for [supplies] and equipment. She further noted that since the state Board of Education & Early Development will need to adopt the standards through regulation

there is an additional one-time cost of \$6,000 reflected for the legal services associated with developing the regulations.

[8:49:33 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked if she is correct in understanding that these early education staffers will be department staffers and they will be working with early childhood educators in districts around the state.

MS. TESHNER confirmed these will be DEED staff and they will run that grant program and provide the support to districts.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND inquired whether the early education programs are currently funded by the districts themselves or through the grant program.

MS. TESHNER answered that it is a mixture. Currently, a handful of districts get a pre-kindergarten grant from the department, and a number of [districts] use their own funds or federal funds that they received to run their pre-kindergarten programs.

[8:50:43 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS inquired about the number of positions that would be hired as DEED employees.

MS. TESHNER replied there would be three staff members to help run these programs.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked whether these three staff members would be for the initial ten districts.

MS. TESHNER responded no, this is not related to the lowest performing, which is the school improvement program. Rather, this is to spear up the early education grant program, a comprehensive program across the state. It is voluntary and districts don't have to do it, but if they want to get a program that is approved by the department, then they can go through this early education grant program.

[8:51:49 AM](#)

MS. TESHNER resumed her review of the fiscal notes for HB 153. The fiscal note for Pre-Kindergarten Grants, OMB Component Number 3028, she explained, shows the costs associated with just

the early education grant program. Page 3 provides a funding breakdown by fiscal year for this three-year grant.

[8:52:23 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND observed that the cost of this pre-elementary program in the first year is approximately \$1.7 million and the operating budget is \$4.3 million. She asked whether she is correct in thinking that the cost is \$6 million for the pre-K programs statewide because the \$1.7 million and \$4.3 million total \$6 million.

MS. TESHNER answered that there is money in the budget for the pre-K programs and that is expected to continue. This is an addition to that. The \$1.7 million in FY 21 is just for the lowest 10 percent of districts that could go through this grant program.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND offered her understanding that the lowest ten percent of districts correlates to approximately five or six districts, not the lowest ten schools.

MS. TESHNER replied correct.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked whether she is correct in understanding that this is new money for new pre-school programs where they don't already exist to cover, on a voluntary basis, every four-year-old.

MS. TESHNER responded that there could be a potential that they have a grant program, but their grant program might not meet the standards that are going to be adopted by the state Board of Education & Early Development. So, she explained, this will allow the districts to build up those grant programs to meet those standards so that they could have that program moving forward and then those students could flow through the foundation formula.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND inquired about the point at which those funds are incorporated into the foundation.

MS. TESHNER answered that she will discuss page 3 of the fiscal note to outline how it lays out and explain how the funds flow into foundation.

[8:54:44 AM](#)

MS. TESHNER continued her review of the fiscal note for Pre-Kindergarten Grants, OMB Component Number 3028. She explained that Table 1 on page 3 calculates an estimate of the number of students that could be served by this legislation. There are approximately 10,000 four-year-old cohorts, she said. Removing the students who are already served by pre-K programs or Head Start results in 3,675 students that could be served by HB 153, a participation rate of 88.45.

MS. TESHNER turned to Table 2 on page 3 that shows how each of the six district cohorts would be added each fiscal year. Based on the bill, she explained, in FY 21 the first cohort to go through would be the lowest 10 percent. The lowest 10 percent of districts could apply during that first year and then they would go through their three-year grant cycle. By FY 24, assuming their grant program is approved, they would flow into the foundation formula. In FY 22 the second district cohort, the second lowest 15 percent, would be addressed; next would be the third lowest 15 percent [in FY 23]; next would be the third highest 20 percent [in FY 24]; then the second highest 20 percent [in FY 25]; and last [in FY 26] is the highest 20 percent of all six district cohorts that can apply for grants through the three-year early education grant.

MS. TESHNER said Table 3 on page 3 shows, by year, which cohorts would be flowing through the grant cycle. At any given time, there would be up to three cohorts going through each year until all have phased out by FY 28.

MS. TESHNER related that Table 4 on page 3 shows those students after they've gone through the three-year grant program, the number of students that would flow into the foundation formula.

MS. TESHNER addressed the chart at the bottom of page 3. She said the top part is the three-year grant and the colors show each of the cohorts and how they would flow through and then go into the foundation formula. It's estimated that by FY 29, the foundation program would increase by about \$17.2 million and the total grant program would be about \$51.6 million.

[8:57:28 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND inquired whether the foundation formula and the grant program would be operating simultaneously.

MS. TESHNER replied yes.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked when the grants are incorporated into the foundation formula, the \$51.6 million.

MS. TESHNER responded that the \$51.6 million is just the three-year grant program itself, which is reflected in fiscal note 3028. Once they've gone through the three years, or if they need an additional year because they're not ready, and once they've been approved by the state Board of Education & Early Development, they can flow into the foundation formula.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked whether she is correct in understanding that the \$51.6 million grant will eventually go away as the early childhood programs are incorporated into the foundation formula.

MS. TESHNER answered that's correct, the program sunsets in 2031.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND stated she thinks it would be good to run it out to 2031 so it can be seen when the grant program disappears and when it becomes fully funded through the foundation. She asked whether she is correct in understanding that it is cheaper to fund it through the foundation.

MS. TESHNER replied correct.

[8:59:37 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS observed on Table 1 that the estimated number of students who are going to be moved into the early education grant program, which would be the current number of pre-K students in current programs, is 3,590. He asked whether he is correct in understanding that the estimated cost for those current students being incorporated into the foundation formula at half cost would be calculated by multiplying 3,590 times \$4,685.

MS. TESHNER responded that that is a good estimate. She stated that by taking the current number being served, and assuming those programs meet the standards, then that could be an immediate cost to the program.

[9:01:06 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND observed on Table 1 that eventually [88.45] percent of four-year-olds will be served. She inquired whether the department surveys private preschool programs in order to

get a handle on how many students are out there, given that ultimately most of those students will enter the public school system. She stated that in terms of the quality of the programs, she wants to ensure that all kids have similar opportunities by the time they are ready to enter kindergarten.

MS. TESHNER answered that the department looks at all cohorts across the K-12 system and they are approximately 10,000 students. "So," she continued, "knowing that what we currently serve as pre-K or kindergarten students in the reports that are listed on the department's website, they may not currently reflect ... the private school pre-K, but then if they flow into the public system they would be reflected in out years, so we're still kind of including them through that approximate 10,000 students per cohort."

[9:02:38 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY asked how this envisions working with the Head Start programs in Alaska's communities.

MS. TESHNER replied that the bill only addresses the district operated early education grant programs. She related that Senator Begich's office has had numerous conversations with Head Start programs specifically, but this one is only addressing the programs the districts are operating.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND observed on Table 1 that there are about 1,600 Head Start students.

MS. TESHNER answered that's correct.

MS. TOBIN stated that Senator Begich's office has had numerous conversations with Head Start programs and the bill has been crafted with their insight. She said the senator's office also has two memorandums regarding how this bill holds Head Start harmless. The goal was to ensure that those programs continue to offer their high-quality programming for students three and four years of age, and this really focuses on high quality pre-K service, which is age four.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND confirmed that that's Head Start and early Head Start is the three-year-olds.

[9:04:21 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX stated that existing private preschool programs is an interesting point. He recalled a hearing where a couple of preschool operators were concerned about this program's impact on their service. He asked whether anyone has consulted with private preschools to get an idea of how they are going about it, how this impacts them, and whether they could participate in this somehow.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND responded that most of those testifying were daycare programs and they talked about the impact. She said those are much younger kids. Only three-year-olds, Head Start, and early Head Start are being talked about and there aren't too many. She asked whether it is correct that the figure of 1,580 students on Table 1 depicts four-year-olds.

MS. TOBIN nodded.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND continued and stated it could be assumed that the number of three-year-olds is equivalent. She noted that districts also operate special education programs that start at the age of three for students who are identified. She said this is not going to impact infant care or toddler care; these are kids that are potty trained, and their parents are thinking about preparing them for school. There is an extreme shortage of childcare slots, she added, but that is a different discussion than this bill. She related her previous experience when the Anchorage School District annually surveyed all the private K-12 schools in the Anchorage area and queried them about their populations so it would be known how many kids in Anchorage were going to public schools and how many were going to private schools. That was a long time ago, she continued, and now there's a lot more home schooling going on through families and through charter schools operating from many locations in the state, and that's harder to look at. Early care is a different conversation than what is being had for this bill, she advised.

MS. TOBIN pointed out that HB 153 is about universal voluntary preschool. If an individual wants to put their child into a private preschool program the bill still allows for that opportunity. This bill simply focuses on offering pre-K to everyone regardless of socio-economic status and focuses on school readiness. It's trying to address those four-year-olds who don't know how to sit and stand in line, or who need assistance in learning their colors or numbers, or who need preparation to read.

9:07:52 AM

CO-CHAIR STORY stated she isn't quite sure how the programs work together with Head Start. She noted that facilities are shared in many of the districts and that there are nice linkages between Head Start and those kids flowing naturally into their school districts. There are memorandums of agreement on how things are used jointly, and the committee and Senator Begich's office have heard from Head Start providers. She asked whether Senator Begich's office has talked about how to have a good partnership working together and has thought about a memorandum of agreement.

MS. TOBIN answered that the conversations between the senator's office and Head Start programs were related to a particular provision on page 11 of the bill that talks about accommodating and working with existing programs regardless of socio-economic status. There has been some insight that that might not be as clear as intended in bill language, she related. The focus is about working with existing programs that service three- to five-year-olds in their communities, so a look is being taken at tightening that up to ensure that that is the intent in that line at the very bottom of page 11.

MS. TOBIN said the senator has heard from several districts that offer Head Start and pre-K programs to their students at different points during the day and potentially different facilities within their district. Nothing in this bill precludes someone or a district from offering that, she stated. It would be allowed within the bill to have Head Start students in the morning in one space and then have those same students roll into a pre-K program that is offered in the afternoon. However, the bill prohibits double dipping - students cannot be enrolled in a pre-K program and enrolled in a Head Start program at the same time; federal funds and state funds cannot be received for the same student at the same point in time.

CO-CHAIR STORY asked which line on page 11 the provision is located.

MS. TOBIN replied that it is line 29, [subparagraph] (D). She reiterated that the intent is for that to be working with existing programs. Because it may not be the cleanest language, a look is being taken at amending it and suggestions for how to amend that language would be entertained.

CO-CHAIR STORY said she would look at that.

[9:10:47 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked whether Head Start programs are full day or half day.

MS. TOBIN responded that she doesn't know and will get back to the committee with an answer.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND pointed out that this is looking at half-day programs and said it is going to continue to create issues with childcare. She added that it is looking ahead and after the COVID-19 virus pandemic.

MS. TOBIN pointed out that the bill does allow for a full-day pre-K program, but it doesn't fund a full-day pre-K program.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND surmised the districts could do that within their own abilities.

MS. TOBIN answered that's correct.

[9:11:47 AM](#)

MS. TESHNER, in response to Co-Chair Drummond, confirmed that she had completed her review of all five fiscal notes.

[9:12:07 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 9:12 a.m. to 9:16 a.m.

[9:16:05 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND brought attention to the amended sectional analysis within the committee packet titled, "CS HB 153: Alaska Reads Act, Sectional Analysis, CS for House Bill 153(EDU), Version: 31-LS0928\U." She turned to Ms. Tobin to provide a review of the amended analysis.

MS. TOBIN explained that the amended sectional analysis expands specific sections to give more clarity and in-depth information. She said Section 1 establishes the Act as the Alaska Reads Act. She noted that Section 2 amends AS 14.03.060(e) to include a Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) approved early education program, including Head Start, as part of an elementary school.

CO-CHAIR STORY recalled Ms. Tobin's comment about Head Start. She suggested that [Section 2] might also be a place if she were going to make an amendment to include a memorandum of agreement with the Head Start agency or some language, as it would seem to make sense to have it here.

[9:17:44 AM](#)

MS. TOBIN resumed her review of the amended sectional analysis. She said Section 3 amends AS 14.03.072(a) to include reading intervention services in addition to intervention strategies for early literacy.

[9:18:03 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY stated she is asking questions as the committee goes along because it will help members to understand the Alaska Reads Act and what it hopes to accomplish. Of great importance, she said, is that Alaska's core reading program instruction be a scientific evidence-based program. That's the tier one program, then it moves into tier two for the interventions. It is known that most of Alaska's students are not reading or proficient at the end of third grade, she opined. Alaska cannot have 50-60 percent of its students in intervention programs, so it is critical to support the core programs.

CO-CHAIR STORY suggested that here or somewhere in the Alaska Reads Act must include talk about the importance of core reading programs. She urged the committee to think about this and to hear from the commissioner and Senator Begich about where to state in the bill that each district will provide to DEED the scientific evidence-based core reading instruction program they are using and their reading instruction practices in formal assessments and curriculum so that there is a baseline of what is being done in early reading programs across the state. As a policy maker, she said she wants to know that every one of the state's districts is using a scientific evidence-based reading program. Once it is known what that is, the department would work in partnership with a district to analyze its core reading program and then that analysis would be shared with the local school board members and the community, so they know they have a good solid core reading program. As part of that, DEED would provide access to supportive intensive teacher training in scientific evidence-based reading. She said she wants to be assured that in doing a state reading act that "we know we have got these programs and how do we know."

[9:21:08 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY drew attention to Section 3, subsection (a), which states that each school district shall annually provide to parents and guardians of students enrolled in kindergarten through grade three in a public school in the state current information on the importance of reading. She suggested that paragraph (4) be moved up to be paragraph (1) because strategies and resources to help children learn to read should be the first things given to parents. She suggested paragraph (2) stay as (2), and paragraph (1) be moved to become paragraph (3). She urged that the language in lines 19-20 be changed to read: grade proficiency standards and policies for the elementary school attended, including retention. This way parents would know what they are aiming for, for their students. This is the Alaska Reads Act, she opined, and "we want to know our programs are delivering core great reading instruction, scientific based, and that we want our parents to know ... those strategies and resources that we have, we want them to know the grade proficiency standards, so they know what they're aiming for."

[9:22:40 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK asked whether Co-Chair Story is suggesting that Section 3 or Section 4 be amended.

CO-CHAIR STORY replied Section 3. She said the provision in subsection (a) would stay the same regarding that each school district shall annually provide information to parents. She suggested adding [subsection] (b), which would stipulate that each district shall annually provide to the department the scientific evidenced-based core reading intervention instruction program they are using, their reading instructional practices, formal assessment practices, and curriculum materials, including each district's culturally relevant place-based materials. She stated that while there is this formal reading program, it's also important that the local programs have culturally relevant materials, and that DEED knows what those are. Co-Chair Story further suggested adding [subsection] (c), which would provide that the department in partnership with [each] district shall analyze their core reading programs and the analysis should be shared with their school board and their community. She lastly suggested adding [subsection] (d), which would be to provide intensive teacher training and support for the scientific evidence-based program. She offered her belief that many districts are doing this, but she would like the comfort of knowing that. What follows is going into the intervention

programs, but it's important to know what the core reading programs are and that they are scientific based.

[9:24:43 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK noted that Section 3 provides for annual reports to parents and guardians of students and Section 4 provides for [annual] reports to the legislature. He said therefore he is asking which of these two sections Co-Chair Story wants to put her suggestions. He said he thinks it is more important for the legislature to know this information than to provide it to parents. Parents should understand the strategies and resources to help children learn to read. It is also important for parents to know when they may want to retain a child since it is a parental choice. He said he is fine with Co-Chair Story's suggestions, but it may be more important to have them in Section 4.

CO-CHAIR STORY responded she would be fine with that.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND surmised Co-Chair Story is going to propose an amendment at some point.

CO-CHAIR STORY answered affirmatively.

[9:25:47 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND agreed the legislature needs to know what the state's school districts are currently doing and she is going to assume that the department is going to assess what the districts are doing. She said some districts have embarked on improved reading programs in the last several years and are already showing results. This program may not need to be provided to every single district since they are coming along, but the legislature does need to know what they are doing.

CO-CHAIR STORY related she had a brief conversation with the commissioner about her concern, and he said he would give some thought for where that information should be. She said it seems natural to have it at the beginning of the Act.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND invited the commissioner to testify.

[9:27:01 AM](#)

MICHAEL JOHNSON, Ph.D., Commissioner, Department of Education and Early Development, offered his appreciation for the idea

that Co-Chair Story and Representative Tuck proposed. He said he thinks information is transparency and transparency is good for kids. He stated that collecting and reporting and supporting districts with the materials, curriculum, and teaching strategies they are using and further harmonizing that with what is in the bill in terms of evidence-based reading is a great idea. He said he is happy to work with the committee and Senator Begich on that idea.

[9:27:53 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK asked whether the term is "scientific-based" or "evidence-based."

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON replied it is evidence-based. He explained that most people are referring to the same thing and that is the five components of reading that were talked about before in the committee.

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK asked whether he is correct in understanding that that is spelled out later in the bill.

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON responded correct.

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK suggested the committee go through the bill to see where everything is placed and then discuss whether to rearrange the locations of the provisions.

[9:28:41 AM](#)

MS. TOBIN resumed her review of the revised sectional analysis. She said Section 4 amends AS 14.03.078(a) which directs DEED to include information collected under AS 14.03.120, Parents as Teachers, and AS 14.30-760 - 14.30.775, the Alaska Reads Act, in their annual report to the legislature.

MS. TOBIN stated Section 5 amends Alaska statute by changing the date a student is eligible to enter kindergarten and establishes a waiver process for eligibility.

[9:29:38 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY inquired whether she is correct in understanding that the date has gone back to September 1.

MS. TOBIN replied she is unsure what the rules are around speaking to a potential committee substitute in another committee.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND related she has heard a conversation on whether to keep the September 1 kindergarten entry age or change it to June 1. She said it makes a big difference for some kids. She instructed that it be noted for the committee to discuss this.

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK pointed out there is already opportunity for parents to opt out their children from this. He asked about the number of children and what the difference is between June 1 and September 1.

MS. TOBIN responded that the exact number of students that would be impacted is not known, but it is known that as of October 1, 2019, eight students out of the approximately 10,000 students in kindergarten were below the age of five.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND surmised that those kids would have gotten an exemption to enter that early.

MS. TOBIN answered that's correct.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND stated that a June 1 entry date allows for children to be more mature by the time they enter kindergarten. But, she noted, there is variation of opinion on this. In working on the early childhood part and making sure kids are ready when they walk into kindergarten, this may eventually be a moot point. She suggested this be a future topic of discussion.

[9:31:54 AM](#)

MS. TOBIN continued her review of the revised sectional analysis. She said 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.

[9:32:12 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX stated it would be helpful to say on both these sections from which date to which date.

MS. TOBIN replied that Section 5 changes the date from September 1 to June 1 preceding the beginning of the school year. She said the new addition to Alaska statute in Section 6 allows for

a child who is at least four, but no more than five, before June 1 preceding the beginning of school year to attend or may enter a public-school early education program.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND noted that those are all permissive in that they all state "may." She pointed out that Alaska doesn't require kids to go to kindergarten. She inquired about the entry age.

MS. TOBIN responded that Alaska has compulsory attendance from ages seven to sixteen.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND related that there are people who would like to move that. She said the committee might want to discuss this if it is seen that not enough kids are in kindergarten or properly prepared to be reading proficiently by the end of grade three.

[9:33:53 AM](#)

MS. TOBIN returned to her review of the revised sectional analysis. She said Section 7 amends AS 14.03.120 by adding a new subsection (h), which establishes annual reporting requirements for school districts regarding student performance metrics in grades K-3. These new performance metrics include information related to class size, the number and percentage of students in K-3 who are proficient at grade-level skill reading, and the number and percentage of students who are retained from advancing in grades K-3. Currently districts report none of this information, so this will help inform future legislation or future policy.

[9:34:37 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY drew attention to page 4 and said it seems that DEED would also want to get the percentage of students who are receiving free and reduced lunch in each classroom. She noted that part of the sponsor statement talks about the importance of giving more support to children and families with limited incomes. Oftentimes it's been shown in the data that they come in with not as much literacy experience even though they have very rich experiences. This would also give more information to the district, she added, and she may make an amendment because it would be helpful.

CO-CHAIR STORY addressed lines [6-7] on page 4, which state, "(A) in grades kindergarten through three who demonstrated

improvement." She recommended using the word "growth" rather than "improvement" because that is the standard language used in assessments.

MS. TOBIN offered to make that recommendation to Legislative Legal Services. She related that she inserted the word "growth" and Legislative Legal Services changed it to "improvement," so she will inquire about the reason for this choice.

[9:36:50 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY spoke to line 13 on page 4 that states "in grade three who demonstrated sufficient" and recommended substituting "proficient" for "sufficient" because proficient is the language that is used.

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK asked whether a student would be proficient at grade three or whether it is wanted to ensure that a student is at a certain level at grade three. This is where the difference is between the words proficient and sufficient, he posited, and a definition of proficient for a third grader might need to be added. He said he thinks sufficient reading skills are what are wanted for the grade progression.

[9:38:04 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY suggested hearing from the commissioner about why the word sufficient was chosen since it isn't used on assessments. "When we're keeping data at the district level," she stated, "we want to know kids who are proficient, below proficient, above proficient and we usually target the kids who are below proficient."

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON responded that the language "sufficient reading skills" is in keeping with the idea that promotion or retention is not based on one single data point. Because those decisions are so consequential, he continued, [the department] doesn't want that to be determined on one test. It is wanted students to have the benefit of being able to demonstrate their proficiency or sufficiency in several different ways. Assessments are one of those, but the bill makes sure to allow for other ways to demonstrate that and the word sufficient allows that broader opportunity to demonstrate the skills necessary to move on.

[9:40:25 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY stated that when districts are giving this information to the department, they are not simply looking at one score for whether the student is proficient, even though it is always scores that are being talked about. She asked whether the districts would be giving the department that one data point as well as other assessments. She further asked how the department is going to put it all in categories if there is not something to find.

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON answered that it may be assessments, but the bill also allows for portfolios for students that may struggle with assessments. Teachers would have the opportunity to provide other evidence that a student has the skills necessary to move on, he explained. Additionally, the bill does call for a statewide screener, but it allows districts that already have implemented an evidence-based screener to have a waiver from using the statewide screener. So, districts can continue to use the screener that they've already implemented because most districts are already doing that. Those screeners use a variety of terms - some use proficient, some use other terms to indicate that, and that's another reason why the word sufficient is used.

[9:41:53 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY observed that the language "for grade progression based" is used in [subparagraphs (D)], (E), and (F). She asked whether there is a reason the department felt it had to be in there, that retention is not mandatory.

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON replied that the point of the bill is to make sure that students are proficient or are ready to move on past third grade with adequate skills for reading. That decision to move a student along through those levels is very important and that's why the language is necessary in the bill to say as a student progresses from grade to grade.

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK said he thinks one of the goals of the bill for when there are early language learners is to be able to move them along. He recalled that earlier the committee was told that children who speak two languages really excel by the tenth grade even though they may not be as proficient as English primary-speaking children, but it might be sufficient for them to move on. He said he is glad for this discussion and would like to stick with the word sufficient.

[9:43:39 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND stated that all teachers teaching kindergarten through third grade are continuously assessing their students themselves. [The bill] is just talking about a couple of tools that the department will provide. She drew attention to paragraph (1) on lines 3-4 of page 4, which states that "the number of students and teaching staff assigned to each classroom in grades kindergarten through three", and she stressed that class size is a critical issue across the state. As budgets have tightened through the years, class sizes have gotten too large for teachers to pay sufficient attention to these youngsters.

CO-CHAIR STORY said that is one of the reasons why she suggested giving the percentages of students in free and reduced lunch. She further suggested including special education because there are four levels of special education. A lot of kids in the class are at level 1 and level 2. If there are 25 kids and one teacher has six, it really makes a difference on how things might go along in the classroom.

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK requested clarification on whether it is early learning or grades one through three that Co-Chair Story is talking about.

CO-CHAIR STORY responded that paragraph (1) [on lines 3-4 of page 4] states grades kindergarten through three, so her suggestion would need to be added under paragraph (2). She said teachers tell her that each year is different; depending upon the needs they have in their classroom, it affects outcomes. It might be that the school decides to have a paraprofessional help in that classroom for more intervention.

[9:46:13 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND related that she and Co-Chair Story previously talked about the number of kids who get assigned to special education classes when they don't necessarily need special education services; they just need more intensive reading services. [The state] would save a ton of money if this could be caught early, she said, and that is the whole point - smaller class sizes and intensive supports to ensure kids are ready.

CO-CHAIR STORY stated that's why it's important that the core one programs of all teachers are evidence-based. Alaska's children are going to do better if evidence-based reading programs are used and teachers are trained in it.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND inquired whether Co-Chair Story meant "core" one or "tier" one.

CO-CHAIR STORY explained she used core because the core reading program is usually in the tier one instruction. She said there are three instructional levels - tier one, tier two, and tier three. Tier one is the basic instruction, and all kids get reading in their program, so it's their core reading program.

[9:47:26 AM](#)

MS. TOBIN continued her review of the revised sectional analysis. She said Section 8 creates a stair-step, three-year grant program to provide training and assistance to school districts in developing an early education program, defined as pre-K. She explained in further detail: In year one the lowest performing 10 percent of school districts will be eligible for a grant to establish a district-wide, high quality early education program. In year two the next lowest performing 15 percent of school districts will be eligible for that three-year grant program. In year three the grants will be available to the third lowest performing 15 percent of districts. Then the third highest 20 percent of school districts in year four, then the second highest performing 20 percent of school districts in year five, and finally the highest performing 20 percent of school districts in year six. Over six years all school districts will have been offered the opportunity to participate. She added that at the end of the three-year grant cycle, DEED would be responsible for determining if the district's early education program is in alignment with state standards and as established by the state Board of Education & Early Development.

[9:48:54 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY recalled the discussion about local evidence-based screeners and state-provided screeners. She noted that the state's education environment has drastically transformed for the foreseeable future due to COVID-19. She inquired about the type of flexibilities and considerations that might need to be made to uphold the goals of the bill, given they were likely within the framework of a traditional learning environment rather than students learning from home.

COMMISSIONER JOHNSON replied that the current situation requires thinking ahead. He explained that in places where there is connectivity the screeners can be conducted face-to-face using

Zoom, which is possible even in many rural communities. When that isn't possible, some of these screeners can be done verbally over the phone - for instance, in very early grades a teacher could say a word and then ask the student how many sounds were in that word. That's building phonemic awareness. Also, a teacher could ask a student to read and measure the student's fluency in reading as he or she progresses through the different grade levels. So, there are ways to accommodate and make it workable even in the current situation.

[9:51:53 AM](#)

MS. TOBIN resumed her review of the revised sectional analysis. She continued with Section 8, noting that this section also codifies the Parents as Teachers (PAT) program, a state program within DEED, and specifies criteria for PAT to demonstrate its efficacy in supporting school districts with pre-K education.

MS. TOBIN stated Section 9 amends AS 14.07.020(a) and directs DEED to supervise all early education programs, approve those early education programs established under AS 14.03.410. She said Section 9 also establishes the new reading program, which will be detailed in a later section, and the reading intervention programs of participating schools, which will also be detailed in a later section.

MS. TOBIN said Section 10 amends the definition of an "early education program" as a pre-K program for students three to five years old if the primary function is educational. She noted that the three-year-old students are not included in the program of this bill but are included in this definition to ensure they are not excluded from existing state and federal programs.

MS. TOBIN explained Section 11 allows DEED to supply supplemental reading textbooks and materials related to intervention services.

MS. TOBIN said Section 12 amends AS 14.07.165(a), relating to the duties of the state Board of Education & Early Development and directs the board to adopt regulations establishing standards for an early education program that is half-day or full-day or less than half-day and is locally designed and evidence-based. The lead teacher of the program must hold a valid teaching certificate and have satisfactorily completed a minimum of six credit hours in early childhood education or complete the six credits within one year of their teacher's employment or have two or more years of experience teaching

kindergarten or another early education program. She said regulations must also be established to develop appropriate objectives and accommodations for all children and allow districts to adapt content to be culturally appropriate and to local communities.

[9:54:15 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY drew attention to page 11, subparagraph (B) on line 14, which states "a requirement that a teacher in charge of a program". She asked whether it should say "school program" because there can be many schools in a district, and she is wondering what the intent is. She noted that paraprofessionals would be working in some of these classrooms under the direction of a teacher in charge, so she is wondering if that needs to be clarified as to the district or school level. She further inquired about what the qualifications are for a Head Start teacher and whether this should be included as one of the sub-subparagraphs under subparagraph (B).

MS. TOBIN answered that Section 12 only relates to pre-K programs, it does not define or amend any statute that relates to who leads or does not lead a Head Start program. She recommended not inserting that into this section.

[9:56:26 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND announced that HB 153 was held over.

[9:57:02 AM](#)

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:57 a.m.