

Introduced: 4/20/72
Referred: Health, Welfare
and Education

BY THE HEALTH, WELFARE
AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

1 IN THE SENATE

2 SENATE BILL NO. 421

3 IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

4 SEVENTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

5 A BILL

6 For an Act entitled: "An Act relating to bilingual education."

7 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

8 * Section 1. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE. The legislature finds and declares
9 the following:

10 (1) Traditionally, basic language differences in Alaskan schools
11 have been overlooked to the extent that the need for an educational program
12 which incorporates both English and the Native language dialects has been
13 vastly underestimated and often the program has tended to ignore and some-
14 times belittle classroom use of the Native dialect, a practice deplored by
15 modern educators, concerned parents and students alike.

16 (2) The right to one's native language and culture is inherent in
17 the concepts underlying our constitutional guarantees and continued disregard
18 of this right has been protested by many who believe that Alaskan schools
19 have an obligation to provide education which does not bypass this right and
20 which is not designed to shift students unilaterally from one culture to
21 another. Students in the villages of Alaska are representatives of a viable,
22 valuable culture which is in a continual process of change, as are all
23 cultures, but which has a right to continue its existence as a unique culture
24 whether Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut.

25 (3) The absence of a bilingual program of education has worked a
26 great learning handicap for those students who use English as a second
27 language, placing a double burden of learning both the language and academic
28 concepts simultaneously, while singular emphasis on English usage has con-
29 tributed to a communications gap between parents and child, school and

community, even though educational research has shown that the most successful educational method in primary programs is one that instructs in the Native dialect and then proceeds to promote literacy in English. It is a well-known fact that contrary traditional methods have resulted in below-standard achievements by Alaskan Native students which, in turn, spawn difficulties in secondary and higher educational pursuits, exacerbate acculturation problems, present significant barriers in securing adequate employment and constitute a serious hindrance to the full enjoyment of life and its benefits.

(4) Establishment of a bilingual program of education for Native Alaskans will encourage the development of educational materials relevant to Native history, legends, folklore, artistic expression, and characteristic lifestyles by recognizing that the local culture is a legitimate source of study and interest. Adoption of a bilingual program of education will tend to bring about an end to the deprecation of local culture elements and values by the schools, stimulate better communication between the community and the school in solving educational problems, effect a positive student self-image, provide more effective use of both English and the Native dialect, foster higher achievement levels in academic performance, encourage more successful secondary and higher education careers, ease the obtaining of employment, allow genuine options for Native Alaskan students in choosing a way of life, and facilitate a more harmonious blending of Native Alaskan culture with the mainstream of society.

* Sec. 2. AS 14.08 is amended by adding new sections to read:

Sec. 14.08.160. BILINGUAL EDUCATION. (a) A state-operated school which is attended by at least 15 pupils whose primary language is other than English shall have at least one teacher who is fluent in the native language of the area where the school is located. Written and other educational materials, when language is a factor, shall be

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presented in the language native to the area.

(b) The board of directors shall promulgate regulations to carry out the purposes of this section.

Sec. 14.08.170. BILINGUAL EDUCATION FUND. There is in the State-Operated School System a bilingual education fund which is an account in the general fund to receive money appropriated by the legislature for bilingual education and to be used for bilingual educational program implementation.