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1 IN THE SENATE

BY DUNCAN AND JOSEPHSON

2

SPONSOR SUBSTITUTE FOR SENATE BILL NO. 452

3

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

4

FIFTEENTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

5

A BILL

6 For an Act entitled: "An Act relating to alternative education for certain  
7 school children; and providing for an effective  
8 date."

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

10 \* Section 1. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE. (a) The legislature finds that

11 (1) under AS 14.30.010(a) a student may withdraw from school at  
12 the age of 16;

13 (2) students withdraw from high school before graduation for  
14 various reasons, including unsatisfactory educational experiences, disci-  
15 pline problems, truancy, and a variety of family, health, and social  
16 problems;

17 (3) in the changing economy that will characterize the nation  
18 and the state through the next decades, most jobs will demand a level of  
19 basic skill that is seldom attained by students who have failed to finish  
20 high school; opportunities in many jobs, the military, the post-secondary  
21 education system, and many industry training programs are reduced or closed  
22 to those without a high school diploma, and the failure to obtain a high  
23 school diploma or its equivalent may consign students to a greater risk of  
24 unemployment or to a lifetime of low-level jobs;

25 (4) those responsible for public education should act to reduce  
26 the numbers of students withdrawing from school before graduation.

27 (b) It is the purpose of this Act to

28 (1) require the commissioner of education to collect and report  
29 information about the number of students withdrawing from enrollment before

1 graduation, and the reasons for their withdrawals; and

2 (2) authorize the Department of Education to target state assis-  
3 tance to the state's school districts that develop and maintain remedial  
4 programs for students who are at risk of withdrawing from school before  
5 graduation, and to provide money to school districts to support successful  
6 remedial programs.

7 \* Sec. 2. AS 14.07.020(a) is amended by adding new paragraphs to read:

8 (15) develop and implement a program to obtain from each  
9 district on an annual basis information about secondary school stu-  
10 dents who withdraw from enrollment in the district before graduation,  
11 and the reasons for the students' withdrawals; from the information  
12 obtained, the department

13 (A) shall calculate and report information about  
14 withdrawals from schools under AS 14.30.055;

15 (B) may make recommendations to the board and the  
16 legislature for changes to the standards adopted under  
17 AS 14.30.450 - 14.30.499 defining qualifying students and  
18 eligible district programs;

19 (16) manage and implement a financial support program under  
20 AS 14.30.480 for children at risk.

21 \* Sec. 3. AS 14.30 is amended by adding a new section to article 1 to  
22 read:

23 Sec. 14.30.055. WITHDRAWAL FROM SCHOOL. (a) Each district  
24 shall report to the commissioner the number of secondary students who  
25 withdraw from enrollment in the district before graduation and the  
26 reasons for the students' withdrawals. The chief school administrator  
27 shall provide the information in the manner that the department may  
28 require by regulation.

29 (b) For each school year, the commissioner shall calculate and

1 report the dropout rate of each district for grades 7 - 12 and the  
2 dropout rate for all districts for grades 7 - 12. The rates shall be  
3 expressed as a percentage of enrollment within each respective grade.

4 \* Sec. 4. AS 14.30 is amended by adding new sections to read:

5 ARTICLE 5A. PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN AT RISK OF LEAVING SCHOOL.

6 Sec. 14.30.450. IDENTIFICATION OF CHILDREN AT RISK. Each school  
7 board shall annually identify children at risk who are or should be  
8 enrolled in the district.

9 Sec. 14.30.460. PLAN. (a) A school board may develop a plan to  
10 meet the needs of children at risk. The plan must describe how the  
11 school board intends to retain children at risk in district enrollment  
12 until graduation. The plan may consider curriculum modifications and  
13 alternative programs that meet the minimum course of study for public  
14 schools prescribed by the department, and may include

15 (1) individual tutoring, individual and group remediation,  
16 and other instructional strategies, with sufficient support services,  
17 to permit a student to benefit educationally from the instruction;

18 (2) model alternative educational programs, including  
19 programs combining academic learning with a strong employment or  
20 experience component;

21 (3) collaborative efforts with other state and local  
22 agencies directed at helping a student to overcome problems that  
23 interfere with learning;

24 (4) expanded use of guidance and career planning services;  
25 and

26 (5) expanded use of counseling services, including peer  
27 discussion groups and intervention efforts.

28 (b) A plan developed under (a) of this section must also de-  
29 scribe how remedial instruction, parental involvement, and community

1 support services will be used to meet the needs of children at risk.

2 (c) Notwithstanding (a) of this section, a school district  
3 shall develop and submit a plan under this section to the commissioner  
4 for review and approval if, in the previous school year, the school  
5 district had 50 or more dropouts or a dropout rate exceeding five  
6 percent of the district's total secondary school enrollment.

7 Sec. 14.30.470. EDUCATION PROGRAM. Each school board may pro-  
8 vide an education program for children at risk who are enrolled in the  
9 district. The program shall be based on the plan adopted by the  
10 school district under AS 14.30.460.

11 Sec. 14.30.480. STATE AID FOR PROGRAMS. (a) A district is  
12 entitled to additional state aid under AS 14.17.049 if the district  
13 submits an application to the commissioner and the commissioner deter-  
14 mines that during the previous school year the district's program for  
15 children at risk meets at least three of the following criteria:

16 (1) a retention rate of at least 70 percent;  
17 (2) an attendance rate of at least 70 percent;  
18 (3) graduation of 70 percent of the seniors enrolled;  
19 (4) at least 70 percent of the pupils enrolled received  
20 academic credit; or

21 (5) the program maintained an average of at least one month  
22 of improvement in reading and mathematics performance for each month  
23 of instruction.

24 (b) An application from a district for state aid under  
25 AS 14.17.049 must include

26 (1) a description of the type of program that the district  
27 intends to implement; and

28 (2) an evaluation of the anticipated results of the pro-  
29 gram.

1           Sec. 14.30.490. EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS. In addition to the  
2 requirements of AS 14.30.480, the commissioner may withhold approval  
3 of an application if, as a result of an evaluation of the district's  
4 existing child at risk program, the commissioner determines that

- 5           (1) the district has not reduced its dropout rate; or  
6           (2) services provided by the district to children at risk  
7 did not provide substantial remedial services.

8           Sec. 14.30.900. DEFINITIONS. In AS 14.30.450 - 14.30.900

9           (1) "child at risk" means a secondary school student en-  
10 rolled in a public school that a district determines, in accordance  
11 with regulations of the department, is a student who

12           (A) has withdrawn from enrollment in the district  
13 before graduation and has returned to school in the district to  
14 complete graduation requirements; or

15           (B) may withdraw from enrollment in the district  
16 before graduation because of

17           (i) family, personal health, pregnancy, or social  
18 difficulties;

19           (ii) poor attendance;

20           (iii) low achievement, as evidenced by the student  
21 being one or more years behind the student's age group or  
22 grade in the number of credits attained or in basic skill  
23 levels, including reading and mathematics;

24           (iv) low academic test scores;

25           (v) retention at a certain grade level;

26           (vi) diminished self-esteem and motivation;

27           (2) "district" has the meaning given in AS 14.12.010;

28           (3) "dropout" means a child who is not attending school as  
29 required by AS 14.30.010, continues to reside in the district, does

1 not attend a vocational, technical, or adult education program, and  
2 has not graduated from high school;

3 (4) "dropout rate" means the rate calculated and reported  
4 under AS 14.30.055(b).

5 \* Sec. 5. AS 14.17.031(a) is amended to read:

6 (a) The department shall adopt regulations defining funding  
7 communities within each district which reflect geographic and atten-  
8 dance area factors. For the purpose of determining instructional  
9 units, students are counted in the district and the funding community  
10 from which they receive educational services. The total number of  
11 instructional units in a school district is the sum of the following  
12 units for each funding community within the district, as determined by  
13 the department

14 (1) the number of units for elementary and secondary stu-  
15 dents determined under AS 14.17.041(a) or (b);

16 (2) the number of units for vocational education determined  
17 under AS 14.17.043;

18 (3) the number of units for special education determined  
19 under AS 14.17.045; [AND]

20 (4) the number of units for bilingual education determined  
21 under AS 14.17.047; and

22 (5) the number of units for alternative education deter-  
23 mined under AS 14.17.049.

24 \* Sec. 6. AS 14.17 is amended by adding a new section to read:

25 Sec. 14.17.049. INSTRUCTIONAL UNITS FOR CERTAIN ALTERNATIVE  
26 PROGRAMS. A child who is enrolled in a child at risk program estab-  
27 lished under AS 14.30.470 and who is enrolled on the last day of the  
28 counting period for which a determination is being made generates  
29 0.025 instructional units if the child receives child at risk services

1 and the program is entitled to receive funding under AS 14.30.480.

2 \* Sec. 7. TRANSITION. (a) The commissioner of education shall begin  
3 to collect program data required by AS 14.07.020(a)(15), added by sec. 2 of  
4 this Act, by October 1, 1988.

5 (b) The provisions of AS 14.30.480(a), added by sec. 4 of this Act,  
6 do not apply to a school district's application for state aid under  
7 AS 14.30.480 submitted for the school year beginning July 1, 1988.

8 \* Sec. 8. This Act takes effect July 1, 1988.