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1 IN THE SENATE

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2

SENATE BILL NO. 81

3

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

4

SIXTEENTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

5

A BILL

6 For an Act entitled: "An Act relating to educational programs for school  
7 children who are at risk of withdrawing from school  
8 before high school graduation; and providing for an  
9 effective date."

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

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

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

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

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

26 (4) those responsible for public education should act to reduce  
27 the numbers of students withdrawing from school before high school gradu-  
28 ation.

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

1 (1) require the commissioner of education to collect and report  
2 information about the number of students withdrawing from enrollment before  
3 high school graduation, and the reasons for their withdrawals; and

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

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

10 (15) develop and implement a program to obtain from each  
11 district on an annual basis information about school students who  
12 withdraw from enrollment in the district before high school grad-  
13 uation, and the reasons for the students' withdrawals; from the infor-  
14 mation obtained, the department

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

17 (B) may make recommendations to the board and the  
18 legislature for changes to the standards adopted under AS 14.-  
19 30.450 - 14.30.499 defining qualifying students and eligible dis-  
20 trict programs;

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

23 \* Sec. 3. AS 14.17.031(a) is amended to read:

24 (a) The department shall adopt regulations defining funding  
25 communities within each district which reflect geographic and atten-  
26 dance area factors. For the purpose of determining instructional  
27 units, students are counted in the district and the funding community  
28 from which they receive educational services. The total number of  
29 instructional units in a school district is the sum of the following

1 units for each funding community within the district, as determined by  
2 the department

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

5 (2) the number of units for vocational education determined  
6 under AS 14.17.043;

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

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

11 (5) the number of units for child at risk educational  
12 programs determined under AS 14.17.049.

13 \* Sec. 4. AS 14.17 is amended by adding a new section to read:

14 Sec. 14.17.049. INSTRUCTIONAL UNITS FOR CHILD AT RISK PROGRAMS.  
15 A child who is enrolled in a child at risk program established under  
16 AS 14.30.470 and who is enrolled on the last day of the counting  
17 period for which a determination is being made generates 0.025 in-  
18 structional units if the child receives child at risk services and the  
19 program is entitled to receive funding under AS 14.30.480.

20 \* Sec. 5. AS 14.30 is amended by adding a new section to article 1 to  
21 read:

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

28 (b) For each school year, the commissioner shall calculate and  
29 report the dropout rate of each district for kindergarten through

1 grade 12 and the dropout rate for all districts for kindergarten  
2 through grade 12. The rates shall be expressed as a percentage of  
3 enrollment within each respective grade.

4 \* Sec. 6. 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) Except as provided in (b) of this  
10 section, a school board may develop a plan to meet the needs of chil-  
11 dren at risk. The plan must describe how the school board intends to  
12 retain children at risk in district enrollment until graduation. The  
13 plan may consider curriculum modifications and alternative programs  
14 that meet the minimum course of study for public schools prescribed by  
15 the department, and may include

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

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

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

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

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

29 (b) If, in the previous school year, a school district had a

1 dropout rate exceeding five percent of the district's total secondary  
2 school enrollment or 50 or more dropouts, the school board shall  
3 develop and submit a plan under (a) of this section to the commis-  
4 sioner for review and approval.

5 (c) A plan developed under this section must also describe how  
6 remedial instruction, parental involvement, and community support  
7 services will be used to meet the needs of children at risk.

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

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

18 (1) a retention rate of at least 70 percent of the pupils  
19 enrolled in the program;

20 (2) an attendance rate of at least 70 percent of the pupils  
21 enrolled in the program;

22 (3) graduation of 70 percent of the seniors enrolled in the  
23 program;

24 (4) at least 70 percent of the pupils enrolled in the  
25 program received academic credit; or

26 (5) the program maintained an average of at least one month  
27 of improvement in reading and mathematics performance for each month  
28 of instruction.

29 (b) An application from a school board for state aid under

1 AS 14.17.049 must include

2 (1) a description of the type of program that the school  
3 board intends to implement; and

4 (2) an evaluation of the anticipated results of the pro-  
5 gram.

6 Sec. 14.30.490. EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS. In addition to the  
7 requirements of AS 14.30.480, the commissioner may withhold approval  
8 of an application if, as a result of an evaluation of the school  
9 board's existing child at risk program, the commissioner determines  
10 that

11 (1) the program has not reduced the dropout rate for the  
12 district; or

13 (2) the program does not provide substantial remedial  
14 services.

15 Sec. 14.30.499. DEFINITIONS. In AS 14.30.450 - 14.30.499

16 (1) "child at risk" means a secondary school student en-  
17 rolled in a public school that a school board determines, under regu-  
18 lations of the department, is a student who

19 (A) has withdrawn from enrollment in the district  
20 before high school graduation and has returned to school in the  
21 district to complete graduation requirements; or

22 (B) may withdraw from enrollment in the district  
23 before high school graduation because of

24 (i) family or social difficulties, personal  
25 health, or pregnancy;

26 (ii) poor attendance;

27 (iii) low achievement, as evidenced by the student  
28 being one or more years behind the student's age group or  
29 grade in the number of credits attained or in basic skill

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- 1                    levels, including reading and mathematics;
- 2                    (iv) low academic test scores;
- 3                    (v) retention at a certain grade level;
- 4                    (vi) diminished self-esteem and motivation;
- 5                    (2) "district" has the meaning given in AS 14.12.010;
- 6                    (3) "dropout" means a child who is not attending school as
- 7                    required by AS 14.30.010, continues to reside in the district, does
- 8                    not attend a vocational, technical, or adult education program, and
- 9                    has not graduated from high school;
- 10                    (4) "dropout rate" means the rate calculated and reported
- 11                    under AS 14.30.055(b);
- 12                    (5) "secondary school" includes grades seven through 12.
- 13                    \* Sec. 7. REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS. The Department of Education
- 14                    shall report on withdrawals from school by elementary students in kinder-
- 15                    garten through sixth grade and make recommendations for criteria to identi-
- 16                    fy and for programs to assist elementary students who are at risk of with-
- 17                    drawing from school before graduation from high school. The department
- 18                    shall submit the report to the Board of Education and the legislature
- 19                    before January 1, 1991.
- 20                    \* Sec. 8. TRANSITION. (a) The commissioner of education shall begin
- 21                    to collect program data required by AS 14.07.020(a)(15), added by sec. 2 of
- 22                    this Act, by October 1, 1989.
- 23                    (b) The provisions of AS 14.30.480(a), added by sec. 6 of this Act,
- 24                    do not apply to a school board's application for state aid under AS 14.30.-
- 25                    480 submitted for the school year beginning July 1, 1989.
- 26                    \* Sec. 9. This Act takes effect July 1, 1989.