

SENATE BILL NO. 421

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

SEVENTEENTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

BY SENATOR HOFFMAN

Introduced: 2/18/92
Referred: HES, Finance

A BILL

FOR AN ACT ENTITLED

1 "An Act relating to a curriculum for Native language education; and providing for an
2 effective date."

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

4 * **Section 1. SHORT TITLE.** This Act may be known as the Native Language Education Act.

5 * **Sec. 2. FINDINGS.** The legislature finds that

6 (1) Alaska's indigenous Native cultures and languages are unique, essential elements of
7 Alaska's heritage;

8 (2) Alaska's indigenous Native languages are an integral part of Alaska Native people's
9 culture and well-being;

10 (3) knowledge of one's indigenous language is important for the development of social
11 skills and self-esteem; it further contributes to the development of the individual, and the ability to
12 communicate;

13 (4) translations from a Native language into English result in the loss of context and
14 deprivation of the full range of social and cultural understanding necessary to function in the individual's

1 environment;

2 (5) when Native children are proficient in their primary indigenous language, they are
3 more likely to do better in school; they also develop a higher degree of proficiency in English;

4 (6) historically, Alaska Native children first learned their Native language in their homes
5 and communities but with the passing of Native elders and with a current generation of parents who are
6 not fluent in their Native language, younger generations are less knowledgeable about their language and
7 culture;

8 (7) the loss of indigenous Native languages dates back to the late 1800's when
9 mainstream American missionaries enforced federal policies that forbade the use of Native languages,
10 punished children for speaking their own language, and urged parents to speak only English to their
11 children;

12 (8) the continuation of "no Native language" policies in federal, territorial, and state
13 school systems between 1910 and 1970 resulted in the loss of many Native languages;

14 (9) the fact that only two of the 20 Alaska Native languages are fluently spoken by
15 children today is an indicator of the impending extinction of Native languages;

16 (10) unless action is taken, by the year 2055 only five of the 20 Alaska Native languages
17 will be spoken by anyone, and soon thereafter the Native languages of Alaska may vanish.

18 * Sec. 3. AS 14.03.120(e) is amended to read:

19 (e) A district shall, by October 31 of each year, provide to the state board, and make
20 available to the public, a report on the performance of each public school and public school
21 students in the district. The report must be entitled "School District Report Card To The Public"
22 and must be prepared on a form prescribed by the department. The report must include

23 (1) the percent of district students in the top and bottom quarter of standardized
24 national achievement examinations; results under this paragraph shall be disclosed in a manner
25 that does not reveal the individual identities of students;

26 (2) the percent of students who are not promoted to the next grade;

27 (3) student, parent, and community member comments on the school's
28 performance;

29 (4) the annual percent change in enrollment and the percent of enrollment change
30 due to student transfers into and out of the district;

31 (5) attendance, retention, and graduation rates;

1 (6) the ways in which meaningful parent involvement in school performance was
2 achieved;

3 (7) if Native language education is provided, a summary and evaluation of
4 the curriculum described in AS 14.30.420;

5 (8) other indicators of school performance required by the state board; and

6 (9) [(8)] other indicators of school performance selected by the district.

7 * Sec. 4. AS 14.30 is amended by adding a new section to read:

8 Sec. 14.30.420. NATIVE LANGUAGE EDUCATION. (a) A school board in a district
9 in which a majority of the students are Alaska Natives shall establish a local Native language
10 curriculum advisory board. If the local advisory board recommends the establishment of a Native
11 language education curriculum, the school board shall initiate and conduct a Native language
12 education curriculum for grades K through 12 at each school in which a majority of students in
13 the school are Alaska Natives. The program must include Native languages traditionally spoken
14 in the community in which the school is located. Each school board conducting a program of
15 Native language education shall implement the program as a part of regular classroom studies
16 and shall utilize

17 (1) certified instructors or instructors who have knowledge and adequate training
18 in teaching the Native language of the community in which the school is located;

19 (2) to the extent possible

20 (A) instructors and instructional materials available through the University
21 of Alaska; and

22 (B) distance learning materials, including audio-visual and computer
23 technology.

24 (b) In this section,

25 (1) "district" has the meaning given in AS 14.17.25;

26 (2) "Native" means a person of one-fourth degree or more Alaskan Indian,
27 Eskimo, or Aleut blood.

28 * Sec. 5. This Act takes effect July 1, 1993.