

HB

208

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**HOUSE COMMITTEE REPORT**

(7) Finance  
 Date Referred: March 11, 1991 FURTHER REFERRALS:

Date of Committee Action: 4-11-91

The HEALTH, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES Committee considered: HB 208

HOUSE BILL NO. 208 APPROP: IMPROVEMENT OF SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

"An Act making an appropriation to the fund for improvement of school performance; and providing for an effective date."

- RECOMMENDATIONS: [ ] the same title  
 be replaced with \_\_\_\_\_ [ ] a new title
- [ ] have attached amendments(s)
  - [ ] do pass
  - [ ] do not pass
  - [ ] no recommendations
  - [ ] individual recommendations
  - [ ] additional referral to the \_\_\_\_\_ Committee

ADOPTS: \_\_\_\_\_ letter of Intent

- ATTACHES NEW FISCAL NOTE(S): (Dept) APPROVES PREVIOUS: (Dept/Date)
- [ ] fiscal impact \_\_\_\_\_ [ ] fiscal note(s) \_\_\_\_\_
  - [ ] zero fiscal note \_\_\_\_\_ [ ] zero fiscal note(s) \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNING <u>DO</u> PASS	DP	OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS	DNP	NR	AM
<i>Cheri Davis</i>	✓				
<i>Mary Miller</i>	✓				
		<i>J. G. Boyle</i>		X	
		<i>Mark Hanley</i>		X	
<i>Patricia [unclear]</i>	✓				
<i>[unclear]</i>					

*Patricia [unclear]*  
 CHAIRMAN'S SIGNATURE

**New Directives in School Performance:**  
**The Legislature as Advocate and Guarantor**



**REPORT OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE  
ON  
SCHOOL PERFORMANCE**

To The  
Seventeenth Alaska Legislature

JUNEAU, ALASKA  
JANUARY 1991

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**INCENTIVE GRANTS: A MODEST SOLUTION TO  
PROBLEMS OF "STUDENTS AT RISK"**

The incentive grant program, recommended in the Joint Committee's first report, now established in Chapter 173, came to be known as the Fund for the Improvement of School Performance. Creation of the Fund is intended to restore confidence in the potential of parent groups, teachers, and principals to make a positive difference in school performance. In short, the Fund encourages parent and teacher empowerment; it sends the message that those working at the top of the political pyramid care and are trying to do something positive about poor student performance. It is unique in that it is not categorically specific and that it allows teachers and lay members of the community equal standing as applicants. The primary criterion by which applications are to be judged is whether the proposed activity can be shown to have the potential to improve schooling.

Reasons in the first report for supporting the Fund remain as valid now, if not more so, as they did a year ago. For example, in a Department of Education report to the legislature in January, 1990, it was shown that the number of pupils that the schools were not serving adequately had continued to increase, alarmingly so among some segments of the population. In its report to the legislature in January, 1990, DOE pointed out that

Based on the last census, approximately one in seven Alaskans (approximately 72,000) is functionally illiterate in English.

An estimated 30% of freshmen entering Alaska's high schools do not graduate. In urban areas, in excess of 60% of Native freshmen do not graduate.

Twenty of Alaska's 54 school districts scored on average below the 22nd percentile in either reading, mathematics, or language arts at the 4th, 6th, or 8th grade [on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills used in

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Alaska's statewide standardized testing program]. A score at the 22nd percentile means that 78 percent of other students across the country scored higher on the test.... [See the Committee's first report for a discussion of the reliability of standardized tests, pages 26 - 28].

Total school population in the twenty [lowest achieving] districts is 12,783.

Average percent of students living in poverty in these districts is 56% as opposed to a statewide average of 21.8%....

Sixteen of the districts report an above average level of bilingual students ranging from 23.5% to 100% enrolled in bilingual education programs....<sup>4</sup>

Because up to one third of Alaska's school age population, approximately 36,000 students, fits one of the various definitions of "students at risk," the group that the fund is primarily intended to benefit, the Committee and the State Board of Education had urged that no less than \$3,000,000 be appropriated annually to this fund over the next five years. This amount represents approximately a modest \$100 per Alaska "at risk" student per year, if prorated uniformly. Put another way, \$3,000,000 is less than half of one percent of the total state appropriation for education annually.

Unfortunately, the appropriation part of the Joint Committee's recommendation was not enacted. Although \$100,000 survived the budget process until the final week of the session, even that was cut from the allotment at the close of the Sixteenth Legislature. Thus, the Fund was created in name but not in fact. This status reinforces the perception in the minds of many that the legislature does not take seriously the fact that extraordinary measures will have to be taken to eliminate the unacceptable outcomes of schooling among low achieving districts.

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Not only statistics and DOE reports substantiate the need for the Fund. Testimony heard throughout the state calls for measures to reverse the ever-declining quality of learning among "at risk" students and to increase the number of students who complete the twelfth grade. Moreover, testimony bears out the premise that it can be shown that the less "programmatic direction" given to the schools from central administrative units, the more teachers and local community groups are likely to improve school performance when given the proper resources.

The Fund for the Improvement of School Performance was specifically designed with this principle in mind as the language of the legislation passed by the Sixteenth Legislature makes clear. Part (b) of the act provides "that a governing body, district advisory board or nonprofit organization located in the state, or a teacher or principal employed by a school in the state, may apply for a grant to improve school performance by submitting an application to the commissioner." Without funds to accommodate this section of the statute, it serves no purpose. Pupils in need of the creative thinking of teachers and residents at the community level are denied the opportunity that is expected to accrue by means of the Fund. Therefore, as was proposed in its first report:

*the Joint Committee recommends that no less than \$3,000,000 be appropriated annually to the Fund for the Improvement of School Performance over the next five years.*

**HEALTH AND FAMILY SERVICE PROGRAMS RELATED TO SCHOOL PERFORMANCE**

A conclusion reached by the Joint Committee in 1989 and stated in its first report declared: "It may be that there are no root

(d) Each public school shall, by May 31 of each year, prepare a report on the school's performance and the performance of the school's students. The report shall be presented to parents, students, and community members at a public meeting and forwarded to the chief school administrator of the district.

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

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

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

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

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

(5) attendance, retention, and graduation rates;

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

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

(8) other indicators of school performance selected by the district.

(f) The department shall, by January 15 of each year, provide to the legislature and the governor, and make available to the public, a summary comparison of the reports submitted under (e) of this section in the previous year. The summary comparison shall be prepared in a manner that allows school performance to be measured against state and district education goals established in prior years.

(g) In this section, "district" has the meaning given in AS 14.17.250. (§ 2 ch 173 SLA 1990)

**Effective dates.** — Section 9, ch. 173, SLA 1990, provides: "This Act takes effect July 1, 1990."

**Sec. 14.03.125. Fund for the improvement of school performance.** (a) The fund for the improvement of school performance is created as an account in the general fund. The fund shall be used by the commissioner to make grants to a district located in the state for the purpose of improving school performance. The fund consists of money appropriated by the legislature. The commissioner shall annually determine the amount requested for grants under this section and shall include the amount in the department's budget request.

§ 14.03.125

§ 14.03.150

EDUCATION

§ 14.03.150

(b) A governing body, district advisory board, or nonprofit organization located in the state, or a teacher or principal employed by a public school in the state, may apply for a grant of up to \$50,000 to improve school performance by submitting an application to the commissioner.

(c) A grant may be awarded to the same grantee in consecutive fiscal years, but may not be awarded to the same grantee for more than two fiscal years within a five-year period.

(d) Grant funds awarded under this section may only be expended to improve the performance of a public school.

(e) In this section, "district" has the meaning given in AS 14.17.250. (§ 2 ch 173 SLA 1990)

Effective dates. — Section 9, ch. 173, SLA 1990, provides: "This Act takes effect July 1, 1990."

**Sec. 14.03.150. Insurance required.** (a) Each school district shall purchase and maintain or provide proof of adequate property insurance for the replacement cost of all school facilities and equipment. Insurance purchased to comply with this section may contain a deductible amount, if approved by the department. A school district may comply with this section by initiating and maintaining a program of self-insurance, if the department annually determines that the school district has submitted adequate evidence of the district's ability to self-insure for the replacement cost of all school facilities and equipment. A copy of the insurance policy or other information indicating compliance with this section shall be provided to the department.

(b) If the department determines that a school district is not insured as required under (a) of this section, the department shall notify the school district of the determination. Unless the school district obtains adequate insurance within 30 days after the school district receives notice under this subsection, the department shall purchase the insurance required by (a) of this section for that school district.

(c) The department may not award a school construction grant under AS 14.11 to a municipality that is a school district or a regional educational attendance area that is not in compliance with (a) of this section. The department shall reduce the amount of state foundation aid under AS 14.17.021 for which a school district may qualify, by the amount, if any, paid by the department under (b) of this section. (§ 1 ch 5 SLA 1990)

Effective dates. — Section 17, ch. 5, SLA 1990, provides: "This Act takes effect March 1, 1990."