

**SENATE BILL NO. 8**

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

**BY SENATOR BEGICH**

**Introduced: 1/19/21**

**Referred: Prefiled**

**A BILL**

**FOR AN ACT ENTITLED**

1 **"An Act relating to early education programs provided by school districts; relating to**  
2 **school age eligibility; relating to funding for early education programs; establishing**  
3 **early education programs and a voluntary parent program; relating to the duties of the**  
4 **Department of Education and Early Development; relating to certification of teachers;**  
5 **establishing a reading intervention program for public school students enrolled in**  
6 **grades kindergarten through three; establishing a reading program in the Department**  
7 **of Education and Early Development; establishing a teacher retention working group;**  
8 **and providing for an effective date."**

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

10 \* **Section 1.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section  
11 to read:

12 SHORT TITLE. This Act may be known as the Alaska Reads Act.

1 \* **Sec. 2.** AS 14.03.060(e) is amended to read:

2 (e) In addition to the grades enumerated in (a) of this section, an elementary  
3 school consists of **an early education** [A PRE-ELEMENTARY] program **approved**  
4 **or** supervised by the department under AS 14.07.020(a)(8), **including a program**  
5 operated by **a head start agency** [THE DEPARTMENT] as a head start program  
6 under **42 U.S.C. 9831 - 9852c** [AS 14.38.010, OR LOCATED IN A PUBLIC  
7 SCHOOL FOR FEDERAL FUNDING PURPOSES. EXCEPT FOR A CHILD WITH  
8 A DISABILITY WHO IS RECEIVING SPECIAL EDUCATION OR RELATED  
9 SERVICES UNDER AS 14.30.180 - 14.30.350, PRE-ELEMENTARY STUDENTS  
10 MAY NOT BE COUNTED IN A SCHOOL'S AVERAGE DAILY MEMBERSHIP  
11 UNDER AS 14.17].

12 \* **Sec. 3.** AS 14.03.072(a) is amended to read:

13 (a) Each school district shall annually provide to parents and guardians of  
14 students enrolled in kindergarten through grade three in a public school in the state  
15 current information on the importance of early **reading** [LITERACY], including

16 (1) **culturally responsive** intervention strategies **and reading**  
17 **intervention services provided under AS 14.30.765;**

18 (2) home **reading** [LITERACY] plans;

19 (3) grade **proficiency** [RETENTION] standards and policies,  
20 **including retention,** for the elementary school attended;

21 (4) strategies and resources to help children learn to read.

22 \* **Sec. 4.** AS 14.03.078(a) is amended to read:

23 (a) The department shall provide to the legislature by February 15 of each year  
24 by electronic means an annual report regarding the progress of each school and school  
25 district toward high academic performance by all students. The report required under  
26 this section must include

27 (1) information described under **AS 14.03.120** [AS 14.03.120(d)];

28 (2) progress of the department

29 (A) toward implementing the school accountability provisions  
30 of AS 14.03.123; and

31 (B) in assisting high schools to become accredited;

1 (3) a description of the resources provided to each school and school  
2 district for coordinated school improvement activities and staff training in each school  
3 and school district;

4 (4) each school district's and each school's progress in aligning  
5 curriculum with state education performance standards;

6 (5) a description of the efforts by the department to assist a public  
7 school or district that receives a low performance designation under AS 14.03.123;

8 (6) a description of intervention efforts by each school district and  
9 school for students who are not meeting state performance standards; [AND]

10 (7) the number and percentage of turnover in certificated personnel and  
11 superintendents;

12 **(8) the progress made to implement the reading intervention**  
13 **programs established under AS 14.30.760 - 14.30.775, including data on how**  
14 **school districts are using in-service days for culturally responsive professional**  
15 **development in reading instruction; and**

16 **(9) the effectiveness and participation rates of the parents as**  
17 **teachers program established under AS 14.03.420, including measures of**  
18 **efficiency and effectiveness that demonstrate the effects of the program on school**  
19 **readiness.**

20 \* **Sec. 5.** AS 14.03.080(d) is amended to read:

21 (d) A child who is five years of age on or before September 1 following the  
22 beginning of the school year, and who is under school age, may enter a public school  
23 kindergarten. **A school district may waive the requirements of this subsection for a**  
24 **child who achieves a passing score on an assessment approved by the**  
25 **department.**

26 \* **Sec. 6.** AS 14.03.080 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

27 (g) A child who is at least four, but not more than five, years of age on or  
28 before September 1 following the beginning of the school year and who has not  
29 attended a public school kindergarten may enter a public school early education  
30 program.

31 \* **Sec. 7.** AS 14.03.120 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

1 (h) To the extent allowable under state and federal privacy laws, each district  
 2 shall annually report to the department information from the previous school year  
 3 regarding

4 (1) the number of students and teaching staff assigned to each  
 5 classroom in grades kindergarten through three;

6 (2) the number and percentage of students

7 (A) in grades kindergarten through three who demonstrated  
 8 improvement on expected grade-level skills on the statewide screening or  
 9 assessment tool;

10 (B) in grades kindergarten through three who performed below  
 11 expected grade-level skills on the statewide screening or assessment tool, by  
 12 grade;

13 (C) retained in grades kindergarten through three and the  
 14 reasons for retention;

15 (D) in grade three who demonstrated sufficient reading skills  
 16 for grade progression based on the statewide screening or assessment tool;

17 (E) in grade three who demonstrated sufficient reading skills  
 18 for grade progression based on an alternative standardized reading screening or  
 19 assessment;

20 (F) in grade three who demonstrated sufficient reading skills  
 21 for grade progression based on a student reading portfolio;

22 (G) in grade three who progressed to grade four based on a  
 23 good cause exemption under AS 14.30.765(i);

24 (3) the performance on the statewide screening or assessment tool of  
 25 students in a grade above grade three who were retained in grade three under  
 26 AS 14.30.765(g) or who progressed to grade four based on a good cause exemption  
 27 under AS 14.30.765(i).

28 \* **Sec. 8.** AS 14.03 is amended by adding new sections to read:

29 **Article 4. Early Education.**

30 **Sec. 14.03.410. Early education programs; grants.** (a) The department shall

31 (1) provide training and assistance to develop and improve district-

1 wide early education programs that comply with standards adopted by the board under  
2 AS 14.07.165(a)(5); and

3 (2) approve district-wide early education programs that comply with  
4 the standards adopted by the board under AS 14.07.165(a)(5), subject to the  
5 limitations in (d) of this section.

6 (b) The department may award a grant to provide funding for a three-year  
7 period for the development or improvement of a district-wide early education program  
8 to a district that applies in a format prescribed by the department and that

9 (1) is eligible for a grant during the first fiscal year of the grant period  
10 as specified under (c) of this section; or

11 (2) was eligible for a grant in a previous fiscal year under (c) of this  
12 section, but did not receive a grant under this section in that fiscal year.

13 (c) The department shall rank the performance of all districts in the state in  
14 accordance with the accountability system and performance designations required  
15 under AS 14.03.123. The department shall divide all districts into six groups based on  
16 performance ranking. Each group of districts is eligible for a grant in the following  
17 fiscal years:

18 (1) for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2021, the lowest performing 10  
19 percent of districts;

20 (2) for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2022, the second lowest  
21 performing 15 percent of districts;

22 (3) for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2023, the third lowest  
23 performing 15 percent of districts;

24 (4) for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024, the third highest  
25 performing 20 percent of districts;

26 (5) for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2025, the second highest  
27 performing 20 percent of districts;

28 (6) for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2026, the highest performing  
29 20 percent of districts.

30 (d) The department may assess at any time a district's early education program  
31 and approve the program if the program complies with the standards adopted by the

1 board under AS 14.07.165(a)(5). The number of district-wide early education  
 2 programs that the department approves in a fiscal year may not result in a calculation  
 3 of state aid under AS 14.17.410(b) for all districts that exceeds the amount calculated  
 4 for the previous fiscal year by more than \$5,000,000. If the number of programs  
 5 eligible in a fiscal year exceeds the number of programs that the department may  
 6 approve under this subsection, the department shall prioritize the approval of programs  
 7 based on the department's ranking of districts under (c) of this section.

8 (e) If the department does not approve the early education program of a  
 9 district awarded a grant under (c) of this section by the end of the district's three-year  
 10 grant period, the department may provide a one-year remediation grant to allow the  
 11 district one additional fiscal year to meet the early education program standards  
 12 adopted by the board under AS 14.07.165(a)(5). If the district is unable to meet the  
 13 early education program standards at the end of that fiscal year, the department may,  
 14 in the discretion of the commissioner, provide an additional remediation grant to allow  
 15 the district not more than one additional fiscal year to meet the standards. Nothing in  
 16 this section prohibits a district from using its own funds to continue the remediation  
 17 process.

18 (f) A student in an early education program may not be counted in a district's  
 19 ADM under AS 14.17.500 or 14.17.905 unless the department has approved the  
 20 program under (a)(2) of this section.

21 (g) A grant under this section is subject to appropriation, but may not supplant  
 22 other early education funding available to districts.

23 (h) In this section,

24 (1) "ADM" has the meaning given in AS 14.17.990;

25 (2) "district" has the meaning given in AS 14.17.990;

26 (3) "early education program" means a program

27 (A) for children who are four and five years of age and who  
 28 have not attended a public school kindergarten; and

29 (B) the primary function of which is educational.

30 **Sec. 14.03.420. Parents as teachers program.** (a) The department shall  
 31 design and implement a statewide parents as teachers program for the benefit of

1 children who are under five years of age. The program must provide a system of early  
2 childhood education that

- 3 (1) is evidence-based;
- 4 (2) involves parents;
- 5 (3) is consistent with available research and best practices for high  
6 quality early childhood education;
- 7 (4) incorporates guidelines adopted by the department for early  
8 learning that

- 9 (A) enhance school readiness;
- 10 (B) increase parent understanding of child development and  
11 developmental milestones;
- 12 (C) reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect;
- 13 (D) increase identification of health problems and  
14 developmental delays through regular screenings;
- 15 (E) improve child health indicators, including immunization  
16 rates; and
- 17 (F) increase parental involvement; and
- 18 (5) provides for effective and efficient coordination with or expansion  
19 of early education programs operating in the state, to the extent permitted by law.

20 (b) A school district shall, to the extent space is needed and available, provide  
21 for the use of a room in a school at no charge to support the program established under  
22 this section.

23 (c) The department shall develop and enter into local partnerships to  
24 implement the program established under this section.

25 \* **Sec. 9.** AS 14.07.020(a) is amended to read:

- 26 (a) The department shall
  - 27 (1) exercise general supervision over the public schools of the state  
28 except the University of Alaska;
  - 29 (2) study the conditions and needs of the public schools of the state,  
30 adopt or recommend plans, administer and evaluate grants to improve school  
31 performance awarded under AS 14.03.125, and adopt regulations for the improvement

1 of the public schools; the department may consult with the University of Alaska to  
2 develop secondary education requirements to improve student achievement in college  
3 preparatory courses;

4 (3) provide advisory and consultative services to all public school  
5 governing bodies and personnel;

6 (4) prescribe by regulation a minimum course of study for the public  
7 schools; the regulations must provide that, if a course in American Sign Language is  
8 given, the course shall be given credit as a course in a foreign language;

9 (5) establish, in coordination with the Department of Health and Social  
10 Services, a program for the continuing education of children who are held in detention  
11 facilities in the state during the period of detention;

12 (6) accredit those public schools that meet accreditation standards  
13 prescribed by regulation by the department; these regulations shall be adopted by the  
14 department and presented to the legislature during the first 10 days of any regular  
15 session, and become effective 45 days after presentation or at the end of the session,  
16 whichever is earlier, unless disapproved by a resolution concurred in by a majority of  
17 the members of each house;

18 (7) prescribe by regulation, after consultation with the state fire  
19 marshal and the state sanitarian, standards that will ensure healthful and safe  
20 conditions in the public and private schools of the state, including a requirement of  
21 physical examinations and immunizations in pre-elementary schools; the standards for  
22 private schools may not be more stringent than those for public schools;

23 (8) exercise general supervision over early education programs  
24 [PRE-ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS] that receive direct state or federal funding,  
25 including early education programs provided by a school district for students  
26 four and five years of age, and approve early education programs provided by a  
27 school district under AS 14.03.410(a)(2);

28 (9) exercise general supervision over elementary and secondary  
29 correspondence study programs offered by municipal school districts or regional  
30 educational attendance areas; the department may also offer and make available to any  
31 Alaskan through a centralized office a correspondence study program;



1                   (10) accredit private schools that request accreditation and that meet  
2 accreditation standards prescribed by regulation by the department; nothing in this  
3 paragraph authorizes the department to require religious or other private schools to be  
4 licensed;

5                   (11) review plans for construction of new public elementary and  
6 secondary schools and for additions to and major rehabilitation of existing public  
7 elementary and secondary schools and, in accordance with regulations adopted by the  
8 department, determine and approve the extent of eligibility for state aid of a school  
9 construction or major maintenance project; for the purposes of this paragraph, "plans"  
10 include educational specifications, schematic designs, projected energy consumption  
11 and costs, and final contract documents;

12                   (12) provide educational opportunities in the areas of vocational  
13 education and training, and basic education to individuals over 16 years of age who  
14 are no longer attending school; the department may consult with businesses and labor  
15 unions to develop a program to prepare students for apprenticeships or internships that  
16 will lead to employment opportunities;

17                   (13) administer the grants awarded under AS 14.11;

18                   (14) establish, in coordination with the Department of Public Safety, a  
19 school bus driver training course;

20                   (15) require the reporting of information relating to school disciplinary  
21 and safety programs under AS 14.33.120 and of incidents of disruptive or violent  
22 behavior;

23                   (16) establish by regulation criteria, based on low student performance,  
24 under which the department may intervene in a school district to improve instructional  
25 practices, as described in AS 14.07.030(a)(14) or (15); the regulations must include

26                               (A) a notice provision that alerts the district to the deficiencies  
27 and the instructional practice changes proposed by the department;

28                               (B) an end date for departmental intervention, as described in  
29 AS 14.07.030(a)(14)(A) and (B) and (15), after the district demonstrates three  
30 consecutive years of improvement consisting of not less than two percent  
31 increases in student proficiency on standards-based assessments in language

1 arts and mathematics, as provided in AS 14.03.123(f)(1)(A); and

2 (C) a process for districts to petition the department for  
3 continuing or discontinuing the department's intervention;

4 (17) notify the legislative committees having jurisdiction over  
5 education before intervening in a school district under AS 14.07.030(a)(14) or  
6 redirecting public school funding under AS 14.07.030(a)(15);

7 **(18) establish a reading program to provide direct support for and**  
8 **intervention in the reading intervention programs of participating schools as**  
9 **described in AS 14.30.765 and 14.30.770.**

10 \* **Sec. 10.** AS 14.07.020(c) is amended to read:

11 (c) In this section, "**early education program**" ["PRE-ELEMENTARY  
12 SCHOOL"] means a **program** [SCHOOL] for children ages three through five years if  
13 the **program's** [SCHOOL'S] primary function is educational.

14 \* **Sec. 11.** AS 14.07.050 is amended to read:

15 **Sec. 14.07.050. Selection of textbooks.** Textbooks for use in the public  
16 schools of the state, including a **district-offered** [DISTRICT OFFERED] statewide  
17 correspondence study program, shall be selected by district boards for district schools.  
18 Nothing in this section precludes

19 **(1)** a correspondence study student, or the parent or guardian of a  
20 correspondence study student, from privately obtaining or using textbooks or  
21 curriculum material not provided by the school district;

22 **(2) the department from selecting and purchasing supplementary**  
23 **reading textbooks and materials for school districts to support reading**  
24 **intervention services provided under AS 14.30.765 and 14.30.770.**

25 \* **Sec. 12.** AS 14.07.165(a) is amended to read:

26 (a) The board shall adopt

27 (1) statewide goals and require each governing body to adopt written  
28 goals that are consistent with local needs;

29 (2) regulations regarding the application for and award of grants under  
30 AS 14.03.125;

31 (3) regulations implementing provisions of AS 14.11.014(b);

1 (4) regulations requiring approval by the board before a charter school,  
2 state boarding school, or a public school may provide domiciliary services;

3 (5) regulations establishing standards for an early education  
4 program provided by a school district for children who are four and five years of  
5 age; the regulations must include

6 (A) standards for a locally designed, evidence-based  
7 program that meets federal standards for early education programs and  
8 complies with the day-in-session requirements provided under  
9 AS 14.03.040;

10 (B) a requirement that a teacher in charge of a program  
11 hold a valid teacher certificate issued under AS 14.20 and

12 (i) have satisfactorily completed a minimum of six  
13 credit hours in early childhood education or completes the  
14 minimum credit hours within one year of the date the teacher's  
15 employment with the early education program begins; or

16 (ii) have two or more years of experience teaching  
17 kindergarten or another early education program and have  
18 completed additional coursework related to reading instruction, as  
19 required by the department;

20 (C) developmentally appropriate objectives for children  
21 four and five years of age rather than academic standards appropriate for  
22 older children; the objectives must allow school districts to adapt the  
23 content of an early education program to be culturally responsive to local  
24 communities; and

25 (D) accommodations for the needs of all early education  
26 children and their families regardless of socioeconomic circumstances

27 [REPEALED].

28 \* Sec. 13. AS 14.07.180(a) is amended to read:

29 (a) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the board shall establish  
30 standards and a procedure for the review, ranking, and approval of mathematics and  
31 English and language arts curricula for school districts to use in each grade level as

1 provided in this section. The board may include curricula delivered through virtual  
 2 education in the standards and procedure established under this subsection. **Standards**  
 3 **established for the review, ranking, and approval of language arts curricula for**  
 4 **early education programs and grades kindergarten through three must be based**  
 5 **on the five components of evidence-based reading instruction identified by the**  
 6 **National Reading Panel.**

7 \* **Sec. 14.** AS 14.17.500 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

8 (d) Except as provided in AS 14.17.905(d), a student in an early education  
 9 program provided by a school district and approved by the department under  
 10 AS 14.07.020(a)(8) is counted as one-half of a full-time equivalent student.

11 \* **Sec. 15.** AS 14.17.905(a) is amended to read:

12 (a) For purposes of this chapter, the determination of the number of schools in  
 13 a district is subject to the following:

14 (1) a community with an ADM of at least 10, but not more than 100,  
 15 shall be counted as one school;

16 (2) a community with an ADM of at least 101, but not more than 425,  
 17 shall be counted as

18 (A) one elementary school, which includes those students in  
 19 grades kindergarten through six **and, except as provided in (d) of this**  
 20 **section, in an early education program provided by a school district and**  
 21 **approved by the department under AS 14.07.020(a)(8);** and

22 (B) one secondary school, which includes students in grades  
 23 seven through 12;

24 (3) in a community with an ADM of greater than 425, each facility that  
 25 is administered as a separate school shall be counted as one school, except that each  
 26 alternative school with an ADM of less than 175 shall be counted as a part of the  
 27 school in the district with the highest ADM.

28 \* **Sec. 16.** AS 14.17.905 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

29 (d) A school district may not include in a school's ADM students who are four  
 30 and five years of age if the students are enrolled in an early education program that  
 31 receives state or federal funding other than funding under this chapter.

1 \* **Sec. 17.** AS 14.20.015(c) is amended to read:

2 (c) The preliminary teacher certificate issued under this section must contain  
3 the same endorsements as those on the current valid teacher certificate issued by the  
4 other state. However, a teacher holding a preliminary teacher certificate issued  
5 under this section must complete three credits or the equivalent of coursework,  
6 training, or testing requirements in evidence-based reading instruction approved  
7 by the board to be eligible for an endorsement in elementary education issued by  
8 the department. A teacher may apply coursework, training, or testing  
9 requirements completed under this subsection toward continuing education  
10 requirements established by the board in regulation. In this subsection,  
11 "evidence-based reading instruction" means reading instruction informed by  
12 research that supports improved educational outcomes.

13 \* **Sec. 18.** AS 14.20.020 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

14 (l) A teacher certificated under this section must complete three credits or the  
15 equivalent of coursework, training, or testing requirements in evidence-based reading  
16 instruction approved by the board in regulation to be eligible for an endorsement in  
17 elementary education issued by the department. A teacher may apply coursework,  
18 training, or testing requirements completed under this subsection toward continuing  
19 education requirements established by the board in regulation. In this subsection,  
20 "evidence-based reading instruction" means reading instruction informed by research  
21 that supports improved educational outcomes.

22 \* **Sec. 19.** AS 14.30 is amended by adding new sections to read:

23 **Article 15. Reading Programs.**

24 **Sec. 14.30.760. Statewide assessment.** (a) To implement the district reading  
25 intervention services established under AS 14.30.765, the department shall

26 (1) adopt a statewide screening or assessment tool to administer to  
27 students in grades kindergarten through three to identify students with any reading  
28 deficiencies, including students with characteristics of dyslexia; the screening or  
29 assessment tool must evaluate

30 (A) phonemic awareness, letter naming fluency, letter sound  
31 fluency, and letter word sound fluency of students in kindergarten;

1 (B) letter word sound fluency and oral reading fluency of  
2 students in grade one;

3 (C) vocabulary and oral reading fluency of students in grades  
4 two and three;

5 (2) support teachers of grades kindergarten through three by

6 (A) administering the statewide screening or assessment tool  
7 three times each school year, once in the fall, once in the winter, and once in  
8 the spring, to all students in grades kindergarten through three, with the  
9 exception of students who demonstrate sufficient reading skills on the first  
10 screening or assessment of the school year;

11 (B) providing methods to monitor student progress;

12 (C) providing targeted instruction based on student needs as  
13 determined by the results of the screening or assessment tool; and

14 (D) providing additional assistance as determined by the  
15 department;

16 (3) provide training to school district staff related to using the results  
17 of the statewide screening or assessment tool and understanding evidence-based  
18 reading interventions, including explicit and systematic instruction in phonemic  
19 awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension;

20 (4) establish a process that allows the commissioner to waive, upon  
21 request, use of the statewide screening or assessment tool required under this  
22 subsection by a school district if the school district has adopted an evidence-based  
23 reading screening or assessment tool and the screening or assessment tool is approved  
24 by the department;

25 (5) review and approve alternative standardized reading screenings or  
26 assessments for use by school districts.

27 (b) In adopting a statewide screening or assessment tool under (a)(1) of this  
28 section, the department shall consider the following factors:

29 (1) the amount of time needed to administer the screening or  
30 assessment, with the intention of minimizing effects on instructional time;

31 (2) the time frame for reporting screening or assessment results to

1 teachers, administrators, and parents or guardians;

2 (3) the integration of the screening or assessment with student  
3 instruction and department support;

4 (4) recommendations from a task force, working group, or committee  
5 created by law and charged with studying issues related to reading proficiency and  
6 reading deficiencies; and

7 (5) whether the screening or assessment is culturally responsive to the  
8 needs of particular communities.

9 **Sec. 14.30.765. District reading intervention services.** (a) Each school  
10 district shall offer intensive reading intervention services to students in grades  
11 kindergarten through three who exhibit a reading deficiency to assist students in  
12 achieving reading proficiency at or above grade level by the end of grade three. The  
13 district shall provide the intensive reading intervention services in addition to the core  
14 reading instruction that is provided to all students in the general education classroom.  
15 If practicable, the intensive reading intervention services must

16 (1) be provided by a reading teacher or a paraprofessional under the  
17 supervision of a reading teacher to all students in grades kindergarten through three  
18 who are determined to have a reading deficiency based on the statewide screening or  
19 assessment tool adopted under AS 14.30.760(a)(1);

20 (2) provide explicit and systematic instruction in phonemic awareness,  
21 phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, as necessary;

22 (3) use evidence-based reading intervention methods that have shown  
23 proven results in accelerating student reading achievement within a single school year;

24 (4) include instruction with detailed explanations, extensive  
25 opportunities for guided practice, and opportunities for error correction and feedback;

26 (5) incorporate daily targeted small group reading instruction based on  
27 student needs, either in person or online;

28 (6) monitor the reading progress of each student's reading skills  
29 throughout the school year and adjust instruction according to student needs;

30 (7) be implemented during regular school hours through any available  
31 method, including in person or through online delivery by teachers or specialty

1 reading coaches;

2 (8) be implemented outside of regular school hours, as directed in the  
3 student's individual reading improvement plan under (b) of this section, for a student  
4 who scores at the lowest achievement level on the statewide screening or assessment  
5 tool; and

6 (9) be reviewed based on a department-approved response to  
7 intervention or multi-tiered system support models, addressing additional support and  
8 services needed to remedy identified needs.

9 (b) In addition to the reading intervention services provided under (a) of this  
10 section, a school district shall provide an individual reading improvement plan for  
11 each student in grades kindergarten through three who, based on the statewide  
12 screening or assessment tool, is determined to have a reading deficiency. An  
13 individual reading improvement plan developed under this section must

14 (1) be implemented not later than 30 days after identification of the  
15 reading deficiency;

16 (2) be created by the student's reading teacher in consultation with the  
17 school principal, the student's parents or guardians, and other pertinent district staff;

18 (3) describe the evidence-based reading intervention services the  
19 student will receive to achieve and demonstrate sufficient reading skills;

20 (4) provide reading intervention services outside of regular school  
21 hours for a student who scores at the lowest achievement level on the statewide  
22 screening or assessment tool consistent with (a)(8) of this section;

23 (5) include a process for monitoring progress and adjusting the plan  
24 based on student needs;

25 (6) require the district or school to provide the student's parents or  
26 guardians with updates on the student's progress not fewer than 10 times during the  
27 school year; and

28 (7) be culturally responsive.

29 (c) If at any time during the school year a student in grades kindergarten  
30 through three demonstrates a reading deficiency, the district or school shall notify the  
31 student's parents or guardians in writing or during a conference. The initial notification



1 must

2 (1) be provided to the student's parents or guardians not later than 15  
3 days after identification of the reading deficiency;

4 (2) state that the district identified the student as having a reading  
5 deficiency and that a reading improvement plan will be developed under (b) of this  
6 section;

7 (3) describe current services that the district is providing to the student;

8 (4) describe the proposed evidence-based reading intervention and  
9 supplemental instructional services and supports that the district will provide to the  
10 student to address the identified area of reading deficiency;

11 (5) explain that the district or school will inform the parents or  
12 guardians of the student's progress toward grade level reading as outlined in the  
13 student's individual reading improvement plan;

14 (6) identify strategies for the parents or guardians to use at home to  
15 help the student succeed in reading;

16 (7) explain that if the student has a reading deficiency at the end of the  
17 school year, unless the student receives an exemption under (i) of this section or has  
18 previously been retained in kindergarten, grade one, grade two, or grade three, the  
19 student may be prevented from progressing to the next grade level under (e) of this  
20 section; and

21 (8) explain that a student in grade three should demonstrate sufficient  
22 reading skills to progress to grade four under (g) of this section, unless the student  
23 receives an exemption under (i) of this section or has previously been retained in  
24 kindergarten, grade one, grade two, or grade three.

25 (d) If a student does not demonstrate proficiency on the statewide screening or  
26 assessment tool administered in the winter, the district or school shall inform the  
27 student's parents or guardians about the process and deadline to request a good cause  
28 exemption from delayed grade level progression under (j) of this section.

29 (e) If, not later than 45 days before the end of the school year, a teacher  
30 determines that a student in grades kindergarten through three has a reading  
31 deficiency, the student's teacher and other pertinent district staff shall provide written

1 notification to and meet with the student's parents or guardians to determine whether  
2 the student will be able to maintain adequate academic progress at the next grade level  
3 and discuss delayed grade level progression as an intervention strategy. School staff  
4 shall work with the parents or guardians to schedule a date, time, and place for the  
5 meeting and, if no parent or guardian attends the meeting, the teacher and school staff  
6 shall determine grade level progression.

7 (f) At the meeting described in (e) of this section, the parents or guardians, the  
8 teacher, and the participating staff members shall decide whether the student will  
9 advance to the next grade level in the next school year. If the parents or guardians, the  
10 teacher, and the participating staff members are not in agreement, the parents or  
11 guardians shall decide whether the student will advance to the next grade level unless  
12 circumstances exist as specified in the policy adopted by the district that would  
13 prevent advancement.

14 (g) A student in grade three should demonstrate sufficient reading skills to  
15 progress to grade four. A student demonstrates sufficient reading skills for progression  
16 by

17 (1) scoring at a proficient or higher achievement level on the statewide  
18 screening or assessment tool or on the statewide summative assessment;

19 (2) achieving an acceptable score on an alternative standardized  
20 reading screening or assessment as determined and approved by the department; or

21 (3) demonstrating mastery of reading standards through a student  
22 reading portfolio based on criteria established by the department.

23 (h) The department shall develop a program to provide recognition to districts,  
24 schools, school staff, and students for increases in the percentage of students in grade  
25 three who demonstrate sufficient reading skills under (g) of this section.

26 (i) A school board may exempt a student from delayed grade level progression  
27 for good cause. A good cause exemption is limited to

28 (1) a student with a disability whose individualized education plan  
29 under AS 14.30.278 exempts the student from participation in the statewide screening  
30 or assessment tool;

31 (2) a student with a disability who participates in the statewide

1 screening or assessment tool and has an individualized education plan under  
2 AS 14.30.278 or a plan under 29 U.S.C. 794 that reflects that the student has received  
3 intensive reading intervention services for two years or more but still demonstrates a  
4 reading deficiency;

5 (3) a student who has received intensive reading intervention services  
6 for two or more years but still demonstrates a reading deficiency; or

7 (4) a student whose primary language is other than English and who  
8 has had less than two years of instruction in an English language learning program.

9 (j) A student's parents or guardians may request that the student receive a good  
10 cause exemption under (i) of this section by submitting documentation to the principal  
11 of the school in which the student is enrolled showing that an exemption is  
12 appropriate. If the principal determines that the student meets one of the exemptions  
13 under (i) of this section, the principal shall recommend to the school board in writing  
14 that the school board grant the student a good cause exemption. The school board shall  
15 accept or reject the principal's recommendation in writing and provide notice of its  
16 decision to the student's parents or guardians and the principal.

17 (k) If a student in grade three does not demonstrate sufficient reading skills for  
18 progression to grade four under (g) of this section, the district or school in which the  
19 student is enrolled shall provide written notification to the student's parents or  
20 guardians not later than 45 days before the end of the school year. The written  
21 notification must

22 (1) state that the student did not demonstrate sufficient reading skills to  
23 progress to grade four;

24 (2) explain the implementation of intervention or progression  
25 strategies;

26 (3) describe the current services being provided to the student; and

27 (4) if the student's parents or guardians requested a good cause  
28 exemption under (i) of this section and the school board rejected the request, include a  
29 statement that the request for a good cause exemption was rejected and a copy of the  
30 written notification the school board provided the parents or guardians under (j) of this  
31 section.

1 (l) For a student who does not progress to the next grade level under (e) or (g)  
2 of this section, or who progresses to the next grade level with a good cause exemption  
3 under (i) of this section, the district in which the student is enrolled shall

4 (1) review the student's individual reading improvement plan;

5 (2) provide intensive reading intervention services to improve the area  
6 of reading deficiency using effective instructional strategies to accelerate student  
7 progress;

8 (3) provide additional services and support to improve the student's  
9 identified area of reading deficiency, including

10 (A) a transitional instructional setting that is designed to  
11 produce learning gains;

12 (B) supplemental tutoring offered by a person with specialized  
13 reading training;

14 (C) an increase in time dedicated to the reading instruction  
15 methods described in (a)(3) - (5) of this section, including more extensive  
16 opportunities for guided practice and error correction and feedback;

17 (4) a plan for reading at home outlined in an agreement with the  
18 parents or guardians, including parent participation in training workshops and regular  
19 parent-guided home reading activities.

20 (m) A district or school may not retain a student under this section who was  
21 previously retained in kindergarten, grade one, grade two, or grade three.

22 (n) In this section,

23 (1) "evidence-based reading intervention" means an intervention based  
24 on reliable, trustworthy, and valid evidence that has a demonstrated record of success  
25 in adequately increasing a student's reading competency in the areas of phonemic  
26 awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, oral language skills,  
27 and reading comprehension;

28 (2) "reading teacher" means a teacher who holds a valid teacher  
29 certificate under AS 14.20 and has demonstrated an effectiveness at instructing  
30 students to read at or above grade level through student reading performance data and  
31 teacher performance evaluations and who meets the requirements established by the

1 state Board of Education and Early Development in regulation.

2 **Sec. 14.30.770. Department reading program.** (a) The department shall  
3 establish a reading program to provide direct support for and intervention in intensive  
4 reading intervention services in the lowest performing 25 percent of schools serving  
5 students in grades kindergarten through three as determined under AS 14.03.123,  
6 selecting not more than 10 participating schools at a time. State funding provided to  
7 participating schools for implementation of the reading program is in addition to the  
8 amount of funding provided under AS 14.17. In conducting the program, the  
9 department shall

10 (1) use the accountability system established in AS 14.03.123 to  
11 identify low performing schools;

12 (2) establish an application process for school districts to apply to  
13 participate in the program;

14 (3) select low performing schools from the schools that apply to  
15 participate in the program;

16 (4) employ and assign a reading specialist for each school selected to  
17 direct the implementation of the intensive reading intervention services established  
18 under AS 14.30.765 by

19 (A) modeling effective instructional strategies for teachers by  
20 working regularly with students as a class, in small groups, or individually;

21 (B) coaching and mentoring teachers and staff in reading  
22 instruction with an emphasis on prioritizing time in a manner that has the  
23 greatest positive effects on student achievement;

24 (C) training teachers in data analysis and using data to  
25 differentiate instruction;

26 (D) leading and supporting reading leadership teams; and

27 (E) reporting on school and student performance to the  
28 department;

29 (5) establish a reporting process for each reading specialist and support  
30 reading specialist to submit updates to the department on implementation of the  
31 program;

1 (6) work with reading specialists to create specific improvement goals  
2 for each school selected, including measures of interim progress;

3 (7) select and purchase additional reading material for each school  
4 selected to supplement the intensive reading intervention services;

5 (8) pay travel and associated costs for a reading specialist or support  
6 reading specialist to attend relevant training sessions identified by or hosted by the  
7 department;

8 (9) periodically review staff development programs for their  
9 effectiveness in developing reading skills and, after consultation with school districts  
10 and experts, recommend to the board for approval staff development programs that

11 (A) have been proven to assess and accelerate student progress  
12 toward reaching reading competency;

13 (B) provide explicit and systematic skill development in the  
14 areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and  
15 comprehension;

16 (C) are evidence-based and reliable;

17 (D) provide initial and ongoing analysis of student progress  
18 toward reaching reading competency; and

19 (E) include texts on core academic content to assist students in  
20 maintaining or meeting grade-appropriate proficiency in academic subjects in  
21 addition to reading;

22 (10) annually convene, either in person or electronically, a panel made  
23 up of teachers of grades kindergarten through three, school administrators, and parents  
24 of students in grades kindergarten through three to review and provide commentary on  
25 the effectiveness of the reading intervention programs established under AS 14.30.760  
26 - 14.30.775.

27 (b) The department may employ and assign a support reading specialist for  
28 each school selected to participate in the program, as necessary, to support the reading  
29 specialist assigned under (a)(4) of this section or serve as a reading specialist for a  
30 school's early education program.

31 (c) A school selected to participate in the reading program established under

1 this section shall

2 (1) ensure that a reading specialist assigned to the school is not  
3 required to perform functions that divert from the duties the department has assigned  
4 to the reading specialist;

5 (2) coordinate with the reading specialist or specialists to redesign the  
6 school's daily schedule to dedicate time to reading program activities, including  
7 intensive reading intervention services identified in a written agreement between the  
8 school and the department;

9 (3) present on the reading program established under this section and  
10 the intensive reading intervention services established under AS 14.30.765 at a public  
11 meeting; the presentation must include

12 (A) the data the department used to identify the school as  
13 eligible for the reading program;

14 (B) a detailed overview of the reading program and intensive  
15 reading intervention services;

16 (C) a timeline for implementing the intensive reading  
17 intervention services and meeting reading improvement goals; and

18 (D) the implications of the program for students, families, and  
19 educators;

20 (4) provide notice of the public meeting required under (3) of this  
21 subsection to the parents or guardians of each student at least seven days before the  
22 date of the meeting;

23 (5) present an annual update on the school's implementation of the  
24 reading program and intensive reading intervention services at a public meeting with  
25 notice provided to the parents or guardians of each student at least seven days before  
26 the date of the meeting;

27 (6) create partnerships between the school, the families of students,  
28 and the community that focus on promoting reading and increasing the amount of time  
29 that students spend reading.

30 (d) The department shall publish on the department's Internet website and  
31 make available to the public

1 (1) a completed application from each school selected to participate in  
2 the reading program;

3 (2) the reading program and intensive reading intervention services  
4 implemented by each school selected to participate; and

5 (3) a data analysis conducted by an independent contractor of the  
6 success of the reading program and intensive reading intervention services.

7 (e) The department may employ a person as a reading specialist or support  
8 reading specialist under this section if the person

9 (1) holds a valid teacher certificate issued under AS 14.20 and

10 (A) has completed an approved graduate program for the  
11 preparation of reading specialists at an approved institution of higher education  
12 and a supervised practicum or internship as a reading specialist; or

13 (B) has at least three years of full-time, demonstrated  
14 classroom teaching experience where reading instruction was a primary  
15 responsibility;

16 (2) is knowledgeable about and demonstrates competency in reading  
17 instruction, including

18 (A) an understanding of the five components of reading  
19 instruction identified by the National Reading Panel;

20 (B) knowledge of and experience in implementing effective  
21 reading instruction strategies and intervention methods;

22 (C) experience in designing and implementing a school-wide  
23 response to intervention program or multi-tiered system support model;

24 (D) an understanding of and experience in reading screenings  
25 or assessments and data analyses that inform instruction;

26 (E) knowledge of dyslexia and other learning disorders that  
27 affect reading achievement;

28 (F) knowledge of and an ability to effectively articulate the  
29 methods, issues, and resources involved in support of student instruction to a  
30 wide variety of audiences, including staff, parents, and students whose primary  
31 language is other than English; and



1 (3) meets other reading instruction coursework requirements  
2 established by the department in regulation.

3 **Sec. 14.30.775. Definitions.** In AS 14.30.760 - 14.30.775,

4 (1) "district" has the meaning given in AS 14.17.990;

5 (2) "parent" or "guardian" includes a natural, adoptive, and foster  
6 parent, legal guardian, relative, and other adult person with whom the student has  
7 resided and who has acted as a parent in providing for the student or has been  
8 responsible for the student's welfare for a continuous period of time.

9 \* **Sec. 20.** AS 47.17.290(12) is amended to read:

10 (12) "organization" means a group or entity that provides care and  
11 supervision for compensation to a child not related to the caregiver, and includes a  
12 child care facility, pre-elementary school, early education program, head start  
13 center, child foster home, residential child care facility, recreation program, children's  
14 camp, and children's club;

15 \* **Sec. 21.** AS 14.03.410 is repealed July 1, 2032.

16 \* **Sec. 22.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to  
17 read:

18 **TEACHER RETENTION WORKING GROUP.** (a) A teacher retention working  
19 group is established to review issues and make findings related to challenges with teacher  
20 retention at public schools in the state and make recommendations for improvement in teacher  
21 retention. Members of the working group serve without compensation.

22 (b) The teacher retention working group consists of the following members:

23 (1) the commissioner of education and early development or the  
24 commissioner's designee;

25 (2) two superintendents who are members of the Alaska Council of School  
26 Administrators, one from an urban area and one from a rural area;

27 (3) two teachers who are members of the National Education Association -  
28 Alaska, one from an urban area and one from a rural area;

29 (4) two members of the Association of Alaska School Boards, one from an  
30 urban area and one from a rural area;

31 (5) the chairs of the legislative committees having jurisdiction over education;

1 and

2 (6) two members of the state Board of Education and Early Development, one  
3 from an urban area and one from a rural area.

4 (c) The teacher retention working group shall select a chair from among its  
5 membership.

6 (d) The teacher retention working group shall meet periodically and prepare a report  
7 of its findings and recommendations. The working group shall submit the report to the  
8 governor and to the senate secretary and chief clerk of the house of representatives for  
9 distribution to all legislators on or before January 15, 2022, and shall notify the legislature  
10 that the report is available. The working group expires January 16, 2022.

11 \* **Sec. 23.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to  
12 read:

13 **APPLICABILITY.** Section 18 of this Act applies to endorsements in elementary  
14 education issued on or after the effective date of this Act. An endorsement in elementary  
15 education issued before the effective date of this Act may not be renewed on or after the  
16 effective date of this Act unless the teacher has completed three credits or the equivalent of  
17 coursework, training, or testing requirements under sec. 18 of this Act.

18 \* **Sec. 24.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to  
19 read:

20 **TRANSITION.** To determine the lowest performing 10 percent of districts for  
21 purposes of grant eligibility under sec. 8 of this Act, in fiscal year 2022, the Department of  
22 Education and Early Development shall use school accountability rankings from the 2019-  
23 2020 school year.

24 \* **Sec. 25.** This Act takes effect July 1, 2021.