

## ALASKA READS ACT WHAT & WHY?

### What is the Alaska Reads Act?

The Alaska Reads Act is a bill that would create a statewide comprehensive K-3 reading policy designed to improve reading outcomes. The policy expands high-quality pre-k opportunities for four and five year olds, provides direct support and intervention services for low-performing schools, ensures early identification of struggling readers, and requires reading intervention services for K-3 students who need more help to become successful readers.

### What is a comprehensive K-3 reading policy?

The bill's proposed reading policy includes early education program grants, early screening, parent involvement, teacher training, direct support for low-performing schools, and intensive reading intervention. Fundamental principles include:

1. **Statewide teacher training on reading instruction and job-embedded training through department-employed reading specialists** to ensure all teachers have the knowledge and skill to teach reading to all students, including students with severe reading difficulties such as dyslexia.
2. **Focusing existing state and/or federal funds** to support policy implementation, including new funding through grants.
3. **Early literacy screening tool** administered three times each school year in grades K-3 to identify students with potential reading difficulties.
4. **Timely parent notification** for any student identified with a reading difficulty in grades K-3.
5. **Individual reading plans** developed with the parent, recommending evidence-based reading interventions aimed at removing the reading deficit.
6. **Student progress is monitored** more frequently for students identified as having reading difficulties.
7. **Home reading strategies and/or programs** are provided to parents to support their child at home.
8. **Interventions** during the school day and before/after school.
9. **Appropriate grade-level progression for students severely below grade level** who are unable to demonstrate sufficient reading skills for progression to fourth grade. More intensive interventions with a highly effective teacher are provided.
10. **Multiple pathways** are provided to third grade students to demonstrate reading skills required for progression to fourth grade, so one test on one day is not the determining factor.
11. **Good cause exemptions** for appropriate grade-level progression are provided that recognize the special needs of some students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who have previously experienced delayed grade-level progression.

### Why is it important?

A person's ability to read is a critical predictor of educational and lifelong success. A strong reading program, beginning in kindergarten and continuing into the third grade and beyond, gives students the best possible chance to maximize their education.

Before third grade, students are learning to read. Beginning in fourth grade and beyond, a student must be prepared to read to learn across all subject areas.