

Representative Jim Holm
Alaska State Legislature
District 9

Session

Capitol Building, Room 110
Juneau, AK 99801
Phone: (907) 465-3466
Fax: (907) 465-2937



Interim

119 N. Cushman St.
Fairbanks, AK 99701
Phone: (907) 456-7423
Fax: (907) 451-9293

CS HB 228
Sponsor Statement

4/28/05

"An Act imposing a maximum pupil-teacher ratio for grades kindergarten through three in public schools"

Today we all recognize the difficulties of complying with "No Child Left Behind." Classroom instruction is impacted by a number of factors including discipline, materials, curriculum, teacher competency, and the number of students per class. HB 228 is an attempt to fix one of the major classroom problems, the pupil-teacher ratio (PTR). Generally we have turned to school boards to manage classroom size, but it has not worked as well as we'd like.

If the problem in higher grades is a lack of preparedness, discipline, and motivation, then I suggest this could be mitigated by laying a better foundation in early grades with a lower PTR.

Our kindergarten through third grade teachers are now expected to provide for each individual child's different learning style. One of the major retention problems in these grades is PTR. The old "sit quietly and learn together" idea is obsolete – so it requires space, to separate children who just can't learn while sitting still, from those who learn best that way and are distracted by those who can't. It also requires a great deal of individual attention. Neither is possible with a PTR higher than 20-1.

It's my intent that schools be given four years to comply, starting with Kindergarten the first year, then K+1, K+1-2, and finally K+1-3 in year four. Districts should also be allowed to have multi-age classrooms as long as the ratio remains no higher than 20-1.

Requiring a maximum PTR of 20-1 in grades K-3 will allow teachers to give our kids a much better foundation, and I urge your support for HB 228.