

Alaska State Legislature

Session:
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801
Phone: (907) 465-2995
Fax: (907) 465-6592



Interim:
716 W 4th Avenue, Suite 430
Anchorage, AK 99501-2133
Phone: (907) 269-0250
Fax: (907) 269-0249

Representative Lesil McGuire
Chair, Judiciary Committee

HB 338

“An Act relating to attendance at public school; and providing for an effective date.”

SPONSOR STATEMENT

[HB 338](#) accomplishes two simple, but necessary, statutory changes that govern the entry age for attendance into public school and the process by which local school districts may allow early entry applicants to be accepted.

Currently, [AS 14.03.080\(c\)](#) stipulates that a child under school age may be admitted only if the child can demonstrate “minimum standards prescribed by the board evidencing that the child has the mental, physical, and emotional capacity. . .” Under the current statute, this language requires a full board vote in order to approve such early entry applications. The new language included in HB 338 would allow local school boards to delegate this authority to their chief school administrator, thus relieving the boards from this minor administrative burden more appropriately left to career education professionals.

Further, HB 338 adjusts the date certain, from August 15th to September 1st, by which a child must have attained the age of five for standard entry in kindergarten. Alaska is one of only three states that have an entrance cut-off date on or before August 15th. 35 states have kindergarten entrance cut-off dates between August 31 and October 16th with September 1 being shared by 19 states. Because of the large number of new residents arriving from other states with their respective cut-off dates and varying school start dates among Alaska’s school districts, we believe this change will create a less confusing standard that will allow the greatest number of Alaskan students to begin school each year without having a disruptive impact on a classroom environment. It is for these reasons that this change is supported by a number of Alaska school districts and the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development.