

Alaska State Legislature

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House District 6

Sponsor Statement CS HB 330 (FIN) Version O: State Standards

State education funding support for public K-12 education is increasing at a significant rate and yet, many districts are struggling to maintain instructional programs to meet student needs. Additionally, proposed State education standards are on the brink of adoption, without significant private sector input. The stakes and costs for rushing to adoption are high. The standards must be rigorous, but meaningful.

CS HB 330 (EDC) creates a Joint Legislative Task Force Sustainable Education to:

- examine the efficiency and effectiveness of education delivery in Alaska, with a specific focus on:
 - education funding and educational standards, and
 - the ability to prepare students for significant careers.
- The Task Force will submit a report of its findings and proposed legislative changes to the governor, the legislature and the Board of Education and Early Development by September 30, 2013 and make any additional reports it considers advisable.

Members of the Task Force will represent:

- The Legislature
- Association of Alaska School Boards
- A public school superintendent
- Alaska Council of School Administrators
- The University of Alaska
- A major career destination of high school graduates

In addition, one member will be appointed by the Governor.

The Task Force's specific duties include:

1. Creating a process for vetting proposed education standards before the standards are adopted by the state board of Education and Early Development
2. Examining dual education tracks for college bound and vocation bound students;
3. Evaluating school district challenges that result from implementation of federal education laws;
4. Evaluating the efficacy, cost-effectiveness, and redundancies of various education assessments, including the high school graduation qualifying examination;
5. Conducting an analysis of public education funding that includes:

- A. The adequacy of public school funding for coverage of appropriate education expenses;
- B. Alternative methods of addressing fluctuating energy, health, insurance, personnel, and pupil transportation costs;
- C. A comparison of the allocation of administrative and instructional personnel among districts; and
- D. The effect of pension and health care expenses on total state education costs.
- E. A cost-benefit review of the process used for hiring, evaluating and retaining staff.

The State educational content and performance standards are the foundation of our educational system. Upon them are built a massive superstructure:

- The writing of the Grade Level Expectations (GLE's);
- The choice of expensive curricula in 53 different districts;
- Thousands of teacher hours aligning new curricula to the new standards;
- Hundreds of thousands of dollars of professional development;
- \$7.0 million of new assessment tools;
- Over \$1.2B annual funding supporting the system driven by the new standards; and
- The quality of instruction for over 130,000 students.

The cost-to-date of producing the standards the Department of Education & Early Development is proposing for adoption has been \$270,886. The standards were created in eight separate meetings attended by a sliver of stakeholders. The superstructure built upon them as well as annual maintenance will cost multiple billions of dollars and directly impact every facet of instruction statewide.

Educational funding and student performance are under continual intense scrutiny. These subjects are the source of great consternation for parents, educators and policy makers. It only makes sense that the foundation of our educational system for the next six-year cycle should be of the highest quality and directed at fulfilling our mission statements.