

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE HEALTH, EDUCATION & SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

February 21, 2001
1:36 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Lyda Green, Chair
Senator Loren Leman, Vice Chair
Senator Gary Wilken
Senator Jerry Ward
Senator Bettye Davis

MEMBERS ABSENT

All Members Present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LAW
PRESENTATION ON THE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION QUALIFYING EXIT EXAM

WITNESS REGISTER

Mr. Greg Maloney
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Mr. Phil Reeves
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Mr. Rich Kronberg
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ACTION NARRATIVE

TAPE 01-12, SIDE A

Number 001

CHAIRMAN LYDA GREEN called the Senate Health, Education & Social Services Committee meeting to order at 1:36 p.m. Present were Senators Leman, Wilken and Green. CHAIR GREEN announced Mr. Greg Maloney would discuss the impact of the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam (HSGQE) on special education students and Mr. Phil Reeves would discuss the legal defensibility of the HSGQE.

MR. GREG MALONEY, Director of Special Education for the Department of Education and Early Development (DOEED), said he would give an overview of the assessment requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 97 (IDEA 97), review the specific results and discuss improvement strategies to support the performance of students with disabilities. Mr. Maloney reminded the committee that Dr. Bruce Johnson presented the overall results of the norm referenced test along with the benchmark and high school exam results at a previous meeting.

MR. MALONEY said IDEA 97 emphasizes the importance and sets the standard that all students, including students with disabilities, be included in statewide assessments. The purposes for that policy are to ensure that high standards exist for all students and to increase accountability among school districts for the performance of those students. Rather than consider regular education and special education separately, the goal is to look at education for all students. IDEA 97, more than its predecessors, was very clear that students with disabilities should be included in the assessment system, and that the data and performance of those students should be taken into account and reported in the same way that data for students who are not disabled is reported.

MR. MALONEY said there are three ways that all students can participate in the assessment. A student can take the standardized test, whether it be a benchmark or qualifying exam, with or without accommodations or a student can take an alternate assessment. There is some confusion about an alternate assessment and an alternative assessment. The regular statewide assessments are not necessarily appropriate for all students with disabilities. As a result, IDEA 97 mandates that states have in place an alternate assessment system. The alternate assessment is not necessarily a test, it is a process in which products and skills that a student with disabilities demonstrates are collected and compared to a set of performance standards that have been developed based on the

current performance standards for all students that have been extended to include those students with significantly delayed skills or development.

CHAIR GREEN asked for an example.

MR. MALONEY said the IEP team determines whether a student will participate in the alternate assessment or in the traditional assessment. Criteria for participating in the alternate assessment are:

- the student demonstrates cognitive impairment and delays in adaptive skills that prevent completing the standard academic curricula, even with accommodations;
- a student requires extensive, direct instruction in multiple settings to apply and transfer skills;
- the student is involved in a functional basic skills educational program; and
- the student's inability to complete the standard curriculum is not the result of extended absences, visual, auditory or physical disabilities, emotional or behavioral disabilities, specific learning disabilities, or social cultural or economic differences.

MR. MALONEY said this applies to a relatively small number of students who have very significant disabilities and whose participation in the traditional assessments would be meaningless.

Number 418

CHAIR GREEN asked if this criteria was developed at the same time the qualifying exam was developed.

MR. MALONEY said it was developed in response to IDEA 97 and to align with the current assessments, those being the benchmarks and the qualifying exam.

CHAIR GREEN asked if it was designed to be the alternate assessment to the qualifying exam.

MR. MALONEY said that is correct.

CHAIR GREEN asked if this would not be the test that a bright student who happens to be delayed by two years would take.

MR. MALONEY said it would not be and that is where the confusion about alternative versus alternate comes in. The alternate assessment process is a formal process that has been designed

specifically for about 2 percent of students who are significantly impaired. It is similar to a portfolio assessment. The group working with the particular student would collect a series of products - math problems, drawings, or other products in line with the student's skills. The alternate performance standards maintain the same line as the content standards and performance standards but continue to provide a level of comparison that is appropriate for that student. Mr. Maloney said a particular performance standard for that student might be that the student will participate meaningfully in the community. One indicator to measure that participation would be, "Working with a peer, Mary stamps the sponsor cards at the one-mile marker at the community walk-a-thon," or "Working with a peer, Mary hits a switch to count the number of people attending a class-sponsored spaghetti dinner." The evidence could include a videotape or written documentation by peers.

MR. MALONEY pointed out there is a standardized process for scoring the alternate assessments. A numerical score is derived that designates a proficiency level for those students.

CHAIR GREEN repeated that a very small percentage of students would participate in that type of assessment.

MR. MALONEY agreed and said that is why it excludes most of the disabilities that qualify for special education. He pointed out the assumption is that most students will participate in the traditional or current assessments. The alternate assessment is for those students for which that would not be appropriate.

CHAIR GREEN noted that Senators Ward and Davis were present.

MR. MALONEY said the alternate assessment process is currently being field tested for grades 3 and 11. It will match the benchmarking exam. DOEED believes that eventually, it will only do the alternate assessment for students who are in 11th grade one time, rather than provide the repeated process used for students taking the traditional assessment. In general, the purpose of the alternate assessment is to further emphasize that all students should be included in the assessment system.

MR. MALONEY referred to a chart entitled, "Performance of Students with Disabilities on the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam."

Number 718

SENATOR LEMAN asked if there is any way to determine what type of a disability these students have.

MR. MALONEY said he could not break the information out by each category of disability at this time. That data will be built into the system eventually and will be determined by how the test booklets are coded.

SENATOR LEMAN asked if Mr. Maloney has a list of the types of disabilities in the disabilities category.

MR. MALONEY said there are 14 categories and he could provide that information to Senator Leman this afternoon.

CHAIR GREEN asked how a student is identified, regarding a disability, when taking the test.

MR. MALONEY explained that information about whether the student has an IEP and whether accommodations were made available is placed on the cover of the booklet.

CHAIR GREEN noted the practice test does not ask for that information. She questioned how many students would list their disability.

MR. MALONEY said sometimes students are not aware of their disabilities. In general, the accuracy of the test booklet coding would fall to the test coordinator so the local school district would make sure the information is correct. He noted DOEED is focusing on that process as well.

CHAIR GREEN expressed concern that a lot of that information would be unsubstantiated.

MR. MALONEY responded there may be ways of getting that information in the future so that it does not depend on the accuracy of the cover of the booklet. He felt the goal is to track the individual progress of a student, maintain confidentiality, and get at that information from the data system.

MR. MALONEY explained the information on the Performance of Students with Disabilities chart lists the results for both the spring and fall administrations of the exam. The chart shows the number of students with and without disabilities who passed all sections in the spring and fall and that failed. The pool of students taking the exam in the spring was larger because the fall administration was a retake for those who failed. Clearly, students with disabilities performed less well than students without disabilities. What is interesting is that the performance of students with disabilities follows a similar pattern as that of

students without disabilities. The reading scores were higher while math and writing scores were lower. This information provides important baseline data from which to determine how schools are improving and supporting the outcomes for students with disabilities. That is why, in a sense, student participation is so important - the data represents a top to bottom range of assessment of all students. That differs from the past across the country. No level of importance was placed on having students with disabilities participate in assessment data. The data was generally focused more on IEPs than on the connection of special education to the general curriculum. One of the most important pieces of IDEA 97 has been to support the notion that the services that a student with disabilities receives should be connected to the general curriculum so that the student is given a supportive program - rather than a separate program - that allows the student to achieve the standards to the best of that student's potential.

MR. MALONEY said along with increasing test scores, DOEED wants to focus on participation rights and drop out rates for students with disabilities. One concern is what impact a high stakes exam will have on students leaving school prior to graduation. Students enrolled in special education have historically demonstrated a proportionally higher level of drop out rates.

MR. MALONEY pointed out that DOEED is making several efforts to increase overall student performance. DOEED has received a five-year systems change grant (the Quality Education in the Last Frontier grant) from the federal government that is specific to special education programs. About 25 states have received similar grants. This grant focuses on improving professional development of those working with students with disabilities, as well as other students, and to help ensure that students with disabilities are included in school-wide or statewide reform efforts.

CHAIR GREEN asked who will be overseeing that grant process and who will be a typical recipient.

MR. MALONEY said DOEED has about 45 different partners for this grant: local school districts, other government agencies, institutions of higher education, and professional organizations who work with the private sector. The six goals of the grant program are:

- to increase the level of participation and outcomes of students with disabilities in statewide school reform efforts;
- to increase training and skills of parents, family members, and community members in the education process;
- to increase the level of intra- and inter-agency cooperation

among agencies that are working with students with disabilities;

- to enhance professional development and recruitment and retention of teachers who work with students with disabilities;
- to support the development, recruitment and retention of para-educators, or class roommates; and
- to evaluate the project.

Within each goal area, there are a number of strategies. The first one focuses on having students with disabilities included fully within school reform efforts.

MR. MALONEY stated that the exam data gives DOEED pause, especially when looking at the results of DOEED's efforts to provide more support and direction to districts as they work to improve the outcomes for students with disabilities.

SENATOR WARD referred to the chart and asked if the federal government wants the data by age rather than grade.

MR. MALONEY pointed out that statewide information is grade-based so drop-out rates are derived from the number of students that drop out from certain grades. The federal government does require reporting by age so DOEED reports the number of students with disabilities in different areas by age. The problem with the comparison is that not all tenth graders are the same age, especially students in special education. DOEED can come up with rough estimates but DOEED needs to fix that and make grade to grade comparisons.

SENATOR WARD asked if the chart reflects age, not grade.

MR. MALONEY said no, it reflects the grade. It only reflects students with disabilities enrolled in tenth grade last fall.

Number 1327

SENATOR WILKEN asked how many Alaska high school students have an IEP.

MR. MALONEY estimated that the number for all students in Alaska, ages 6-21, is about 13,000 to 14,000. He guessed about 5,000 to 6,000 of those students are in high school.

SENATOR WILKEN stated that the main concern he has heard regarding the competency test is the special education component but the

problem cannot be resolved in a short period of time because there are many variables. He asked Mr. Maloney's opinion of setting the test aside for the 6,000 high school students with IEPs but administering it to the other students and, in the meantime work on the special education component.

MR. MALONEY replied that one focus of IDEA 97 is to make sure that students with disabilities are included in the same systems as students without disabilities. The focus is on how to make the system responsive to all students. His concern would be, on what basis would those 6,000 students be separated out. The state could run into discrimination issues, issues of accountability, and DOEED could face compliance problems with its special education requirements.

SENATOR WILKEN asked if the discrimination issue would exist if the state was clear about its intent to come up with a test for the special education component. He felt that because the standards for 5 percent of the student population are not ready, the other 95 percent cannot be measured, which he thought was a form of reverse discrimination.

MR. MALONEY said he would provide Senator Wilken with more information from the Office of Special Education (OSE) in Washington, D.C. and that he is not in a position to say whether DOEED should go ahead with that. He repeated the concern would be how the 5 percent are being included and how they are being assessed by looking at how they are performing in terms of the general curriculum.

CHAIR GREEN suggested focusing that conversation on what alternatives and accommodations need to be made available for that population. She felt that issue could take several years to decide.

Number 1590

MR. PHIL REEVES, Assistant Attorney General, Department of Law, said he had the opportunity to complete his remarks from the February 12 meeting, but a number of people requested a copy of the notes he was testifying from. He provided the committee with a cleaned up copy of those notes and was available today to answer questions.

SENATOR WARD asked whether any other states have been able to devise a competency test and have a separate one for the 5 percent with IEPs. He asked if so, whether there are additional legal conflicts about that 5 percent.

MR. REEVES replied the requirement is that unless they cannot, all children with disabilities should be included in the normal assessment systems. He said he believes that many children with disabilities would be able to pass the exit exam with accommodations and that the assessment would be meaningless for a much smaller percentage than 5. He thought removing the 5 percent from the assessment program would prove difficult. He pointed out that the standard required for those students to receive a diploma may be a different question. Those students could be involved in the same test but, in his reading of the federal law, the federal government's concern is that all children be involved in the assessments to ensure that schools can see how those students are doing comparatively and provide the services they need. He was not sure that goes so far as using exactly the same standard to receive a diploma.

SENATOR WARD referred to the Texas case Mr. Reeves cited at a previous meeting [87 F.Supp.2d 667] and said he was under the impression that the students who fell into this category were not required to take the competency test.

MR. REEVES said he is unable to answer questions about the specifics of all of the testing systems. The cases he discussed did not address children with disability issues. He offered to provide that information at a later date.

CHAIR GREEN directed Senator Ward to the chart that compares how states consider the standards for special education students. She noted that Texas did not give the exit exam to students with IEPs for 10 or 12 years but it has since rolled the exam into its program.

There being no questions of Mr. Maloney or Mr. Reeves, CHAIR GREEN announced that the committee would discuss pending legislation. She referred to her HSGQE legislation proposal and noted that some of it was adapted from the Indiana plan. Alaska is not the only state that is undergoing this conversation. She emphasized that her proposal is a very, very broad roadmap that needs a lot of refining. She hopes to have legislation drafted before Friday to release to the Legislative Information Offices for people to testify to. She noted that her proposal does not address a date for the exam. It changes the focus so that the test is not the single factor in receiving a degree. She asked people who testify to not address whether the exam should be delayed.

CHAIR GREEN said she hopes to put in place legislation that would provide the public with a description of what a high school

graduate would know. She would like to require, in statute, a high school transcript that includes test scores, CAT scores, whether the student took advanced AP courses, etc.

CHAIR GREEN said that it came to her attention, while speaking with Commissioner Holloway, that DOEED has no way to know what courses are being taught in Alaskan high schools. DOEED and the state board should have that information on file so that when a student says a class was never offered, that can be substantiated. There is a fear that in some districts, the scheduling of courses is not what it should be. The state cannot require a competency test if it doesn't know whether all students are being taught the subject matter.

CHAIR GREEN indicated that she would like to see the test administered on an in-service day, so that one-third of the students are not in limbo while the test is given on a regular school day. In addition, appropriate exams must be developed for the learning disabled and the developmentally disabled. She noted the writing portion of the test indicates the ability to give the correct answer. A student may be able to provide the correct answer using a method other than writing but whether other methods can be used is unknown at this time.

CHAIR GREEN said that vocational and technical programs seem to be cyclical. She is interested in how such a program could be identified on a transcript and on a diploma. Such a student may have the mastery of competency highest level diploma with a vocational technical certification. She is also promoting that students must maintain a "C" average and that attendance criteria be included in graduation requirements if students fail the test.

Number 2040

SENATOR WARD asked how the 95 percent attendance requirement came about.

CHAIR GREEN replied that several school districts are having problems with the attendance rates of students, particularly in the elementary grades. In some districts, the local school board has not adopted any regulations requiring students to attend. She believes that is a standard that has to be maintained, while leaving room for excused absences and illness.

SENATOR WARD commented that the 95 percent attendance rate does not include sick days or other family considerations.

CHAIR GREEN agreed and ventured to guess that some districts have a

high standard in place while some have none. The high standard might include nine unexcused absences per year. She repeated that her proposal is meant to be a suggestion and is negotiable. Her goal is to figure out a system that shows that Alaska students are qualified to graduate. She pointed out the first paragraph in the proposal focuses on creating another path for students to receive a diploma because a large number of students are unlikely to pass the exit exam and receive a diploma.

CHAIR GREEN explained that the State of Indiana offers three methods in which a student can receive a diploma.

Number 2197

SENATOR LEMAN commented that he has three concerns with the proposal. While he commends the requirement of a "C" average, he is unaware that there is a uniform standard for grading throughout the state, therefore grades might be elevated in some districts and not in others. He believes that coming up with a statewide grading standard will be difficult.

CHAIR GREEN asked Senator Leman if he believes that uniformity in grading exists now. She said if one compared transcripts of students from Mat-Su and Juneau, it is likely there would be a variance in the same grade.

SENATOR LEMAN said he agrees the problem exists now but it will create a difficulty in making a "C" grade requirement meaningful.

CHAIR GREEN asked Senator Leman if he would be more comfortable using a percentage.

SENATOR LEMAN said no because it would not make a difference. His second concern is about the attendance policy. He felt there should be a way to make up unexcused absences short of repeating the school year. His third concern is that, rather than wait until 2004 for the endorsement, he would prefer that the endorsement begin in 2002.

Number 2297

SENATOR DAVIS asked if a student would be required to maintain a "C" average to finish high school.

CHAIR GREEN explained that the "C" average, attendance policy, the minimum number of credit hours, and remedial classes would be required of students who fail the exit exam to graduate.

SENATOR DAVIS expressed concern that almost two-thirds of Alaska students have not passed the math portion of the practice test. She asked if under this proposal the one-third who passed will get a diploma and a special certificate proving they mastered the test.

CHAIR GREEN said that is not correct.

SENATOR DAVIS asked if the students that go through the hoops of taking remedial classes and maintaining a "C" average will get the same diploma.

CHAIR GREEN explained that her proposed plan is meant to be in place for a couple of years until an endorsement process is established. In that way, students who pass the exam will receive credit and praise.

TAPE 01-12, Side B

CHAIR GREEN continued. Under Phase II, several diplomas would be offered. The diploma of advanced mastery would be given to students who pass the exit exam and take all required coursework. The diploma of foundational mastery would be given to students who pass the arithmetic portion of the math test. That would be typical of students who did not take algebra or geometry.

SENATOR DAVIS commended Senator Green for her proposal but thought it might be more difficult to implement than the current program. She said she supports the idea of giving a Regents certificate to those students who pass the test. That certificate would be in addition to a diploma and would reward the student. She thought to require students who do not pass the test to have a "C" average could increase the number of students who cannot graduate. She pointed out that many students graduate with less than a "C" average and, according to the grading system used, a "D" is considered to be a passing grade. She agrees that attendance is a serious problem but she thought remediation of that problem should be tied to school funding.

CHAIR GREEN pointed out that Texas, in association with the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), has also started to do major attendance work. She asked members to think about an adequate system to put into place that requires everyone to be tested. She repeated that testing is a good thing in that it gives people the ability to evaluate schools within a district and among districts but the state cannot require a test for graduation that some students have not been prepared for. She would like to think that in the future all students would be prepared for the highest level of the test.

Number 2219

SENATOR WARD noted that Senator Taylor mentioned that a student who has passed all portions of the exit exam in the junior year may want to attend the University if the student has completed enough coursework. He expressed concern about using a one-size-fits-all approach that may hold some students back.

CHAIR GREEN pointed out that many students graduate early now. She explained that if the test is implemented in 2002, the students who pass the exit exam will be on their way. For those who do not, excluding special needs students, they must take remedial classes for each failed exam subject area, maintain 95 percent attendance, maintain a "C" average and have teacher/principal recommendations. For special needs students, the same requirements would apply except that an alternative test could be given and an IEP team recommendation would be required. For vocational/technical students the same requirements would apply but a description of vocational/technical student will need to be put in statute.

In Phase II (beginning in 2004), every student would take the exit exam and, a diploma of advanced mastery or a certificate with an endorsement would be granted if all three sections of the exam are passed. Students could also get the vocational/technical endorsement which would require meeting the requirements of the foundational mastery diploma. The diploma of mastery of individual education plan will probably not make it onto any certificate but will be a designation for students with learning or other disabilities. The state board would devise a plan for that to be put in place. That will be one problem with moving to Phase II. The diploma of minimum competency would be granted to students who have attended school and have achieved a minimum level of competency in educational standards developed by the state board of education, that is the listing of courses and credits a student must have. In addition, students would also have to maintain a "C" average, have a 95 percent attendance record, teacher/principal recommendations, and remedial coursework in the subject areas of the exam they failed.

CHAIR GREEN asked participants for comments.

SENATOR WILKEN felt that Chair Green correctly read the Legislature's desire to not postpone the original exam date. He asked, regarding the 95 percent attendance record, whether that is a function of an exit exam or a competency test and whether the class valedictorian should be denied a diploma because he or she had a 94 percent attendance record.

CHAIR GREEN said that is not a requirement for a student who passed the exam and that it is only required for a diploma of minimum competency.

SENATOR WILKEN questioned whether a student needs to have a 95 percent attendance record if they passed the exam.

CHAIR GREEN said no. She said that is only required for the diploma of minimum competency. She explained that her proposal is an attempt to give another means to graduate for a student who is on task and working to the best of his or better ability and has a "C" average.

SENATOR WILKEN asked if the student who did not pass the exit exam but passed areas of weakness, attended school 95 percent of the time, and maintained a "C" average would get a minimum competency diploma.

CHAIR GREEN said that is correct.

SENATOR WILKEN expressed concern about the 95 percent attendance rate.

CHAIR GREEN noted that is an arbitrary number.

SENATOR WILKEN asked if the test will be given in English only.

SENATOR WARD said it must be by law.

SENATOR WILKEN asked Chair Green if she considered offering a diploma that contained specific endorsements for reading, writing and arithmetic.

CHAIR GREEN said she is not sure how well the diplomas should be adorned and how expensive that could be.

SENATOR WILKEN pointed out that as an employer, he asks potential employees whether they graduated from high school and when, and whether they have their diplomas in their possession. He said it wouldn't take him long to figure out how to ask on his employment application whether and when an applicant graduated, whether the applicant has a diploma, and what endorsements the applicant has. He indicated he probably would not hire a person without endorsements in reading, writing and arithmetic but he felt that is a simple way to focus on what the Legislature is trying to do.

CHAIR GREEN agreed but maintained that most employers would request

a transcript from the school to find out if the endorsement is on there.

Number 1807

SENATOR LEMAN stated that on page 2 of Senator Green's proposal, under Phase II, all students would be required to maintain the "C" average and 95 percent attendance record and remediation yet farther down under Phase II those requirements only show up under item 5.

CHAIR GREEN said she stands corrected. She added that she would like to hear from people about the impact of student attendance and whether it is a problem. If it is not a problem statewide, the Legislature does not have to address it. She felt that students who remain on task but do not have high grades need to be recognized for their hard work and effort. She thought that a student with one unexcused absence per month would have other problems in their academic life.

SENATOR WILKEN referred to page 3, item 6, regarding the requirement that the board develop definitions for "vocational, technical and special needs" students, and asked if a student would enter high school on a vocational track or a technical track or whether the student would be classified at the end of the process.

CHAIR GREEN said she could not answer that and it is one of the things that will be turned over to the state board. She noted there are several things going on with workforce development; employability standards were adopted that might be folded into this. Those standards are for those students who are trying to prepare for a certain job while in high school, which will be happening more frequently. Those students would still be required to take the exam so that the standard is not lower, it is just different.

Number 1581

SENATOR WARD informed committee members that he is having a bill drafted that is modeled after the Colorado law. All students that graduate would get a State of Alaska high school diploma if they meet the local criteria in their school districts. The face of the diploma contains spaces for notating whether the student is proficient in reading, writing, and/or math. He explained that this concept was suggested by the teachers and principals in the Kenai area. He commended Senator Green for coming up with some interesting concepts that may do more. He noted that other states that chose to require competency tests have run into similar

problems.

CHAIR GREEN said another Senator suggested that Alaska move away from a test manufactured strictly for Alaska and use a nationally normed test. She maintained there are problems with that approach when it comes to a graduation requirement but a nationally normed test can be used as an assessment to compare students to students.

SENATOR WILKEN felt Alaska could "walk with that and you run a few years later with this more sophisticated system."

CHAIR GREEN suggested using Senator Ward's bill as a point of discussion for Saturday's meeting.

SENATOR WARD indicated that he called Elmendorf Air Force Base but could not get an answer regarding the military high school diploma and the test required for that diploma.

Number 1387

MR. RICH KRONBERG, NEA-Alaska, stated that he did not want to comment on the different kinds of diplomas presented in Senator Green's proposal but he applauded her for raising significant points contained on page 3 of her proposal. NEA-Alaska members have articulated those same concerns.

CHAIR GREEN said many people have suggested that she address the test only but the next step is to establish what is happening statewide. She acknowledged that she was dumbfounded when she realized that a transcript is not required by statute.

MR. KRONBERG indicated that the Anchorage School Board has had many discussions about providing transcripts and the costs involved, which may be worthy of guidance from the State. He likes the notion that study materials for the exam should be provided and that uniform language should be provided to be used as a test script.

CHAIR GREEN said she talked to several teachers last year who did not know how to administer the test. She believes that is important and that the script should be rehearsed, if necessary.

SENATOR WILKEN asked if schools keep records of excused absences.

MR. KRONBERG said as far as he knows, students must have an excuse for absences. [The remainder of his response was inaudible.]

CHAIR GREEN asked if the range is all over the board.

MR. KRONBERG said each district determines the limit on unexcused absences.

CHAIR GREEN suggested asking districts to report their attendance policies.

SENATOR WARD asked if it is true that no one knows in the State of Alaska whether all seniors have been taught algebra or had access to it.

CHAIR GREEN replied that algebra would be listed on one's transcript but most people do not look.

SENATOR WARD asked if a school board could submit information to the State as to whether or not it offers algebra. He expressed concern that accessibility to certain courses is a glitch with the test. He assumed all students were able to take algebra but he is now being told that there is no way to know whether all schools are teaching it.

CHAIR GREEN said it is her understanding that neither DOEED or the state school board can get that information because of the local control issue. She said that for purposes of requiring an exit exam that covers certain subjects, the Legislature needs to know that those subjects are being taught throughout the state. The only way she knows how to do that is to require schools to report what courses they are teaching.

SENATOR WARD asked if that question was asked before the test was created.

CHAIR GREEN said not necessarily because everyone assumes algebra is required, although it isn't required by all school districts.

Number 2002

SENATOR WILKEN asked for an explanation of the last column in DOEED's document entitled, "Year 2000 Alaska State Assessment Results - Mathematics."

MS. BETH NORDLUND, DOEED, explained that the last column compares the number of students enrolled in grade 11 as of October 1, 2000 to the percent that passed.

SENATOR WILKEN asked about the results of the writing assessment and whether 44 out of 55 did not pass. He noted almost all students failed the writing portion and everyone failed the math, which is

not what the committee was told.

CHAIR GREEN asked if he was referring to the district that did not give the test.

SENATOR LEMAN explained the first column gives the percentage of students in each district that passed the exam in the Spring and Fall of 2000.

SENATOR WILKEN said only one school got above 60 if a traditional grading system was used.

There being no further business to come before the committee, CHAIR GREEN adjourned the meeting at 3:00 p.m.