

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

February 9, 2006  
11:10 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Mark Neuman, Chair  
Representative Carl Gatto  
Representative Bob Lynn  
Representative Bill Thomas  
Representative Peggy Wilson  
Representative Les Gara  
Representative Woodie Salmon

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

HOUSE BILL NO. 345

"An Act raising the compulsory school attendance age; relating to the crime of contributing to the delinquency of a minor; relating to truancy; and relating to employment of a minor."

- HEARD AND HELD

HOUSE BILL NO. 140

"An Act establishing a tuition waiver and voucher program for eligible students who were placed in foster care by the state; and providing for an effective date."

- SCHEDULED BUT NOT HEARD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HB 345

SHORT TITLE: RAISE COMP. SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AGE TO 17

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) WEYHRAUCH

01/09/06	(H)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/6/06
01/09/06	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/09/06	(H)	EDU, HES
02/09/06	(H)	EDU AT 11:00 AM CAPITOL 106

**WITNESS REGISTER**

JACQUELINE TUPOU, Staff  
to Representative Bruce Weyhrauch  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented HB 345 on behalf of  
Representative Weyhrauch, sponsor.

DEBBIE JOSLIN, President  
Eagle Forum Alaska  
Delta Junction, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Spoke in opposition to HB 345.

RORY SCHNEEBERGER  
Hoonah, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Spoke in opposition to HB 345.

PETER BURCHELL  
Wasilla, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Spoke in opposition to HB 345.

PEGGY COWAN, Superintendent  
Juneau School District  
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Spoke in support of HB 345.

CARL ROSE, Executive Director  
Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB)  
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Spoke in support of HB 345.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

**CHAIR MARK NEUMAN** called the House Special Committee on Education meeting to order at [11:10:47 AM](#). Representatives Neuman, Gatto, Lynn, Salmon, Thomas, and Wilson were present at the call to order. Representative Gara arrived as the meeting was in progress.

HB 345-RAISE COMP. SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AGE TO 17

[11:10:53 AM](#)

CHAIR NEUMAN announced that the only order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 345, "An Act raising the compulsory school attendance age; relating to the crime of contributing to the

delinquency of a minor; relating to truancy; and relating to employment of a minor."

[11:11:52 AM](#)

JACQUELINE TUPOU, Staff to Representative Bruce Weyhrauch, Alaska State Legislature, paraphrased from the following written sponsor statement [original punctuation provided]:

House Bill 345 changes the compulsory school attendance age so a student may not drop out until after they turn 17. Current law requires compulsory school attendance from age seven through age sixteen. As it is, when a student turns 16 they may drop out of school.

Increasing the drop out age from 16 to 17 is important for several reasons. Sixteen year olds are not ready to make the enormous decision to give up a high school education. Increasing the mandatory age to seventeen ensures students will remain in school and have continued opportunities during their high school career, into their adulthood, and out into the workforce. Currently, less than six out of every ten students in the Alaska school system graduate from high school. Only two states have worse annual dropout rates than Alaska. Additionally, dropouts make up nearly half the heads of households on welfare and nearly half of the prison population. Research has shown that the more education a person obtains, the more income they will earn. The direct and indirect costs to the State of Alaska continue to add up.

Alaska can do a better job preparing our students to have a brighter future. House Bill 345 helps gives school districts another tool to help our students attain more education and in so doing, better equipping our students for that future.

MS. TUPOU concluded by urging the committee to adopt this important piece of legislation.

[11:14:19 AM](#)

CHAIR NEUMAN requested Ms. Tupou address the variety of questions asked on HB 345 in the many e-mails the committee members received.

MS. TUPOU noted that some of the people who wrote did not have a clear understanding of existing state law, which includes 12 exemptions affecting mandatory school attendance. A student [within the compulsory school attendance age] who already obtained a high school diploma would qualify for an exemption, she explained, as well as a student with a "specialized reason" for discontinuing school who was granted an exemption by his/her local school board. She said other constituents seemed concerned with the financial impact of this legislation, writing that it was "poor public policy to fund those students that didn't want to be in school ... and if their parents didn't want to make them [attend school] and wanted to write them off, then [the state] should just write them off, too." She expressed her hope that funding was not a main concern and opined that investing in the education of children is the most important priority. She said, "It's a matter of spending the money up front, or [supporting] half of the people on our welfare system and half the people on our correction system [who] are high school dropouts."

[11:16:46 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE THOMAS suggested that if school districts are truly concerned about the dropout rate, then perhaps they should change the student count from the start of the year to the end of the year to serve as a possible incentive to teachers and the administration to find ways to keep students in school. He said he does not support pushing up the age from 16 to 17 and "if they want to go, let them go."

[11:18:27 AM](#)

MS. TUPOU opined that this bill may not be the right vehicle for addressing the financial incentive Representative Thomas suggested. She expressed her belief that teachers' motives are altruistic in that they want to help students and keep them in school, and that those adults who show they care can help sway a student's desire to stay in school. As an example, she highlighted that the Juneau School District has hired three dropout counselors to improve attendance within the district. She said that a lot of times dropouts are stigmatized as being lazy, but research shows otherwise and that it's often a second problem, such as troubles at home, that might affect students' attendance. She informed the committee that, "We think, as a matter of public policy, that this committee should decide to work with these children because they're not hopeless causes,

that they are [part of the] bright future, and if we don't make them our bright future, then they're going to be our welfare or correction problem down the road."

11:19:59 AM

CHAIR NEUMAN, returning to Representative Thomas's suggestion of taking a student count at the end of school term, said he did not know the implications this would have. However, he relayed that there have been discussions on taking a student count in January to address the transient population fluctuations, in addition to the average daily membership count at the beginning of the school year.

11:20:43 AM

REPRESENTATIVE LYNN, drawing on his experiences as a former teacher of regular and special needs students, said that although there may be a common goal to see students graduate, forcing a child to attend school, study, and behave appropriately "is something like trying to push a bowling ball uphill with a piece of wet spaghetti. It just doesn't work ... it's not fair to teachers and not even fair to the kids themselves." He said he applauds the intent of the bill, but feels that the needs of those who wish to be in school should be considered.

MS. TUPOU reminded the committee that the change in the compulsory school attendance age is only by one year, which research has shown to be a critical one for students. She opined that the policy of ensuring students do not drop out until age 17 should be a holistic one shared at both state and local levels. She concluded by asking, "If you would prefer that those children aren't at school, where are they going to be and where are we going to pay for it elsewhere?"

REPRESENTATIVE LYNN expressed his belief that the school's purpose is to educate those kids that [want] to be there and not "imprison" those who don't. Therefore, he suggested that the best way to keep kids in school is to provide a more quality education that addresses particular needs of students and which may entail more attention be given to vocational education. "It's not the job of the school to keep them in school [to avoid any] trouble if they're not in school; that's [a job] for public safety [officials], parents and everybody else," he claimed.

MS. TUPOU agreed that [schools] shouldn't be babysitting [students] and posed the question: "At what point do we think that children should make the decision that will impact the rest of their lives?" She posed the question that if the parents of those students wishing to drop out of school don't care, at what point should the state stop caring, and then opined that 16 is too early "to make a decision that will adversely affect your whole life." Ms. Tupou then directed the committee's attention to the data available in their packets which showed the compulsory age for 28 states set at age 16, for 9 states set at age 17, for 17 states set at age 18, and currently 5 states with pending legislation to raise the compulsory age. She highlighted that research has shown more education is needed to sufficiently function in today's society.

[11:26:49 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO reflected that with the exception of available statistics showing only two states with a higher dropout rate than Alaska, there is no evidence to determine whether age 16 or 17 is the best age. Furthermore, he questioned why the compulsory age isn't determined by when a student graduates and asked "Why do we even want to have compulsory education?" He said he would like to know the answers to "why we should have compulsory education [and] why it should be up to age 17 and not longer and not shorter."

MS. TUPOU explained that the information that might help answer this is "somewhat skewed;" however, if kids can remain in school until their senior year, when [it's been determined] that only 10 percent of them drop out, they generally have a better understanding of the importance of remaining in school. Regarding the need for compulsory education, Ms. Tupou opined that "we as a society have deemed that we want to educate all children." Furthermore, she stated that changing the compulsory attendance age "is part of a holistic policy that needs to happen at the local level, but this is what we can do at a state level [to address the state's dropout rate] ...."

[11:30:00 AM](#)

CHAIR NEUMAN remarked that the "heart of this discussion" deals with the question of whether government knows what's best for a parent's child and where does the decision lie.

[11:30:28 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARA opined that there was some truth on both sides of the argument and said he would like to hear from school officials and those who have done studies on what the impacts might be for requiring kids to stay in school until age 17. He speculated that the answer to this would be that "there's some benefit and there's some harm." He then expressed his belief that the focus of attention should be on the years when kids are most susceptible to learning, when their brains are developing the most rapidly, and when educators have the most impact on them. He informed the committee that he has filed legislation which would start prekindergarten (Pre-K) education in the state, which is the age at which "we're going to have the biggest impact," he opined, though this did not infer that "the 17-year old issue isn't important." He requested Ms. Tupou provide the committee with any additional evidence.

[11:32:54 AM](#)

MS. TUPOU remarked that regardless of age, there are always disruptive kids in the classroom and asked at what age should it be decided that a disruptive child no longer attends school. Addressing Representative Gara's comment on the importance of educating children at an earlier age, she informed the committee that an amendment had been offered, labeled 24-LS1240\A.1, Mischel, 1/12/06, which would change the compulsory school age to begin at age six rather than age seven as follows:

Page 1, line 1:  
Delete "**raising**"  
Insert "**changing**"

Page 2, lines 20 - 21:  
Delete "[BETWEEN] seven years of age or older and under 17 [16]"  
Insert "six years of age or older on or before September 1 following the beginning of the school year and who is under 17 [BETWEEN SEVEN AND 16]"

Page 2, lines 23 - 24:  
Delete "[BETWEEN] seven years of age or older and under 17 [16]"  
Insert "six years of age or older on or before September 1 following the beginning of the school year and who is under 17 [BETWEEN SEVEN AND 16]"

Page 3, following line 1:  
Insert a new bill section to read:

"\* **Sec. 4.** AS 14.30.010(c) is repealed."

Renumber the following bill section accordingly.

11:34:19 AM

CHAIR NEUMAN announced that the committee would address any amendments during future committee discussions [on this bill].

REPRESENTATIVE GARA, referring to his belief that some of the most important childhood learning occurs at ages four and five, opined that "we should join most of the other states in having a preschool program for children." He expressed that changing the compulsory age from seven to six years wouldn't likely make that much of a difference.

CHAIR NEUMAN informed the committee that he and Representative Wilson are currently planning a presentation for March 2006 with First Lady Nancy Murkowski, chair of the Ready to Read, Ready to Learn Alaska Taskforce. He related that the two are also gathering information from the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) regarding what other states are doing in early childhood education, which will be a topic of future discussion for this committee.

11:35:50 AM

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON, drawing on her experience as a school nurse and teacher, relayed that she found it was easier to encourage the younger children to attend school but became harder as the children aged. She said she was uncertain that changing the compulsory attendance age at the top end is "the answer to what we want to accomplish" and that there were other factors - such as drugs, alcohol, and uncaring parents - that might affect the dropout rate. She stated her belief that there are parents who do care and yet have children who drop out of school. She said that it is difficult to teach kids who are not at school to learn and are very disruptive in class. She opined that she would much rather see the compulsory age changed to age four because "that age three to five is very crucial ... and it's proven that if we can make the changes at that age, it makes a huge difference. There's no proof at the older age."

11:39:35 AM

REPRESENTATIVE LYNN again referred to his experiences as a former schoolteacher and said there was "a heck of a difference

between a disruptive kindergartner and a disruptive 16-year old kid." He said that although some of the best education is done during the early years, he asked at what point should a child begin his/her education and at how early an age do we want the government involved in that child's education.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO asked whether the intent of the bill is clear enough as to whether it means those students enrolled "in class" as opposed to those enrolled "in school." Since being in school can involve education outside of a building, he surmised that the bill would have to include all the alternative ways for a child to be in school without being in class.

MS. TUPOU referred to earlier mention of the 12 exceptions currently in statute under AS 14.30.010, and said that any type of equivalent education is considered an exemption, such as home school or vocational programs. In response to further questions by Representative Gatto, she confirmed that "having a job" could be an allowable exception if approved by the student's local school board.

REPRESENTATIVE SALMON, referring to his years in boarding school and also his observations of life in the village, said "you could always tell which kids [are performing well] whether they're in school or whether they're in town" and said that he could usually tell which kids, at an early age, would grow up to be productive in life. He expressed his belief that "we need to think about these other kids that are in school" and that if a child doesn't want to learn, he/she "should be released."

[11:45:55 AM](#)

DEBBIE JOSLIN, President, Eagle Forum Alaska, acknowledged there is a dropout problem in the state, but opined that raising the compulsory age of education is a misguided effort that will not accomplish what the sponsors intend. She said making a [17-]year old child who does not want to be in school attend school will not ensure that child learns. For comparison value, she recalled when the legislature had lengthy discussions determining the age of an abortion-seeking child at which parent notification is still required - whether it should be children 16 and younger or 17 and younger. She said, "I was all for making it 17 because I consider that to be a decision that impacts the rest of your life; you can't go back and undo abortion. You can later, once you gain some maturity or there is some stabilization in your life, you can go back and finish

your education." She concluded by saying that she is against this bill.

11:48:22 AM

RORY SCHNEEBERGER, speaking from her experience as a public, private, and home school teacher, said she opposed the principle of HB 345 and the question of whether to raise or lower the compulsory school age. She said that parents should be the ones to make decisions of this magnitude. Regarding the point made of saving money by altering the compulsory school age, she suggested that "we may be sacrificing family life or the cohesion of family life" and that "education should be free, not forced."

11:50:14 AM

CHAIR NEUMAN, upon announcing that Peter Burchell was next to testify, expressed his hope that he would address Section 3 of HB 345 which reads:

**\* Sec. 3.** AS 23.10.340(a) is amended to read:

(a) A minor under **17** [16] years of age may not be employed for more than a combined total of nine hours school attendance and employment in one day. If employed, the minor's work may be performed only between 5 a.m. and 9 p.m. Employment outside school hours may not exceed 23 hours in one week, domestic work and baby-sitting excepted.

CHAIR NEUMAN relayed that some of the alternative schools in Alaska provide their students with the opportunity to work in an industry to gain knowledge, often "the last chance for some of these kids." He highlighted Mr. Burchell's interest and experience in providing kids with this opportunity in his many years of committed service with the alternative school programs, and again requested Mr. Burchell address any concerns regarding the age change proposed in Section 3.

11:51:07 AM

PETER BURCHELL, drawing from his experience as a former principal of Burchell High School, spoke in opposition to HB 345. He relayed that none of these programs enforce the current compulsory school law and opined that [society] should be more concerned with getting kids to "drop back in" and should re-examine the purpose of high school, which for him is to provide

kids with the social, career, and academic skills they need to be successful adults. He said he is "pretty hard-nosed about student behavior" and only had one incidence of fighting within his last nine years at the high school where an average of 10 to 12 students were referred by the courts each year. He informed the committee of the new alternative school program he helped establish in Dillingham and highlighted that 100 percent of parents, with students enrolled in that program, attended the 3 annual parent conferences, the school averaged 85 percent attendance, 80 percent of students are employed within the community, and 8 of the 10 graduates last year had passed all 3 exit exams, in spite of having failed the exams twice in earlier school years.

MR. BURCHELL suggested, referring to discussions on changing school funding, that the reward system proposed in 1991 be revisited. This system, he explained, would apply to all school budgets where the schools are given only 90 percent of their budget, as determined by the October count, with the 10 percent held back to reward those communities and school districts successful in keeping kids in school. He also suggested that the budget allotments for those districts with students who have not met the required competency levels, should be reduced by 10 percent the following year. In conclusion, he acknowledged the well-intended legislation on school reform, but said that "the bottom line is we have to start looking at programs that work" such as Head Start. He characterized the Head Start program as "the most effective dollar spent in education." Furthermore, he relayed the importance of having entire community involvement - agencies, parents, churches - working together to educate kids.

[11:55:20 AM](#)

CHAIR NEUMAN and REPRESENTATIVE GATTO commended Mr. Burchell for his work with communities and the students.

REPRESENTATIVE GARA informed everyone that this year's budget, due to a federal reduction, includes an approximate \$200,000 cut to Head Start funding, and therefore he expressed his hope that Mr. Burchell would remain active on this issue as well.

MR. BURCHELL said he would. He then highlighted that his alternative school program was [identified] as the top in the nation for its parenting and life skills classes for teens and for its success with adjudicated youth.

[11:58:28 AM](#)

PEGGY COWAN, Superintendent, Juneau School District, said she appreciates that the bill advocates for all students in Alaska. She opined that the dropout rate in Alaska and the Juneau School District is too high and that the bill could be a part of reversing this. She noted that 16 is the age when students "push out," and changing the compulsory age to 17 would curb this tendency. Furthermore, at 16, one is too young to plan for the future and look ahead since the ability to make these cause and effects links is located in the part of the brain last to develop, which although not fully developed by 17, is more so than by age 16. For those parents wishing their reluctant child would attend school, the bill would help them encourage the child to stay in school longer, she opined.

MS. COWAN recited statistics from the Juneau School District, which show that those who drop out are largely successful and able to do the work, with 60 percent having passed the state tests at a proficient or advanced level in reading and writing and 50 percent having passed the math portion. Of those Juneau students that do drop out, she continued, 27 percent came back. She relayed that this is not an easy thing to do: to be brave enough to drop out and then to take the initiative to come back. She shared that many of those who return expressed that they wish they hadn't dropped out of school as it placed them further behind. Reflecting on her years as a teacher, Ms. Cowan said she taught many difficult students, the parents of whom returned later to acknowledge the work accomplished by the school. The bottom line, she opined, is that "we are not writing these students off, and that they're not students we should be writing off, and that we can help the parents keep them in school by increasing the age to 17."

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MS. COWAN, in answer to questions, said she could provide the committee with dropout statistics and also confirmed that the district does implement exit surveys. Additionally, in an attempt to stem the dropout rate, she said that the district is currently doing an entrance interview for every freshman to learn more about him/her, make an initial connection with the student, and build from there - the data from which is currently being compiled. She relayed the percentages that have been compiled to date: 39 percent are "administrative drops," which are those students who have been absent and just walked away from school; 25 percent went on to obtain a general equivalency

diploma (GED); 13 percent left for "other" reasons; and 8 percent left for medical reasons.

CHAIR NEUMAN informed the committee that the statewide average dropout rate is approximately 47.3 percent Alaska Natives and 65.2 percent for other races.

MS. COWAN, in response to Representative Thomas's question, explained that exit exams have been done in the past and the district has returned to them as a tool in addressing the dropout rate. She noted that although Juneau's dropout rate is not good, it is less than the state average.

[12:05:34 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO, referring to a statement made earlier by Ms. Cowan, asked whether students who can pass all portions of the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam (HSGQE) ought to be allowed to drop out.

MS. COWAN said she would not agree with this because the exams are not the same as what is expected of a 10th grader; they are given in the 10th grade, but don't test the 10th grade standards. In terms of employment opportunities, students need to have high school level algebra and geometry as a minimum, which the exit exams don't currently examine, she explained.

CHAIR NEUMAN asked what effect the change in the compulsory school age from 16 to 17 would have on Juneau's alternative school students regarding employment.

MS. COWAN said this change would mean more students would be in school yet those with employment needs could always approach the school board. In response to earlier questions by Representative Thomas, she relayed that there were only 3 [Juneau] students who dropped out of school for family reasons, which could mean for employment reasons to support the family, and 11 students who dropped out to join the military. She opined that this is not a huge group that would be affected by a change in the compulsory school age, and that the option to petition the board would still be available to those who wished to do so.

[12:08:05 PM](#)

MS. COWAN, in answer to questions regarding Juneau's dropout rate, said that according to the latest 4-year report,

approximately 700 of the 3,000 middle and high school students dropped out of school: 2 percent from middle school, 29 percent from 9th grade, 27 percent from 10th grade, 22 percent from 11th grade, and 16 percent from 12th grade. Last year, 146 Juneau students dropped out of school, 33 of which were age 16.

REPRESENTATIVE LYNN, in regard to confirming school dropouts, asked whether the district goes to the student's home to determine whether he/she has moved out of the community or perhaps moved out of Alaska.

MS. COWAN explained that the term for those students is "no shows" and they make up over 30 percent of the Juneau dropouts. She said the district presumes that if there was not a request for a transfer of records to another school, that those students have dropped out. However, this is not always the case. Recently, a group of students decided to form a special middle school and enrolled in Yukon-Koyukuk's correspondence school, she relayed. They did drop out of Juneau's school district, so "[the district does] need to own that," but the students had officially transferred to another district. She agreed with an observation made by Representative Lynn that there is some "unknown number" of dropouts who are documented as such but may have simply relocated. For example, students of Coast Guard families who leave town and are documented as dropouts until a transfer of records to another school is requested.

[12:11:41 PM](#)

CHAIR NEUMAN announced his intent to hold HB 345 to allow more time for committee members' questions to be answered.

REPRESENTATIVE LYNN expressed his appreciation of how well Chair Neuman is handling "this very contentious bill" and others.

REPRESENTATIVE THOMAS commented that he and Representative Salmon represent a combined 25 school districts, almost half of the entire number of school districts in Alaska, and that not hearing from the districts on contentious legislation often means "we're hanging out there by ourselves ...."

REPRESENTATIVE SALMON relayed that he has received "30 hits on the computer" in opposition to [changing the compulsory school attendance age].

[12:14:36 PM](#)

CARL ROSE, Executive Director, Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB), announced that the board is in favor of expanding the compulsory school attendance age to run from [age 6 to the earlier of 17 years old or high school graduation]. The board, he said, has not yet provided direction on just how early to extend a child's compulsory school age, although research shows starting sooner is beneficial. As it stands now, he opined, the message sent to "youngsters is that we want you to graduate, but if not, at age 16 it's okay to make a decision to discontinue your education." He then stated that having that additional year could allow the student to be a year closer to meeting the requirements of graduation. At the other end of the spectrum, he relayed that if kids don't come to school early enough, "the issue becomes one of grade-level proficiency" - a critical piece of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). In identifying ethnicity, disability, and socioeconomic poverty as subgroups for English language proficiency, he said that schools are trying to find opportunities for kids addressing these specific areas to obtain the education they need to reach grade-level proficiency. Referring to earlier testimony, he agreed that as a parent he would want as much latitude and say on the education of his child as possible. He then shared his experience growing up in poverty in Kihei, Hawaii, speaking pigeon English and not finding out he was dyslexic until the military and compared this with those similarly challenged in Alaska. He exemplified Lower Kuskokwim Schools where 90 percent of the student body is not proficient in English, of varying ethnic origins, in poverty, identified below grade level, and "are disadvantaged in terms of disabilities." He remarked that these are some of the challenges Alaska faces and said, "What we're asking for is a little more time to help kids be proficient." He asked that public policy be examined to determine if it makes sense to educate kids earlier and "hang on to them a little bit longer," options he wished he had growing up.

REPRESENTATIVE GARA expressed his hope that AASB would lend its support in reversing this year's funding cut for the Head Start program.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO asked Mr. Rose how he would weigh the advantage of earlier education versus the extra year at the later age. He suggested that perhaps if earlier education occurred, there would be no need to address later education because "the kids would be capable and happy and willing to complete high school."

[12:21:48 PM](#)

MR. ROSE said that all the research indicates that educating the earlier years is more effective though his preference would be to extend both ends of a child's total years in school. He opined that if grade-level proficiency could be attained earlier in education, then the goal at the upper end [of schooling] would be attained.

REPRESENTATIVE THOMAS asked for Mr. Rose's opinion on holding the annual student count until the end of the school year.

MR. ROSE expressed his belief that if the count were moved to a later time in the school year, it could possibly result in a forward-funding scenario. He acknowledged some benefit to this but referred to the idea of postponing the count as really involving moving the count date "back," and therefore would actually mean funding the subsequent year.

[12:23:16 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE THOMAS opined that this would be fine as long as the reluctant student isn't being dragged back into school solely for the foundation formula money and then allowed to drop out of school once the funds are acquired. He recalled his early years as a disruptive student and also referred to those prominent Alaskans who, in spite of dropping out of school, are "the leaders in the state and multi-millionaires." Though these exceptions are few in number, he commented that [successes] do happen [regardless of the number of years spent in school].

[12:24:42 PM](#)

CHAIR NEUMAN announced that future presentations which will address additional ideas for improving education such as Mr. Rose's introduction of new internet technology (IT) programs for schools and First Lady Nancy Murkowski's Ready to Read, Ready to Learn Task Force presentation, are scheduled for the House Special Committee on Education.

[HB 345 was held over.]

[12:26:20 PM](#)

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Special Committee on Education meeting was adjourned at 12:26 p.m.