

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE HEALTH, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES STANDING COMMITTEE

March 6, 2008

3:03 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Peggy Wilson, Chair
Representative Bob Roses, Vice Chair
Representative Wes Keller
Representative Paul Seaton
Representative Sharon Cissna

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Anna Fairclough
Representative Berta Gardner

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 332

"An Act relating to elementary and pre-elementary schools."

- MOVED HB 332 OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 384

"An Act requiring the Department of Education and Early Development to establish an electronic education records system and standards and requiring school districts to establish and maintain electronic education records systems; requiring learning plans for students; establishing the Merit Scholarship Task Force; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD AND HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 332

SHORT TITLE: PRE-ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PROGRAMS

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) EDGMON

01/18/08	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/18/08	(H)	HES, FIN
03/06/08	(H)	HES AT 3:00 PM CAPITOL 106

BILL: HB 384

SHORT TITLE: ELECTRONIC EDUCATION RECORDS/STUDENT PLAN
SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) KELLER

02/19/08 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/19/08 (H) HES, FIN
03/06/08 (H) HES AT 3:00 PM CAPITOL 106

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE BRYCE EDGMON,
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Introduced HB 332 as the sponsor.

EDDY JEANS, Director
School Finance and Facilities Section
Department of Education and Early Development (EED)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the hearing on HB 332.

DICK LUTHER, Legislative Liaison
Commissioner's Office
Department of Education and Early Development
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the hearing on HB 384.

JAKE HAMBURG, Student Body President
University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF)
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the hearing on HB 384.

DANNY RAY SWISHER, Student Organizing Director
University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF)
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the hearing on HB 384.

JOSEPH BLANCHARD, Student Government Relations Director
University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF)
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the hearing on HB 384.

BILL BJORK, President
NEA-Alaska
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the hearing on HB 384.

ACTION NARRATIVE

CHAIR PEGGY WILSON called the House Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee meeting to order at [3:03:31 PM](#). Representatives Seaton, Cissna, Keller, and Wilson were present at the call to order. Representative Roses arrived as the meeting was in progress.

HB 332-PRE-ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PROGRAMS

[3:04:36 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 332, "An Act relating to elementary and pre-elementary schools."

[3:05:05 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE BRYCE EDGMON, Alaska State Legislature, introduced HB 332 as the sponsor. Representative Edgmon informed the committee that the bill will allow Head Start and preschool facilities to qualify for federal funding under the Schools and Libraries Universal Services Support Mechanism (E-Rate) program. He explained that the E-Rate federal program provides funding under the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) to promote the use of telecommunication among schools and libraries. In 2004, the USAC issued a decision to drop Alaska preschools and Head Start facilities from this funding due to Alaska's statutory definition of preschool and Head Start facilities. The state is in opposition to the federal decision; however, HB 332 attempts to provide clarification in terms of the definition of preschool and Head Start facilities and to satisfy the federal requirement to participate in the E-Rate program. Representative Edgmon stated that the bill has a zero fiscal note as this is a redistribution of federal funds. He then pointed out, with the passage of the bill, Head Start facilities will be required to apply for a new qualification from the Department of Education and Early Development (EED).

[3:08:49 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON recalled that the E-Rate program gives the schools an opportunity to connect to the Internet for a reduced cost.

[3:09:22 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON affirmed that, when schools and libraries provide telephones, computers, and software, federal funding allows for a discount rate to be applied for the use of Internet services. The discount rate is based on the urban rural distinction and also on the level of poverty of the facilities.

[3:09:53 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON asked whether each state gets a certain amount, and whether some schools will get less if Head Start facilities are added to the program.

[3:10:24 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON said no. Allowing preschool and Head Start to participate will increase the total amount of federal funding that Alaska receives under this program.

[3:10:52 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ROSES related testimony from the Juneau library director that the amount of paperwork required for the E-Rate program cost more money than the discounts saved. He assumed that when a Head Start facility is connected with an existing school program, there would be no cost; however, adding a new school would have start-up costs. He then asked whether, when certification is required from the EED, it then becomes responsible for filing E-Rate documentation.

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REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON deferred part of the question to the EED. He did say that his research shows that Head Start facilities feel this program saves money.

[3:12:45 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ROSES expressed his support of Head Start, but said that he wanted to verify the position of the program. He also stated his interest in the position of the EED.

[3:13:32 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON expressed his understanding that the funding flows directly from the federal government to the entity, without going through the EED.

[3:13:52 PM](#)

EDDY JEANS, Director, School Finance and Facilities Section, Department of Education and Early Development (EED), informed the committee that the E-Rate program has a direct relationship with school districts and libraries, and does not flow through the EED. Mr. Jeans pointed out that the program is voluntary, and an entity can decide whether there is a fiscal benefit. The passage of HB 332 will add state qualified preschools and Head Start facilities to the definition of public schools.

[3:15:14 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ROSES expressed his understanding that funding for Head Start flows through the EED and establishes its qualification.

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MR. JEANS explained that the definition of "schools" in Alaska's statute determines the qualification; therefore, referring to Head Start facilities in the definition will allow Head Start to participate in the E-Rate program.

[3:16:14 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ROSES surmised that the EED is satisfied with the language in the bill.

[3:16:14 PM](#)

MR. JEANS expressed his comfort with the language; however, he said that he did not know whether the language will satisfy the federal government. The EED has made multiple unsuccessful efforts to contact the USAC for clarification on this issue.

[3:17:01 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON asked whether this bill will require the state to fund preschools and Head Start facilities.

[3:17:33 PM](#)

MR. JEANS pointed out that the bill eliminates pre-elementary students from the average daily membership under AS 14.17, the statute that provides for school foundation funding. He noted that there are two components to HB 332; that preschools and Head Start facilities are recognized by the state, and that they have state and federal funding associated with them.

[3:18:15 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA asked whether HB 332 will decrease the funding sources available to Head Start.

[3:18:29 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON said no. In fact, there will be an increase. The funding comes from the national government, and is estimated to be near \$20 million.

[3:19:01 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA surmised that, although the E-Rate program is expensive to administer, that cost can be factored in.

[3:19:40 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON re-stated that the USAC has not responded to the Department of Law, perhaps due to the possibility that additional funding for Alaska may undercut other states' allotments.

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REPRESENTATIVE ROSES moved to report HB 332 out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. Hearing no objection, HB 332 was reported out of the House Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee.

HB 384-ELECTRONIC EDUCATION RECORDS/STUDENT PLAN

[3:21:26 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 384, "An Act requiring the Department of Education and Early Development to establish an electronic education records system and standards and requiring school districts to establish and maintain electronic education records systems; requiring learning plans for students; establishing the

Merit Scholarship Task Force; and providing for an effective date."

[3:22:01 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER informed the committee that HB 384 has three requirements: that the EED sets standards for electronic education records [(EDRs)]; that the education records include learning plans that are implemented and maintained by school districts; and the establishment of a task force to make recommendations on a merit based scholarship program. He explained that the EED will set software and technical standards for the electronic education records and define the process for making changes to records by parents or students. In addition, the bill requires that education records are the property of the student and parents as defined by the Federal Education Records Protection Act (FERPA). Representative Keller continued to explain that the electronic records must be a secure system and include the student learning plan. The customized learning plan will allow for prescriptive and diagnostic teaching, set out levels of achievement, and contain achievement records similar to a portfolio of student work. He stressed that the bill is intentionally not specific and depends on the school district and the EED to define the particulars of what is required from a learning plan, and to provide the accompanying professional development training. Lastly, the bill establishes a task force that will "set the bar" for student achievement and create options for a merit based program. Representative Keller then described scholarship programs in other states. He pointed out that many school districts are creating electronic records and the bill will establish statewide standards and a structure. In fact, the National Conference of State Legislatures has passed policy that encourages advances in technology to customize and monitor each child's educational experience. He referred to further research on this topic that was provided in the committee packet.

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CHAIR WILSON asked whether the educational records are required to be uniform throughout the state. She further asked whether school districts, with this system already in place, would be required to conform.

[3:31:22 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER stressed that this bill is needed immediately so that new systems will be developed in a compatible and consistent way.

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CHAIR WILSON observed that No Child Left Behind (NCLB) allows for annual testing. She asked for a further description of the fiscal note.

[3:33:46 PM](#)

DICK LUTHER, Legislative Liaison, Commissioner's Office, Department of Education and Early Development, informed the committee that there are two components to the fiscal note; the task force and the electronic recordkeeping. The task force portion is estimated to be \$15,000. The recordkeeping portion is based on the costs for compiling the existing records system and is estimated to be \$1.5 million.

[3:35:23 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON asked how many schools presently have the same database.

[3:35:46 PM](#)

MR. LUTHER answered that the EED presently requires each district to have a system that is compatible with the state. The bill will require additions to the present recordkeeping system.

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CHAIR WILSON asked whether there will be federal grant money to fund the additional recordkeeping costs to schools.

[3:36:43 PM](#)

MR. LUTHER expressed his understanding that the federal grant money is gone; in fact, it is likely that the new costs will come from the general fund (GF). He opined that school districts will expect state funding to pay for the additional recordkeeping.

[3:37:19 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA asked whether there is already good correspondence between schools and the state, and whether schools are using compatible software.

[3:37:42 PM](#)

MR. LUTHER opined that some districts will have to expand capacity to meet the requirements of electronic records, particularly with the increase of information needed on students under the merit scholarship program.

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REPRESENTATIVE KELLER reminded that committee that the bill does not specify, except that the merit scholarship program will use the electronic educational record system. He asked whether a portion of the \$3.5 million grant was used to assign students identification numbers and create the beginning of a data base, at the direction of the legislature.

[3:39:39 PM](#)

MR. LUTHER expressed his belief that the existing system was created to comply with the requirements of NCLB legislation. Adding additional elements, such as the individual education plan, will require increasing the capacity of the computer program.

[3:40:34 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON asked for an estimate of the cost, per child, to develop an individual education plan (IEP) for special education students.

[3:41:06 PM](#)

MR. LUTHER advised that he would get that information from the special education department.

[3:41:12 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON expressed his concern that the fiscal note does not cover the time needed for teachers and administrators to prepare individual educational plans. Furthermore, the increase to the base student allocation could be used up by new burdens to school districts.

[3:42:57 PM](#)

MR. LUTHER confirmed that the fiscal note does not include the cost that school districts would bear to develop the educational plans. He said that he would provide an estimate of the cost to write one IEP.

[3:43:00 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER emphasized that HB 384 does not establish an individual educational learning plan comparable to those that meet special education requirements. Moreover, there is room for school districts to develop their own model.

[3:44:03 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ROSES called the committee's attention to page 3, line 2, of the bill and read, "A school district shall develop a student learning plan for each student enrolled in a school. The plan must include: diagnostic assignments and goals; a description of optional supplemental or tutorial recommendation for implementation by the parent or guardian of the student for advancement toward high school graduation." He then described his experience with student identification numbers that began with special education students and now includes all students. In Anchorage, elementary school teachers are using computers to download state assessment tests, track each student's progress, and craft lesson plans. For a class of 27 to 32 students, this level of individualization is impossible. Furthermore, implementation of the program, at the elementary level only, has taken seven years and cost \$7 million dollars.

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CHAIR WILSON added that some schools have student portfolios that allow kids to know what work has yet to be learned.

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REPRESENTATIVE KELLER stated that the intent of the bill is to establish a statewide structure so if students transfer between the 53 school districts, their educational history and plan will transfer instantly. He acknowledged that the fiscal note does not include all costs; however, by working together, the school districts, the EED, and the unions can keep costs down.

[3:51:13 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ROSES further explained that the language in the bill says "individual instruction plan." There are programs available that allow for individual instruction on a computer at the high school level. These programs require a computer for each student. In addition, the term "individual educational plan" has meaning in education law. Representative Roses then asked how the scholarship program in the bill differs from the existing University of Alaska (UA) Scholars program.

[3:53:38 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER stated that the UA Scholars program is limited. He opined that the real problem is that the state educational model is out of date. One-third of Alaska's schools have less than 100 kids and the placement of highly qualified teachers requires a different model today. Likewise, putting in statute the requirement of an individual educational plan, without details, will lead teachers and schools districts to develop a new model, perhaps using correspondence school guidelines. Representative Keller challenged schools to customize learning for kids.

[3:56:40 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ROSES expressed his concern that individual education plans are often interpreted by parents in different ways and can lead to lawsuits and court-ordered mediation. For example, special education IEPs often end up in court where the court decides the meaning of a particular IEP, no matter what has been defined by the school district. Representative Roses' final point was that the UA Scholars program, that grants scholarships to those who are in the top ten percent of their high school class, is a four year, full tuition scholarship to any UA campus. He opined that this is a very flexible and successful program that may be expanded.

[3:58:58 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER noted that on page 2, line 2, the bill allows access to the educational plan by students and their parents or legal guardians. He said that he felt this, and other provisions in the bill, will allow a process of corrections to the plan that will reduce parental concerns and confirm goals for the student. Regarding the merit based scholarship, Representative Keller re-stated that the task force will be investigating options for Alaskan students.

[4:00:54 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA expressed her belief that an electronic report is a good idea, but the time and cost are high. Similar programs in other states have had mixed success. She suggested that a student learning plan could also include a focus on the student's future career potential, and could guide a student to their strengths as they are revealed during the years of schooling. Representative Cissna pointed out that the dates for the creation of the task force are confusing, although she supported the idea of the task force and felt that its responsibilities could be expanded to work on other educational questions.

[4:05:42 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER responded that the time table for the task force can be adjusted. He spoke of his meeting with national education officials and the beginning of the idea that each student should have an independent education plan. Even on a national level, the process of setting standards has just begun. Alaska can keep more local control by taking these steps before a federal mandate is issued. He further explained that future software may be shareware; thus, there are many possibilities.

[4:08:34 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON observed that there is individual tracking of students, and the growth model of student achievement, that follows a student throughout the state. He asked whether the only piece missing from the current tracking system is the individual education plan.

[4:09:55 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER stated that he is not familiar with the existing program; his goal is to address the educational outcome of students. He concluded that the EED plan of assigning identification numbers for the purpose of educational outcomes needs to include diagnosis, prescription, and the use of technology.

[4:11:07 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON reminded the committee that the Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development adopts standards and the present tracking system will reveal if kids meet those

standards. He cautioned about the possibility of the committee making changes to education standards. Representative Seaton expressed his satisfaction that it is now possible to follow each student throughout the state, so that relevant parties know whether a student is meeting their standards for growth. He asked whether parents of non special educational students will expect individual education plans equal to the scope of those written for special education students.

[4:13:56 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER answered that this is not a problem now; IEPs are very specific, and the intent of the bill is that the district will keep records for every student, but not necessarily an IEP. The current technology is available to make improvements in education overall.

[4:16:00 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON stressed that there is a problem with writing a loose definition that must be settled in court. He strongly recommended that the bill would be improved by a specific definition that distinguishes the educational learning plan from a special education IEP.

[4:17:23 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ROSES asked Mr. Luther for his position on the use of the language in this bill.

[4:18:35 PM](#)

MR. LUTHER opined that the bill requires that an individual learning plan will be developed for each and every student. He further stated that, once a plan is developed, it must be followed, or there can be repercussions.

[4:19:12 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ROSES asked whether Mr. Luther saw any other problems with the terminology in the bill.

[4:19:33 PM](#)

MR. LUTHER stated that the time factor to develop a plan for each student, including meeting with parents to reach agreement,

is a time consuming process. He assumed each plan would also need to be updated on a continual basis.

[4:20:31 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON suggested the need for year around school.

[4:20:44 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER re-stated his choice to keep the language loose so that the EED can answer questions through regulation and keep the issue out of court.

[4:21:51 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON opined that the courts look at the statute that is written by the legislature, not at the EED regulations. Regulations that are not as broad as the statute will be challenged.

[4:22:59 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON suggested that there should be further testimony from the EED on this topic.

[4:23:19 PM](#)

MR. LUTHER offered that special education specialists and Director Les Morse may provide relevant testimony.

[4:23:56 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER noted that officials from the EED have had copies of the bill for two weeks.

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REPRESENTATIVE SEATON referred to the task force and stated that research shows that a merit based scholarship program is targeted at upper and middle income families; furthermore, there is already a merit based scholarship program in place. He questioned the focus on another merit based program.

[4:26:08 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER explained that HB 384 is relevant to education outcomes and the need to raise the bar for students.

He listed statistics of educational indicators in Alaska and stated the need for incentives to raise student achievement.

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CHAIR WILSON stated that Alaska spends more on education because of the high cost of education in rural areas. She stated her support of the merit based scholarship program.

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REPRESENTATIVE ROSES emphasized that the state currently has that program in place through UA Scholars. The scholarships are available to those in the top ten percent of their high school senior class and are for tuition. He pointed out that areas of low economic status still have ten percent of students that will qualify. He stated that he also felt that there would be confusion with the National Merit Scholarship Program and suggested further consideration of the title. Representative Roses gave an example to illustrate that elimination of the UA program in favor of the program in HB 384 will stop many kids from qualifying for the scholarship.

[4:32:06 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON observed that Wrangell graduates about 30 to 40 kids and the students are aware of their academic placement in the class.

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REPRESENTATIVE ROSES warned against the creation of a program that will replace the existing UA scholarship program. He added that his experience is that many available scholarships go unused and there is a need to develop a clearinghouse for scholarships.

[4:35:55 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER surmised that many high school students feel that graduating from high school is a sufficiently high goal. He expressed his hope that today's technology will keep kids engaged more in learning.

[4:37:20 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ROSES spoke of his desire to explore a variable certificate of graduation model. This would allow schools to issue different type of diplomas that represent varying levels of scholastic achievement. He observed, however, that the committee generally does not have time to study issues on the substance of education.

[4:39:15 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER encouraged the committee to send HB 384 to the House Finance Committee so these issues can be addressed.

[4:39:58 PM](#)

CHAIR WILSON reminded the committee that the House Finance Committee does not make policy, and this is the committee where policy decisions should be made.

[4:40:19 PM](#)

JAKE HAMBURG, Student Body President, University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF), informed the committee that many elementary and middle school students and their parents give up on the idea of college due to the excessive costs. As living expenses and the cost of college increases many students must work and assume loans; in fact, many students work full time, which is detrimental to their academic achievements. Mr. Hamburg urged the committee to support a well researched and broadly supported merit aid scholarship program, the Alaska Achievers Incentive Program.

[4:43:03 PM](#)

DANNY RAY SWISHER, Student Organizing Director, University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF), expressed his pleasure that the scope of the bill includes a systematic, rather than programmatic, approach. However, his concern is that the task force will only be investigating the options for merit based scholarships and will not consider merit aid. His research indicates that other states have been successful in the institution of merit aid scholarships that consider the merits, and the needs, of the most worthy students.

[4:45:02 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ROSES asked how Mr. Swisher was paying for his education.

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MR. SWISHER stated that he is currently working and is using the GI bill; however, he has decided to quit school after obtaining his associate degree.

[4:46:02 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ROSES asked what percentage of his college expenses is being paid for by the GI bill.

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MR. SWISHER explained that the GI bill pays a set amount; his funding sources are not keeping pace with the rising cost of education at UAF.

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CHAIR WILSON asked whether Mr. Swisher has a family.

[4:47:12 PM](#)

MR. SWISHER said yes.

[4:47:16 PM](#)

JOSEPH BLANCHARD, Student Government Relations Director, University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF), opined that there is more of a benefit for students entering and continuing in college when scholarships are a partnership of merit and needs based components. He stated that needs based scholarships are financially burdensome for the state and merit based scholarships help those who have other resources. He noted that student government at UAF supports the ideas of HB 384, if not all of the details.

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REPRESENTATIVE ROSES asked whether Mr. Blanchard has an opinion on the other components of the bill, that are not related to the scholarship task force.

[4:50:21 PM](#)

MR. BLANCHARD declined to give a further opinion of the bill.

[4:50:48 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ROSES reminded the testifiers that legislators must look at all aspects of the bill.

[4:51:24 PM](#)

BILL BJORK, President, NEA-Alaska, informed the committee that NEA-Alaska represents 13,000 teachers and education support professionals who work in public schools in Alaska. His organization supports many of the goals of HB 384, and the statement that, "all students are special." However, he pointed out that the fiscal note reflects the fiscal impact of this bill to the EED, but does not address the cost to the kindergarten through grade 12 public schools that would have to implement this plan. Firstly, the ability to accomplish the goal of a comprehensive data management system, that allows portfolios to be shared, is far beyond the capabilities of existing public school technology. Secondly, the first deadline in the bill provides for plans to be implemented, for grades kindergarten through grade four, in 2009. Mr. Bjork estimated that this would involve writing plans for 49,000 students and would take about 35 full time employees an entire school year to complete. He agreed with the need to assess each student and instantly transfer data, but cautioned that this capability can not be reached overnight. Mr. Bjork reminded the committee that in the 1970s, when the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act became law and required the creation of IEPs, there was a promise that the federal government would pay 40 percent of the cost. In reality, federal support has never exceeded 17 percent. He urged the committee not to burden public schools with another unfunded mandate that is impossible to meet and that will expose schools to litigation.

[4:57:45 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER asked whether Mr. Bjork anticipates that a portion of the increase in money to schools will be spent on a system that will lead to improvements in the transfer of student records.

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MR. BJORK said no. He explained that the passage of HB 273 will allocate money back to regular education students from special education budgets. In Alaska, the impact of intensive needs

students is centered in the metropolitan area schools because those areas of the state have support services available for special needs kids. After those costs are balanced out, the additional \$100 per student mostly will be taken by inflation; there will not be much left to implement a comprehensive data management system.

5:00:16 PM

REPRESENTATIVE ROSES noted that NCLB mandates the institution of policies and procedures to deal with deficiencies in programs. He pointed out that there has been recent funding for remediation, and early intervention for reading programs, and reading scores have been improving over the last three to five years. Representative Roses then remarked:

Are we having 100 percent success? No. Are we having a better shot at it than we did a few years ago? Yes. Can we do more? Absolutely. But does [HB 384] do it? I don't think so.

5:02:04 PM

MR. BJORK pointed out that more students are taking advanced placement and baccalaureate classes than ever before, and schools are working diligently. He clarified that the accomplishment of the laudable goal of HB 384 will take a true recognition of the cost of personnel. Mr. Bjork emphasized that the focus should be on what is best for Alaskan students, whether they are striving to attend college or not. He suggested that a scholarship program should be flexible and should also include funds for students to attend trade schools to train for the highly technical jobs that are available in Alaska.

CHAIR WILSON said that public testimony on HB 384 would remain open.

5:04:12 PM

REPRESENTATIVE ROSES recommended inviting two expert witnesses from the Anchorage School District to testify at the next hearing on HB 384.

5:05:03 PM

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON requested additional testimony from the EED on the bill.

[Although not formally stated, HB 384 was held over.]

[5:05:35 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Health, Education and Social Services Standing Committee* meeting was adjourned at 5:05 p.m.