

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

January 30, 2009

8:07 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Paul Seaton, Chair  
Representative Cathy Engstrom Munoz, Vice Chair  
Representative Bryce Edgmon  
Representative Wes Keller  
Representative Peggy Wilson  
Representative Robert L. "Bob" Buch  
Representative Berta Gardner

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

OVERVIEW(S):

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT'S VOCATIONAL  
EDUCATION PROGRAM AT MT. EDGE CUMBE HIGH SCHOOL AND THE WORKKEYS  
PROGRAM

- HEARD

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT - ALASKA VOCATIONAL  
TECHNICAL CENTER (AVTEC)

- HEARD

UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA - WORKFORCE TRAINING PROGRAM

- HEARD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

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

Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided information regarding the vocational programs that are currently offered at Mt. Edgecumbe High School, and responded to questions.

MARCIA OLSON, Education Specialist  
Teaching and Learning Support  
Department of Education and Early Development (EED)  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided an overview of the WorkKeys Program, also known as the Alaska Career Ready Program.

CLARK "CLICK" BISHOP, Commissioner  
Department of Labor & Workforce Development (DOLWD)  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of the WorkKeys Program, and provided information regarding the Alaska Vocational Technical Center (AVTEC).

GUY BELL, Assistant Commissioner  
Office of the Commissioner  
Department of Labor & Workforce Development (DLWD)  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented an overview of the department.

FRED ESPOSITO, Director  
Alaska Vocational Technical Center (AVTEC)  
Division of Business Partnership  
Department of Labor & Workforce Development (DLWD)  
Seward, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented an overview on behalf of the AVTEC.

FRED VILLA, Associate Vice President  
Workforce Development  
Statewide Programs, University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA)  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented an overview on behalf of the University of Alaska Workforce Programs.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[8:07:22 AM](#)

**CHAIR PAUL SEATON** called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:07 a.m. Representatives Seaton, Keller,

Munoz, Wilson, Edgmon, Gardner, and Buch were present at the call to order.

OVERVIEW(S):

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT'S VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAM AT MT. EDGE CUMBE HIGH SCHOOL AND THE WORKKEYS PROGRAM

[8:07:36 AM](#)

CHAIR SEATON announced that the first order of business would be an overview from the Department of Education and Early Development on the vocational education program at Mt. Edgecumbe High School, and the WorkKeys Program.

[8:09:33 AM](#)

EDDY JEANS, Director, School Finance and Facilities Section, Department of Education and Early Development (EED), listed the vocational programs that are currently offered at Mt. Edgecumbe High School: construction, health and emergency medical technician (EMT), computer, welding, introduction to business, and business concepts.

[8:11:28 AM](#)

MARCIA OLSON, Education Specialist, Teaching and Learning Support (TLS), Department of Education and Early Development (EED), said EED refers to the WorkKeys Program as the Alaska Career Ready Program because it includes more than just WorkKeys elements. The program ensures that Alaskan students, and job-seekers, have the applied academic, or foundational, skills that are required in various careers. Three of those foundational skills are: applied mathematics, reading for information, and locating information in visual formats.

[8:13:31 AM](#)

MS. OLSON pointed out that Alaska Career Ready provides the opportunity for students/ job-seekers to: assess their foundational skills, practice and improve those skills, learn what foundational skills are required by various careers, and document their skills by earning a nationally recognized certificate called a Career Readiness Certificate. The program is a joint effort between EED and the Department of Labor & Workforce Development (DLWD).

8:14:44 AM

MS. OLSON explained that the Alaska Career Ready Program is based on WorkKeys, a job skills analysis and assessment system developed by the ACT Company ("ACT"), a company known for its college entrance exam. The WorkKeys system is housed in ACT's Workforce Development Division, she said. The WorkKeys system is specifically geared towards foundational skills as they are used in the workplace; establishing specific skill sets, skill levels, and a measurement system so that employers, students, and job seekers have a common denominator when referencing career requirements. The system helps a student to make a direct connection between school and what is required for job placement.

8:15:44 AM

MS. OLSON said ACT analyzed over 15,000 specific jobs, called job profiling, in order to develop the WorkKeys system. Through these profiles, ACT determined the skill areas important for most careers, which includes the three aforementioned foundational skills. Within each of the skill areas, ACT determined varying complexities or levels of the skills, and each job profile gives a report on the level of every skill that is required for success in that type of a job. The job profiles are kept in a database which ACT makes available to the public. This job profiling is the basis of the WorkKeys system. Based on those job profiles, ACT developed assessments for each skill area, enabling individuals to discover how their abilities compare with specific skills required for various career opportunities. She related that a person must score the minimum level on assessments for each of the three aforementioned foundational skills to earn a nationally recognized Career Readiness Certificate. This certificate is sanctioned by the ACT Company and lists the skills in which a person has demonstrated proficiency. Various forms of the WorkKeys system are used in approximately 25 states, by employers, schools, and job training programs.

8:17:42 AM

MS. OLSON pointed out that the Alaska Career Ready system also has an instructional component, to be used for skill improvements. This web-based instruction is provided by an independent curriculum company, the Worldwide Interactive Network (WIN). The software provides practice tests, or

placement tests, to determine initial skill levels. The program has a built-in management system that records each learner's progress, thus providing an individualized program that anyone can work through on their own.

MS. OLSON said current education regulations require that assessments for this program be given to Alaska's public school students starting with the 2009-2010 school year. Eleventh graders will receive WorkKeys basements in the three foundational areas: applied mathematics, reading for information, and locating information. Sixth and eighth graders will be required to take the informal, practice placement tests that are part of the instructional software; not actual WorkKeys tests. She informed members that EED is currently providing assessment training and technical support for Alaska's schools.

[8:20:08 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MUNOZ requested clarity on which students would be taking the tests.

MS. OLSON said that eleventh graders will be required to take the actual WorkKeys test, and the sixth and eighth graders will be administered the informal placement test.

[8:21:18 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON requested further explanation of how the test will assist someone in determining their ability areas.

MS. OLSON explained that the test can indicate what skills a person holds in the various WorkKeys areas. The test taker will then be able to access job profiles for different careers and compare their skills to those that are recommended for success in a particular career.

MR. JEANS clarified that this assessment does not determine that a person is qualified for a specific job, rather it tells an employer that a person has the skills to be trained to do a specific job.

[8:22:02 AM](#)

MS. OLSON, in further response to Representative Wilson, agreed that the assessment can be used for career information and career guidance. However, she explained, the skills tested by WorkKeys are for basic applied academics and are not for

determining how good someone is in welding, computer programming, or other technical skills.

8:23:24 AM

REPRESENTATIVE BUCH asked for statistical information regarding how many employers, nationwide, utilize this program.

MS. OLSON said she will prepare a response to the committee, if it is available from the ACT Company.

8:23:45 AM

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER inquired how BP Exploration (Alaska) Inc. (BP) utilizes this program.

MS. OLSON said she believes that BP requires an aspect of the WorkKeys assessments for its process technician jobs in conjunction with other requirements such as education and drug testing. WorkKeys assessments are offered at some of the state's job centers, she continued, and at the University of Alaska, Anchorage, Chugiak-Eagle River Campus. In further response to Representative Gardner, Ms. Olson agreed that there are alternatives for people who do not go through the standard education process.

8:25:04 AM

MS. OLSON, in response to Chair Seaton, said a "crosswalk" of the WorkKeys skills with Alaska's state standards has not been done because the WorkKeys Program and testing are fairly new. "We are looking at ... comparing the scores of kids who took the high school qualifying exam and then the WorkKeys to see how they did, but we don't have a lot of data on that yet," she said.

CHAIR SEATON specified that the committee wants to make sure the state is not layering tests that measure the same thing. He said he would appreciate it if the department would specifically look at this. Career testing is vital, particularly for students who are not proceeding to college, but it is important not to duplicate and put another burden on the classroom and the achievement of those skills, he stressed.

8:27:24 AM

CHAIR SEATON questioned the completeness of the WorkKeys sample certificate, contained in the committee packet.

MS. OLSON noted that the sample National Career Readiness Certificate was only copied on the front side. The back of an actual certificate, she continued, provides a list of the skills that were demonstrated. She said the last two pages of that same handout have a complete listing of all the WorkKeys skills and their different levels.

[8:28:32 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON pondered the effectiveness of the lower grade children taking the WorkKeys test.

MS. OLSON reiterated that sixth and eighth graders take an on-line practice test; the eleventh graders take the actual WorkKeys test. In further response to Representative Wilson, she said the department hopes schools will use the information from the sixth and eighth grade practice tests for career planning and career guidance so that students will be aware of the requirements for different jobs and understand that the academic skills they are learning now will be used later in the workplace.

MR. JEANS interjected that Ms. Olson visits the school districts to provide appropriate teacher training for administration of the tests. He said she also instructs teachers how to utilize the assessment results, and how to guide students in accessing information on various jobs to see how their scores relate to career possibilities.

[8:30:21 AM](#)

MS. OLSON, in response to a further question from Representative Wilson, replied that the department is establishing a follow-up process to ascertain that the school districts are using the practice test results to guide students. She reminded the committee that the program is still in its infancy. Her follow up work, with phone calls, emails, and report review indicates which schools are using the various aspects of the program.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON commented that it would be good to know which schools are participating so they can receive help and be more successful.

MR. JEANS reiterated that the State Board of Education & Early Development passed regulations that will require these assessments to be given in the 2009-2010 school year. A pilot program was implemented in various school districts to determine how to deal with kinks in the program before the full implementation. Under the regulation, the program was to be implemented this year, however the department required more time to prepare.

[8:32:24 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER asked about the funding for the program.

MS. OLSON stated her belief that general funds were received to pay ACT for the WorkKeys tests and to pay for the instructional software site licenses for each of the school districts. In further response, she said that funds are not directed specifically to the districts.

[8:33:37 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER queried how Alaska's scores compare nationwide.

MS. OLSON replied that comparisons have not been tracked. She offered to look into whether the ACT Company would be willing to provide comparison data between states.

[8:34:29 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MUNOZ inquired how the participation requirement will be implemented.

MS. OLSON said that the school districts will be required to participate, when the regulations go into effect in the 2009-2010 school year. However, the department has already made all of the tools available to the districts, and there have been some pilot programs over the past two years. In further response, she explained how an eleventh grader, dissatisfied with their scores, may re-take the test in the same year or in twelfth grade; provided they utilize the instructional software prior to re-testing. The department is coordinating with the university system to coordinate using the test scores when reviewing enrollment applications.

MR. JEANS reminded members that this is a collaborative effort with DLWD.

[8:36:50 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE BUCH asked about presenting career information to grade school students.

MS. OLSON pointed out that many schools have career activities in the lower grades. The WIN instructional courseware has hundreds of career activity lessons geared towards kindergarten through eighth grade students. She said she shows all of these different resources to the teachers and school counselors when she conducts training.

[8:38:43 AM](#)

MS. OLSON, in response to Chair Seaton, agreed to provide log-in information to committee members that will allow them to access the referenced tests and materials.

[8:39:43 AM](#)

CHAIR SEATON commented that vocational education is a focus of the Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development and previous legislatures, which may account, he opined, for why this program has become a requirement in the schools.

The committee took a brief at ease from 8:41 a.m. to 8:45 a.m.

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT - ALASKA VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL CENTER (AVTEC)

[8:45:15 AM](#)

CHAIR SEATON announced that the next order of business would be an overview of the Department of Labor & Workforce Development's Alaska Vocational Technical Center (AVTEC).

[8:45:28 AM](#)

CLARK "CLICK" BISHOP, Commissioner, Department of Labor & Workforce Development (DLWD), outlined his interest in the WorkKeys project, and for working with the Department of Education and Early Development (EED). Alaska's schools can do better in preparing high school graduates for the work world/higher education, he opined. WorkKeys five areas of protocol are the same areas that are considered when the Joint Apprenticeship & Training Council (JATC) recruits for

apprentices. A students "A" performance in Barrow and a "B" in Ketchikan do not mean the same thing, yet that is how students are ranked, he argued. As an example, he spoke about a welding program that was attended by students with a "B" average in mathematics. The welding class had to be put on hold for a week to allow a tutor to provide basic mathematics instruction.

COMMISSIONER BISHOP stated his belief that WorkKeys could help move up Alaska's graduation rate from 62 percent to 85 or 90 percent, because it enables students to begin reviewing 15,000 job possibilities as early as sixth grade. School counselors cannot serve every student in the state, he contended, and that is why the legislature funded the youth career guides in the schools. WorkKeys is another tool to help students become interested in a career. Seeing the name of a job that a student has never heard of might spike an interest that will lead them to investigate the job further, whereas prior to WorkKeys a student would not have had the information to even ask the question.

[8:50:19 AM](#)

CHAIR SEATON agreed that coordination between the departments is essential because of the overlap between education and workforce development.

COMMISSIONER BISHOP offered to work individually with committee members to help them gain a better understanding of the WorkKeys Program.

REPRESENTATIVE BUCH concurred that these issues are inter-related. He noted that the House Finance Committee will be the ultimate determine, and he urged members to attend the House Labor and Commerce Standing Committee meetings to learn more about these issues.

[8:52:15 AM](#)

COMMISSIONER BISHOP commenced with his presentation regarding AVTEC. He noted that there is no "I" in the spelling of the word "T-E-A-M". To be successful in fulfilling its mission, DLWD must seek the counsel of others. He read from a letter he recently wrote to President Hamilton, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, regarding the state's current and future skills gap, and the current wage export of \$1.7 billion:

I am seeking your support to develop a strategy for the post-secondary systems for career and technical education in this state to assure that they are aligned to train and educate our citizens without needless duplications of programs and state ... or federal investments.

COMMISSIONER BISHOP emphasized that his department works diligently to prevent needless duplication of effort.

[8:55:53 AM](#)

GUY BELL, Assistant Commissioner, Office of the Commissioner, Department of Labor & Workforce Development (DLWD), outlined the two broad functions within the department's mission, as indicated on slide 2 they are: 1) a focus on workplace safety, and 2) legal workforce conditions. He said the first is regulatory in nature and the second relates to the department's workforce development efforts.

MR. BELL described how the office of Research and Analysis, Division of Administration, DLWD, provides basic labor market information, including demographic data and workforce projections. The department monitors training program performance and provides reports to the legislature on a regular basis regarding various labor market data. For instance, today the department is releasing a report to the legislature on nonresidents employed in Alaska, the percentage of nonresidents, and wage information by occupation and industry.

[8:57:33 AM](#)

MR. BELL said the Division of Employment Security offers basic employment assistance through the department's 23 job centers located throughout the state, as well as assistance through a web-based labor exchange system. The Alaska Vocational Technical Center (AVTEC), located in Seward and Anchorage, is the department's primary direct vocational training provider. The Division of Business Partnership offers grants to entities that provide training. The Division of Employment Security pays unemployment insurance benefits and offers training accounts to individuals identified as program eligible. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation assists people who have disabilities in obtaining employment.

MR. BELL, in regard to the regulatory aspect, said DLWD enforces the state's wage and hour laws and focuses on workplace safety

through the Occupational Safety & Health Program. The Division of Workers' Compensation and the Alaska Workers' Compensation Appeals Commission adjudicate compensation claims. Lastly, he pointed out that the department collects unemployment insurance taxes.

[8:59:28 AM](#)

MR. BELL discussed Alaska's labor market [slide 3]. He said the department's economist's project that Alaska's workforce will grow by 44,000 jobs between 2006 and 2016. He offered to provide a link to the department's web site where members will find the department's recently released report on workforce projections. In response to Representative Wilson, Mr. Bell explained that the workforce baseline was the year 2006 and the projection goes forward to 2016. He noted that this projection does not include construction of the main gas line, and the department intends to add a layer of data regarding gas line workforce projects.

[9:01:14 AM](#)

MR. BELL, in response to Representative Munoz, confirmed that there is an occupational projection for the career sectors that the 44,000 jobs will be in, and he agreed to provide that data to the committee.

[9:01:31 AM](#)

MR. BELL said Alaska's workforce is aging and focus must be brought to for replacing the highly skilled workers who are retiring. Alaska's current unemployment rate is 7.5 percent, indicating that in any month there are a significant number of people seeking employment. Alaska imports workers, he continued, and last year it imported 78,000 workers, about 20 percent of the state's workforce.

[9:02:22 AM](#)

MR. BELL pointed out that in 2007 nonresident workers earned over \$1.7 billion in wages in Alaska, about 13 percent of the state's total wage and salary earnings, slide 4. Nonresident workers in the high wage, high skill jobs category accounted for about 29 percent of oil industry workers, which is down a couple of percentage points from the last year that data was available; however, the earnings increased from \$327 million to \$364

million. A significant amount of money is leaving Alaska's economy, he remarked.

[9:03:51 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER noted that slide 4 indicates nonresident earnings just over 13 percent of the state's total wages and salaries, but slide 3 shows that 20 percent of the workers are nonresident.

MR. BELL said there is a typo on slide 4 and directed the committee to correct the data year to reflect 2007, not 2006. He explained that many of the nonresident workers are relatively low wage and seasonal, so that brings down their share of the total earnings relative to their proportion in the population. For instance, a large number of nonresident workers are in the seafood processing and tourism industries. In response to Chair Seaton, he confirmed that the title on slide 4 should read 2007, not 2006.

[9:06:02 AM](#)

MR. BELL stated that the department's other area of focus is Alaska's youth; slide 5. He introduced Tom Nelson, Director of the Division of Employment Security, seated in the gallery, as the lead for the department's connection with the WorkKeys Program. He informed members that every year about 11,000 Alaskans who become 18, and there is a significant number of Alaskans between the ages of 16 and 19 who are completely disengaged, being out of school or work, and they need to be reached.

[9:06:32 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON surmised that youth who are not working or going to school tend to get into trouble.

MR. BELL stated his belief that it is a probability and said it is difficult to reach these young people. The department has specific programs focused on connecting with the those that are disengaged and likely to get into trouble.

[9:07:14 AM](#)

CHAIR SEATON inquired whether WorkKeys is used in any of the state's youth detention facilities.

MR. BELL replied he must defer to an expert as to how WorkKeys is delivered to these facilities. The department receives some funding that is targeted toward entities offering services to high risk youth, he said. Additionally, grants are available to these organizations, and the department has a partnership with the federal Job Corps program.

[9:08:35 AM](#)

MR. BELL acknowledged that there are issues with Alaska's graduation rates and with Alaska's youth leaving the state for opportunities elsewhere; slide 5. He opined that an 18-year-old leaving the state for work or school may not return, whereas a person receiving vocational or university education in Alaska is likely to stay.

CHAIR SEATON recalled statistics that support Mr. Bell's aforementioned information.

[9:10:08 AM](#)

MR. BELL said the department's total budget, based on its fiscal year 2010 request, is just over \$175 million; slide 6. The general fund amount is \$31 million, a very small share of the total state operating budget. Federal funds account for \$85 million of the department's budget and \$58 million comes from other state funding sources.

[9:10:49 AM](#)

MR. BELL drew attention to a bar graph for funding of the workforce development program; slide 7. He explained that the state's adult education program is administered by DLWD through grants - funded with a combination of federal and general fund dollars. Vocational rehabilitation is largely federally funded, but it does receive a match from state general funds. The business services component administers the department's Workforce Investment Act programs, the Alaska Youth First programs, and the construction academies, and that it focuses on providing grants to entities for training and associated services. He explained that "employment and training," depicted on the graph, is the Job Center Network and Labor Exchange System and unemployment insurance is for the payment of insurance benefits as well as the collection of insurance revenues. The department also offers grants to regional training centers throughout the state that have been identified for funding by the legislature. The department provides grants

for the operation of construction academies located in Anchorage, Matanuska-Susitna Valley, Kenai, Juneau, and Ketchikan. The department is pleased with the success of this newly established program, he added. The total state general fund investment to DLWD is about \$22 million.

[9:13:18 AM](#)

MR. BELL, in response to Representative Munoz, stated that DLWD provides funding to school districts, but it is limited and designated by the legislature. He said the department's engagement with school districts is through the construction academies and the Alaska Youth First program; focused towards putting career guides in the schools. In addition, the regional training centers are generally affiliated with school districts. For example, the regional training center in Kotzebue is a function of the school district, and is effectively a post-secondary component of the school district. The Northwest Alaska Career and Technical Education Center in Nome is a component of the two school districts in that region, providing boarding services and basic vocational training and career preparation.

[9:14:45 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE BUCH asked whether AVTEC is patterned after "the Mt. Edgecombe example".

MR. BELL answered that it is focused on short-term exposure to vocational opportunities. High school students enroll and only go to the school for a few weeks, then return to their local/home school.

[9:15:48 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER inquired about the school funding for the various training centers.

MR. BELL said Galena is affiliated with the local school district and receives funding from the legislature through the regional training center appropriation. Nenana is not identified and does not receive funding, however, Kotzebue does. He added that was designated through a temporary act, by the legislature, called the Technical Vocational Education Program (TVEP). The legislature mandated that employee contributions to unemployment insurance be set aside for this program. The legislature stipulated how the funds are shared among the

university system, AVTEC, and the regional training centers. The department carries this component in their budget for distribution to the centers that provide workforce training.

[9:17:27 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON requested further information regarding the department's budget.

MR. BELL said the predominant funding source for DLWD is federal. In further response, he explained that the department's general fund budget is \$31 million, with \$22 million specified for workforce. The total budget is \$175 million, with \$110 million directed to workforce development - primarily comprised of federal dollars.

[9:18:56 AM](#)

MR. BELL continued to slide 9, Training System at a Glance, and lauded the accomplishments of the Workforce Investment Board. The board is largely private sector driven, save the seats reserved for the commissioner of education and University of Alaska officials. Ultimately, the partnership of the Department of Education and Early Development (EED), private sector, construction academy, and others, contributes to the focus on living wage and career jobs. Mr. Bell characterized DLWD as a component of the partnership, and a conduit to achieve success.

[9:21:01 AM](#)

MR. BELL illuminated slide 10, State Entity Partnerships, that are: the University of Alaska, by the sharing of workforce data and projections, the monitoring of the training program performance report, and coordination of training and articulation agreements; EED via career and technical education, and through the WorkKeys and Alaska Career Ready Certificate programs; the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development, by meeting the workforce needs of economic development projects; the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, with apprentice utilization on public construction projects; and the Department of Corrections, exploring opportunities for incarcerated persons to develop pre-apprentice skills. Private Sector Partnerships, slide 11, are: the Workforce Investment Board, setting workforce development policy and, with Regional Advisory Councils, provides region-specific input; the Gas Line Training Plan Steering Committee; the Alaska Construction Academies, that are a partnership with

school districts and the Association of General Contractors and Home Builders Association; and the State Training and Employment Program Partners (STEP), honoring grants to training programs for needs identified by industry.

[9:25:12 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON asked whether there is a map to illustrate the locations of training programs throughout the state, and indicate the regional distribution.

[9:25:33 AM](#)

MR. BELL pointed out that one complication of using a map is that the University of Alaska is integral to these programs and the regional training centers often share the same areas. He offered to provide a map, but cautioned that there will be overlaps. Additionally, there are private and non-profit training centers such as the private training center in Palmer. Displaying slide 12, FY 08 Key Program Accomplishments, he pointed out that the Alaska job center network connected over 31,000 Alaskans with jobs; over 6,600 individuals received employment and training services; over 500 Vocational Rehabilitation Division consumers were employed; AVTEC trained nearly 900 Alaskans; and [the department] published a gas line workforce training plan. Turning to slide 13, A Note About Apprenticeship, he explained the apprenticeship program and the opportunities for residents. The concept behind registered apprenticeship is that an employer registers with the U. S. Department of Labor, Employment & Training Administration Bureau of Apprenticeship enabling an apprentice to receive a journeyman level wage, on the job skills, and attend school. The program provides many opportunities, particularly in non-traditional apprenticeship industries.

[9:29:19 AM](#)

CHAIR SEATON asked whether there are any partnerships established with villages or tribes.

MR. BELL assured the committee that he would provide information on the many significant partnerships with tribal entities and Native corporations.

[9:30:28 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE BUCH agreed that it would be difficult to provide a map given how many programs involve partnerships and private enterprise; however, it would be helpful to "try and get a grip on what is being offered out there."

MR. BELL opined that creating a map is possible, but DLWD would not claim ownership of all of the programs included on the map. He then returned to slide 13 to add that statistics prove how registered apprenticeships are a good means for retention of the state's workforce. With slide 15, The Training Continuum, he identified all of the programs run by the department, their funding category, and who and how many they serve. He concluded with slide 16 that listed the department's capital budget requests.

[9:33:40 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER returned to slide 15 and pointed out that about 900 people are served under the AVTEC program at a cost of \$10 million per year. She asked Mr. Bell to compare the per person cost of an AVTEC student to that of a high school student.

[9:34:33 AM](#)

MR. BELL answered that the general fund (GF) budget for AVTEC is \$4.8 million and the remainder comes from tuition, fees, and other sources, and he confirmed that the total cost of \$10 million to serve 900 students per year.

[9:35:35 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MUNOZ asked Mr. Bell for details on how funds dedicated by the Workforce Investment Act will target youth aged 14 to 21 years.

MR. BELL offered to provide a written response for a comprehensive answer. He summarized that the funding is used for competitive grants to entities that serve at-risk youth. Agencies such as the Nine Star Education and Employment Services, in Anchorage, and Southeast Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC), in Juneau.

[9:37:26 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE BUCH asked whether the department is involved with the Alaska Military Youth Academy, which serves 200 at-risk youth and maintains a success rate of 80 percent.

[9:38:05 AM](#)

MR. BELL affirmed that there is funding provided to the military academy.

[9:39:13 AM](#)

FRED ESPOSITO, Director, Alaska Vocational Technical Center (AVTEC), Division of Business Partnership, Department of Labor & Workforce Development (DLWD) informed the committee that AVTEC has adopted the tag line, "Great careers for Alaska's future." The center is approaching their year 40 anniversary, of providing training to Alaskans. He introduced slide 2, Who Our Students Are, and indicated that the center delivers direct services to students in Seward and Anchorage, and elsewhere across the state via distance education. The average student age is 26, of which 70 percent are male and 30 percent are female. Approximately 55 percent of students reside in Southcentral Alaska.

[9:41:06 AM](#)

MR. ESPOSITO continued to slide 3, Graduating Students, and noted that last year 83 percent of enrolled students graduated, or completed training upgrades. Among the 2007 AVTEC graduates, 93 percent were employed in training-related jobs or continued with their education. He opined that this percentage is above the national norm for similar schools in the nation.

[9:41:40 AM](#)

MR. ESPOSITO referred to slide 4, Training Program Facts, and said that entry to the program requires good mathematics and reading skills; enrollment requires a high school diploma and passing a mathematics and reading score assessment. The center has a close relationship with the University of Alaska and most students earn credits toward an associate degree. Mr. Esposito opined that AVTEC students may be non-traditional learners who, after success at AVTEC, are able to develop the confidence to pursue a college degree. He re-stated that AVTEC is nationally accredited by the Council on Occupational Education and is industry certified.

[9:45:05 AM](#)

MR. ESPOSITO explained that slides 5, 6, and 7 list the training programs offered and include high skill, high wage industries such as transportation, construction, health care, hospitality, and information technology. New programs under development include medium/heavy duty truck technician and hydroelectric and wind turbine operation training programs. The center provides student services in the form of housing for 150 students and 17 families, food services, counseling services, recreation, learning resources, and placement services.

[9:47:52 AM](#)

CHAIR SEATON asked whether the maritime training center has been effective in its coordination with the Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) so that ferry pilots and personnel can be trained in Alaska.

MR. ESPOSITO responded that pilots come from across the state to use the simulator for training/orientation of new pilots. Although the level of technology is very high, the center is in need of more databases for navigable waters, Azipod controls, and another cruise ship model to add to the simulator. These upgrades will allow the center to continue to meet the needs of industry.

CHAIR SEATON expressed his understanding that the AMHS is still sending crew members and licensed officers to New Jersey for training and asked why this would be occurring.

MR. ESPOSITO acknowledged the frustration regarding the center's attempts to serve the needs of the marine highway system. He opined that AVTEC has the ability and the programs to provide training; however, it is a struggle to keep qualified instructional staff due to the difficulty in offering competitive wages. At this time, there is an excellent staff and sufficient resources are available for instruction. He offered to re-connect with AMHS officials about this situation.

CHAIR SEATON requested an outline that will assist the committee in determining how best to utilize the capital investment in existing facilities and coordinate between departments for the education of Alaskans.

[9:52:42 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER asked whether classes are full and if there is a wait list. Also, what is the proportion of applicants who are able to enroll in their first choice field. Although there is a high level of success, are there impediments for entrance or to graduate. Her final question was whether popular classes are expanded to meet demand.

MR. ESPOSITO answered that the major impediments to entry are reading and mathematics skills. Students who do not have a high school diploma are referred to adult basic education centers to obtain a General Education Development (GED) certificate; students without the necessary skills can use adult education or on-line tutoring to improve entrance test scores. Once students are in a program the most common reason for not graduating is due to drug/alcohol-related issues. The attendance, drug, and alcohol policies are very strict in order to represent a genuine workplace environment. Regarding wait lists, some programs such as welding, are being expanded; nevertheless, there are 70 students waiting to get into the welding program at this time. A vacant welding instructor position is open, but recruitment is difficult due to the wage competition. Mr. Esposito indicated that other programs are generally full.

[9:56:57 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON referred to vacant staff positions and asked whether the department would do a wage comparison study in order to obtain authorization to increase instructors' wages.

MR. ESPOSITO affirmed that the department has a good understanding about what the industry is paying for skilled teachers, but it is difficult to match wages under the collective bargaining unit of the teacher's union.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON opined that there may be a means for allowing wage increases for state employees.

MR. BELL agreed that there are exempt positions identified in statute, however, allowances for wage categories that were once possible are no longer available options.

[10:00:11 AM](#)

CHAIR SEATON requested further information from the department in this area. He then revealed that he is an AVTEC graduate from the marine diesel program.

10:00:49 AM

OVERVIEW(S): UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA - WORKFORCE TRAINING PROGRAM

CHAIR SEATON announced that the final order of business would be an overview from the University of Alaska - Workforce Training Program.

10:01:15 AM

FRED VILLA, Associate Vice President, Workforce Development, Statewide Programs, University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA), related his personal history in the oil and gas industry and his early involvement with the University of Alaska. He emphasized his personal interest in the opportunities provided to young people by the university and the state. He stated that university officials understand that not every student will aspire to a four-year college program; however, statistics indicate that about 77 percent of the jobs in the future will require some type of post-secondary education or training.

10:04:59 AM

MR. VILLA continued to describe how the workforce programs were implemented by the university at the same time community colleges were absorbed into the university system. During the last 10 years, 80 out of 100 new programs have been introduced through workforce development, including two-year programs with the current technical education emphasis. Currently, the technical educational programs are the most expensive programs to operate for three reasons: technical classes have a low level of economy of scale; low pupil-teacher ratios are required; and expensive hands-on technology is required. Mr. Villa referred to slide 3, Role in Workforce Development, and explained that the role of the university is three phase: to support pre-college programs with career pathways and activities; to prepare students to enter the workforce [at] industry standards; and to train the existing workforce through professional development opportunities.

10:08:42 AM

MR. VILLA displayed slide 4, Award Levels, listing the required credit levels for university certification: occupational endorsements 9-29; certificate awards 30; associate's degree 60; bachelor's degree 120; master's degree 30 credits beyond the bachelor level; and a doctorate has varying credit hours.

Illustrated on slide 5 are the university main administrative units (MAUs) that consist of University of Alaska Statewide; University of Alaska, Anchorage (UAA); University of Alaska, Fairbanks (UAF); and University of Alaska, Juneau (UAS). He stated that University of Alaska Statewide, under the direction of University of Alaska President, Mark Hamilton, governs over human resources, fiscal policy, and departments such as Workforce Programs. The three main campus areas of UAA, UAF, and UAS, are led by their respective chancellors and each have a number of community colleges or training centers with which they are associated. Slide 6 shows a map of the campuses statewide, in addition to training centers and Mining and Petroleum Training Services (MAPTS) programs that are located on mining sites.

[10:12:12 AM](#)

MR. VILLA continued to slide 7, Campus Affiliated Sites, to list sites that are located throughout rural Alaska, and slide 8, Campus Affiliated Military Sites, indicating sites situated on Eielson Air Force Base, Elmendorf Air Force Base, Ft. Richardson Army Base, and Ft. Wainwright Army Base. He emphasized that the physical presence of the university system across the state allows residents access to training "as much as we can." The first role for the university system is to prepare students to consider a direction, as illustrated by slide 9, Alaska's Pathways to Successful Careers. He explained how the students are introduced to career possibilities; for example, through programs such as the Future Teachers of Alaska Program, Lego Robotics, 4-H, and Future Farmers of America (FFA). These are valuable programs that teach leadership, mathematics, and science skills while inspiring youth towards a chosen career.

[10:16:56 AM](#)

MR. VILLA presented each committee member with the UAA Career Connections Educational Opportunities binder containing information on every university system school and program, graduation requirements, and recommended courses for pre-requisites. These binders are continually updated for the benefit of students who are investigating post-secondary education, and are available at every middle and high school in the state. He discussed the Hot Jobs program that identifies 20 careers and career pathways to prepare high school students who may want to step into jobs directly after high school graduation.

10:18:29 AM

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER referred to slide 16 and asked for clarification on the percentage of students who reach their goal.

MR. VILLA explained that the percentages may be skewed due to the number of students in informational technology programs who are hired by industry before the completion of their courses. In addition, students may enter a course to hone basic skills. He opined that there are many different reasons why students may not continue all the way to a degree.

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER further asked whether the rate of completion has increased since 2001.

CHAIR SEATON suggested that university officials will have further information on this subject at a later hearing.

10:21:16 AM

MR. VILLA returned to slide 12, Additional Outreach Programs, and pointed out that Adult Basic Education (ABE) enrollment is at 1,176 students, and includes classes preparing students for GED, English as a second language, and citizenship preparation. Tech Prep is a dual credit program and has over 1,200 students in secondary courses of study. Dual credit is a three-course curriculum "plan of study" that begins in high school and is completed at the university. These credits align with the occupation endorsement and provide students with the opportunity to obtain the endorsement either at high school graduation or after completing one university course. In addition to the dual credit program, in FY 08 there were an additional 340 students enrolled in the university system, from 34 school districts. He added that, including Tech Prep enrollees, dual credit enrollment totaled 4,214 students in FY 08. Most popular courses were: computer information office systems, computer and networking technology, early childhood education, construction technology, English, and welding.

10:25:59 AM

MR. VILLA spoke briefly of the university system partnerships including the Department of Labor & Workforce Development (DLWD) and the Department of Education & Early Development (EED). Partnership programs with the DLWD include: apprenticeships, AVTEC, Hot Jobs, Job Centers, and Research & Analysis. He

described the type of cooperation that can result in benefits to students and employers. With EED, projects such as the WorkKeys assessment system are actively engaged.

[10:28:43 AM](#)

MR. VILLA presented slide 14, University of Alaska Private Sector Partnerships in Workforce Training, and elaborated on the university's relationship with the Alaska Workforce Investment Board; the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education; the Alaska Process Industries Careers Consortium; Putting Alaska's Resources to Work; organized labor; Native corporations; and private businesses and industries. He stressed that every workforce development program in the university system has an industry-based advisory committee to keep the program up-to-date on industry standards and employer/and employee needs.

[10:32:16 AM](#)

MR. VILLA noted that his goal for Campuses and Regional Training Centers, shown on slide 15, is to focus on the close relationship between these entities. Resources, faculty, and sometimes facilities, are shared with the seven community based training campuses located in the Tanana Valley, Seward, Bethel, Kotzebue, Nome, Sitka, and King Salmon. In the present climate of declining funds, the university can provide important assistance to regional training centers, as it did recently to the KotzTech Learning Center, Chukchi Campus, in Kotzebue.

[10:33:56 AM](#)

MR. VILLA explained that slide 16 shows the distribution of Technical Vocational Education Program (TVEP) funding for FY 01 through FY 08 as follows: UAA, 55.3 percent; UAF, 24.7 percent; UAS, 17.8 percent; and Statewide (SW), 2.2 percent. Slide 18 shows the distribution of TVEP funding for program distributions for FY 01 through FY 08 as follows: allied health, 17 percent; information technology, 15.1 percent; transportation, 10.5 percent; nursing, 9.6 percent; early childhood, 8.8 percent; and process technology, 7 percent.

[10:35:53 AM](#)

MR. VILLA presented slide 19, Program Performance High Demand/High Growth Occupation Degree Production to display the following graduation statistics: allied health and nursing, 407; applied engineering, 219; behavioral health, 308; business, 469;

construction, 46; IT, 126; natural resources, 229; process technology, 93; protective services, 77; teacher education, 390; and transportation, 134. He concluded with his plan for revisiting the committee in February.

[10:36:35 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER expressed his appreciation for the comprehensive presentation, and he introduced Caleb Hine, a student in the Alaska Close-Up program, who is his "job shadow" today.

[10:37:22 AM](#)

CHAIR SEATON noted that there are also university interns who are working with the legislature this session.

[10:38:00 AM](#)

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Standing Committee on Education meeting was adjourned at 10:38 a.m.