

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 20, 2009
8:03 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Bryce Edgmon

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

OVERVIEW(S): CHARTER SCHOOLS

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to report

WITNESS REGISTER

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

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented the overview on charter schools.

KIKI ABRAHAMSON, President
Alaska Charter School Association; Head Teacher, Fireweed
Academy
Homer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented a report on charter schools in
Alaska.

CATHERINE REARDON, Legislative Aide
Alaska State Legislature; Parent
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions and presented
information on charter school funding.

BRENDA TAYLOR, President
Academic Policy Committee (APC)
Juneau Community Charter School (JCCS)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the presentation on charter schools.

MARJORIE HAMBURGER
Juneau Community Charter School
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Introduced a group of students from the Juneau Community Charter School.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:02:43 AM](#)

CHAIR PAUL SEATON called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:03 a.m. Representatives Keller, Munoz, Wilson, Gardner, Buch, and Seaton were present at the call to order.

[8:03:01 AM](#)

OVERVIEW(S): CHARTER SCHOOLS

CHAIR SEATON announced that the only order of business would be an overview of charter schools by the Department of Education and Early Development (EEC).

[8:04:03 AM](#)

EDDY JEANS, Director, School Finance and Facilities Section, Department of Education and Early Development (EED), informed the committee the department has a link on its website for information about charter schools. On the website can be found a directory of charter schools in the state, their regulations, and a description of the application process. He noted there are 24 charter schools operating in the state and charter school legislation allows up to 60 schools.

[8:05:07 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE BUCH requested the definition of a charter school.

MR. JEANS said a charter school is a grassroots movement to operate a school differently than a traditional public school, but that still functions as a public school. The focus of the school may be on an alternative to standard instructional practices, on Alaska Native culture, or on a Montessori educational model. According to regulations, a charter school can limit the number of children served and must develop a policy to be approved by the local school board and the state.

REPRESENTATIVE MUNOZ added that a charter school operates under a contract with the local school district.

[8:07:13 AM](#)

MR. JEANS, in response to Representative Seaton, explained that a charter school must teach to all of the state standards and pupils are required to take standard state assessments; however, the governance of the school is different because it has a group that sets academic policy and hires the principal and teachers under the requirements of the contract with the school district.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON offered her understanding that a charter school may be organized by a group of parents unhappy with a traditional public school.

[8:08:42 AM](#)

MR. JEANS explained charter school legislation directs that charter schools will be funded like any other school; however, when the foundation funding formula was rewritten in 1998, charter schools were put in a classification with alternative schools. The reason for this was that charter schools can limit the number of students and can focus on a specific program. In addition, the legislation specified that a charter school needed over 200 students to qualify as a separate site. This legislation was amended in 2002, and reduced the minimum to 150 students to qualify as a separate site; in fact, there is proposed legislation that would change the funding mechanism again for charter schools serving fewer than 150 students. Mr. Jeans advised there is a substantial loss of funding when a school population is under 150 students. He opined the proposed legislation is a "step in the right direction to help charter schools, so they can plan and know what the funding level is going to be from year to year."

[8:10:27 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER asked whether there was hard data that indicates charter schools have a higher graduation rate and fewer drop-outs.

MR. JEANS offered to provide that information; however, charter schools are more often than not elementary schools and do not serve the secondary population. In further response to Representative Gardner, he said he would provide the completion data on charter school students who continue through to secondary school.

[8:11:40 AM](#)

CHAIR SEATON also requested a comparison of charter and traditional schools that meet adequate yearly progress (AYP). He stated the committee's intent to look at charter school success, individually and as a group.

[8:12:21 AM](#)

MR. JEANS cautioned the committee that comparing charter schools and traditional schools can be difficult, as many charter schools do not have a special needs population, or students with limited English proficiency. Unless the student populations are targeted, the comparison could be "apples to oranges."

CHAIR SEATON observed the committee needs some helpful comparisons.

MR. JEANS acknowledged those questions come up; in fact, the home school community is often surprised by comparisons with like students at traditional high schools.

[8:13:51 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON opined parental involvement makes a difference in school success.

MR. JEANS added that when the factors of ethnicity, poverty levels, limited English, and special education programs are excluded, the various programs are comparable.

[8:14:44 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER observed although charter schools may not typically have students with the aforementioned challenges, the

option is there; in fact, some charter schools specialize in language immersion.

MR. JEANS acknowledged charter schools are public schools and they are required to accept the children who come to the program. He repeated that charter schools can limit the number of children who attend and that they can target their program.

[8:16:06 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER asked for a comparison of charter school laws in Alaska with those of other states, and a comparison of Alaska charter schools with public schools in other states.

MR. JEANS advised a comparison is possible of Alaska charter school law to that of other states; however, he questioned the fairness of comparing "schools to schools in other states." He said that most of the charter schools in Alaska are very successful, provide parents with choices, and are supported by the department.

[8:17:06 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER then requested a description of the department's staff support for charter schools.

MR. JEANS explained there is one person who is in charge of supporting all of the schools of choice. That staff member provides information to prospective charter school groups and administrative assistance for correspondence schools, home schools, and other alternative schools as well.

[8:18:01 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE BUCH asked whether the information that the department will be providing to the committee will include all of the programs "that are out there, whether they're brick and mortar or not."

MR. JEANS assured the committee the information will include a mix of schools.

REPRESENTATIVE BUCH observed the committee is trying to determine funding and "where the money goes, and without information like what we're requesting here, we really don't know."

MR. JEANS agreed and said the charter school legislation requires that funding generated by a charter school will go to that school, with the exception that the district can charge an "indirect rate." In some cases, districts and charter schools negotiate in their contract what services the charter school pays for.

[8:20:21 AM](#)

KIKI ABRAHAMSON, President, Alaska Charter School Association; Head Teacher, Fireweed Academy, informed the committee public charter schools are innovative public schools designed by educators, parents, or civic leaders; are founded and attended by choice; and are more accountable for their results than are traditional public schools. Typically a group of parents will identify the need for a charter school, not necessarily because they do not like the existing public school, but to address a certain population or teaching philosophy. She acknowledged the charter school application process can take one to two years and quite a bit of effort. Ms. Abrahamson opined charter schools are one of the fastest and most successful growing reforms in the country; in fact, the first public charter school was opened in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1992, and 16 years later there are over 4,500 charter schools in 40 states and the District of Columbia that serve over 1.3 million children.

[8:23:28 AM](#)

MS. ABRAHAMSON further explained the first charter schools began in Alaska in 1996 with one in the Matanuska-Susitna area, and one in Fairbanks, and today there are twenty-four. She described the grade levels served by charter schools across the state and also that there are language immersion schools for Spanish, German, and Alaska Native languages. Most charter schools are elementary schools and differ, not in the population served, but in the teaching methods used.

[8:25:21 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON asked for a description of the different teaching methods.

MS. ABRAHAMSON explained "a core knowledge school" will use specific programs focused on academics. A Montessori school is based on the principles established by Maria Montessori; a Waldorf school is based on a similar method; and Fireweed Academy, Tongass School of Arts and Sciences, and Kaleidoscope

Charter School are theme immersion schools based on integrated curriculum that is focused on reasoning ability, problem solving, and connections with the community.

[8:27:28 AM](#)

CHAIR SEATON noted the purpose for hearing an overview on this subject is to gain a broad understanding of this aspect of education.

[8:28:24 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE BUCH asked whether Sand Lake Elementary, that has a Japanese language immersion program, is a charter school.

MS. ABRAHAMSON indicated that Sand Lake is not a charter school but an optional program within the school district. In some cases, magnet programs have been converted to charter schools; however, in Alaska, unlike the Lower 48, the only "charter authorizers" are the school districts.

[8:30:06 AM](#)

CHAIR SEATON asked for definitions of alternative, magnet, and charter schools.

MS. ABRAHAMSON clarified her expertise is with charter schools, and she declined to provide a refined definition. She noted that the Anchorage School District has many "optional programs, or magnet schools; ... a magnet school can be a school within a school." She opined magnet schools want to provide an alternative program and are established within the parameters of an already existing public school. A charter school differs in the process that is followed to establish specific requirements. For example, some optional schools in Anchorage are on a lottery system, but all charter schools are required to have a lottery if they have more applicants than they can accommodate.

[8:32:21 AM](#)

CATHERINE REARDON, Legislative Aide, Alaska State Legislature, and a parent, added the magnet and optional programs are similar to a charter school in that they are schools of choice; however, a charter school is managed by a parent-elected board and the "control of money and funding is different."

[8:33:44 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER asked which charter schools are also neighborhood schools in that they are a school of choice, but a student living in that district "gets in no matter what." In addition, she asked "are alternative and magnet schools ... the same thing?"

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER expressed his understanding that a charter school is defined by law and a magnet school may be dealt with at the district level.

MS. ABRAHAMSON agreed. The charter school movement began as a system for educational reform that did not require a voucher system. She opined the federal government felt a voucher system took funding away from the public school system in favor of private schools, thus charter schools were an option for failing schools that still kept the money in public schools. Ms. Abrahamson directed the committee's attention to the committee packet that contained the Alaska Public Charter Schools Directory 2008-2009.

[8:36:56 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MUNOZ commented that the impetus for founding the Juneau Community Charter School was to maintain a public elementary school presence in the downtown area.

[8:37:41 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER advised there is a Native immersion school, a school within a school (SEWS), at East High School in Anchorage.

[8:38:13 AM](#)

MS. ABRAHAMSON stressed the Charter School Association strives to correct the public's perception that charter schools are not public schools. In fact, charter schools are similar to traditional schools in that the mission for every school is to provide students with the environment and opportunity to reach their educational potential. Charter schools are free public schools and do not require tuition. Admission is via lottery and they are open to everyone in the district; for example, Effie Kokrine Charter School is 90 percent Native, but is open to any student in its district. Charter schools must meet all of the same assessments and state standards as other public schools; however, they do not have to follow the same

curriculum. The academic policy committee (APC) that is the charter school's governing body hires a principal, but teachers are hired by district procedures and all teachers are bound by the same system as all public schools throughout the state.

[8:41:37 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON asked whether charter schools require teachers to have extra credentials.

MS. ABRAHAMSON advised some Montessori and Waldorf charter school teachers have received special training, but it is not required by law. In further response, she said this training could happen in a variety of ways. Ms. Abrahamson turned to the subject of how charter schools differ from traditional public schools by offering choice, not only for families and students, but also for teachers. Teachers may choose to work in a charter school because they have an interest in the model, or the methods being taught, or a passion for the population served by the school. In other parts of the nation sponsors such as museums, universities, and other organizations, have founded charter schools to provide a choice for the community.

[8:44:49 AM](#)

MS. ABRAHAMSON continued to explain the role accountability plays for charter schools. She reported only three schools have closed in the twelve years since the first charter school opened in Alaska. A charter may be revoked if the school does not meet or exceed district and state academic standards, if it is not fiscally responsible, or if it breaks rules, laws, or regulations. A charter school can apply for a waiver from the state to alter its calendar, its schedule, and to deviate from the district curriculum. She noted another common question is how to monitor charter schools and suggested one way is through the renewal of the charter, at which point the school must reapply and provide the district with data to prove that the program has demonstrated great achievement. She pointed out many schools in Alaska are not meeting their AYP goal; however, a charter school is held to a higher standard and if it is not successful, it must close.

[8:48:13 AM](#)

MS. ABRAHAMSON then addressed the topic of freedom: Each charter school has the ability to control the curricula; to use assessments beyond those required by the district and state; and

to use alternate reporting systems. In addition, the culture of a charter school may be "freer" and rely on parental involvement for programs.

[8:49:46 AM](#)

CHAIR SEATON asked whether charter schools can require parental involvement.

MS. ABRAHAMSON affirmed some charter schools strongly request parent volunteers; in fact, some charters have been written to include that parental involvement is required - this may be legal because parents have the choice to not place their children in the school.

[8:51:16 AM](#)

MS. REARDON offered her survey of the existing charter schools on this topic. She related three schools did not respond and three schools ask parents to volunteer for a specific number of hours. However, in only one school is it a requirement. At the Juneau Community Charter School, 15 hours of volunteer time per quarter is requested, but it is not mandatory.

[8:52:57 AM](#)

BRENDA TAYLOR, President, Academic Policy Committee, Juneau Community Charter School, clarified parental involvement is sometimes interpreted as classroom time or janitorial work, but the fundamental goal is to get parents more deeply involved in their children's education. Charter schools make a great deal of effort to communicate with parents and to encourage all ways to be involved in the education process.

[8:54:00 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON suggested charter schools share their successful methods of encouraging parental involvement with traditional schools.

MS. TAYLOR said she was unsure whether there was a formal structure for sharing information. Although it is improving, the relationship between districts and charter schools has been of a competitive nature, rather than a cooperative nature, due to the competition for funding.

[8:55:38 AM](#)

MS. ABRAHAMSON returned to the subject of procedural waivers and the allocation of resources available to charter schools. A major point of conflict with traditional schools was the pupil teacher ratio (PTR). A charter school may have a lower PTR than the neighborhood school because it is able to allocate its resources for students and staffing with greater flexibility. As a matter of fact, a charter school may be able to keep a lower PTR by requiring its teachers to act as specialty teachers, as well as classroom teachers. A classroom teacher may also act as an administrator or teach physical education, art, music, or language. She stated the state funding formula puts a total amount of money in "the central office pot and then they allocate that out to the schools, whereas the funding for a charter school goes into that school, then it's up to that school to decide how the money is going to be spent."

[8:59:52 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER asked whether that situation creates an incentive for a charter school to hire teachers who are lower on the pay scale. Furthermore, what is the effect of a teacher who stays on for ten years.

MS. ABRAHAMSON affirmed the current statute forces charter schools to increase their PTR or close when their charters are due to be renewed. In response to Representative Gardner, she said the PTR ratio at her school went from 14 [students to one teacher] to 19 students. A further complication was that the APC can not hire someone based on the applicant's pay scale.

[9:01:50 AM](#)

MS. REARDON noted that the PTR at most of the elementary charter schools is 22:1, which is the same as the "target" for the Juneau School District. She opined this is the fiscal reality of operating any school.

[9:02:32 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON pointed out that a small school in the Bush with ten students could close if that count were reduced by one.

MS. TAYLOR reminded the committee charter schools fewer than 150 students are funded at .84 percent of the average daily

membership (ADM), as opposed to neighborhood schools that are funded at 120 percent of ADM.

[9:04:50 AM](#)

MS. ABRAHAMSON said the last freedom that charter schools have is that they are governed by an APC. Frequently, there is a liaison between a charter school and the district, but the APC can act as the administration of a charter school and set the policy on curriculum, schedules, and hiring.

[9:06:01 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER asked whether parents serve on the APC.

MS. ABRAHAMSON said the APC at her school was made up of parents, staff, and a community member.

[9:06:40 AM](#)

CHAIR SEATON recognized the witnesses online as well as the charter school students in the gallery; Abigail Taylor-Roth, Elia Krumm, Robert Newman, Kolson, and Gabe Cohen.

[9:07:24 AM](#)

MS. ABRAHAMSON concluded the last difference between traditional and charter schools is access to resources, despite the fact that a charter school follows all of the federal, state, and district laws and regulations, and is required to meet or exceed district standards. Public charter schools have no [free] access to facilities and typically pay costs for utilities, maintenance, and operation. In addition, charter schools do not receive state funding equal to traditional public schools and, at the district level, frequently are not given funds from the local contribution to schools. In some cases, school districts provide a facility, or a shared facility, but that is not the norm. She described some of the facilities in use around the state.

[9:10:21 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER surmised responding to a request for proposal (RFP) from a charter school that must apply for renewal every five years, is risky.

MS. ABRAHAMSON confirmed being in business with a charter school is a huge risk.

[9:10:59 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON asked whether charter schools are allowed to use facilities such as a gym or a music room.

MS. ABRAHAMSON explained some charter schools have a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the school district that allows access to shared facilities, staff, busing, or lunch program arrangements.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON pondered how to expand on that practice.

MS. ABRAHAMSON opined the legislature could consider changing the statute to allow charter schools access to existing public facilities.

[9:13:09 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER ascertained in order for a charter school to thrive it must be on a good basis with the local school board and school superintendent.

MS. ABRAHAMSON agreed; however, any partnership has contentious issues. Academic achievement and sustainable growth is dependant upon embracing education as a common goal for every student in a school district.

[9:15:00 AM](#)

MS. ABRAHAMSON, taking direction from the chair, returned to complete her initial presentation. She cautioned that the data she was providing was very difficult to interpret and was based on diverse and small samples. She said in Alaska in 2007 and 2008, 21 charter schools represented 4 percent of the total of 506 schools in the state. In 2007, 170 schools did not meet AYP and 3 of those, or 1.7 percent, were charter schools. In 2008, 207 schools did not meet AYP and 9 of those were charter schools. An important point, she stated, is, given the fact that charter schools are underfunded and do not have equal access to facilities, that most do meet AYP. Additionally, some of the charter schools that did not meet AYP were focused on at-risk students and home-school programs. In fact, home-school programs accept students at any time during the school year. Ms. Abrahamson then presented statistics for the Alaska State

Performance Incentive Program (AKSPIP) that was designed to provide incentives for schools that showed improvement in individual students' growth. In 2007, 42 schools were awarded incentive grants for levels of outstanding, excellent, strong, and high, and 6 of those, or 14.3 percent, were charter schools. In 2008, 32 schools were awarded grants and 3 of those, or 9.4 percent, were charter schools. Furthermore, nine schools received AKSPIP grants both years, and two were charter schools. She again expressed caution when interpreting this data as one of the schools receiving AKSPIP grants, for both years, had eleven students.

[9:22:35 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER asked whether it could be said that the AKSPIP grants are not effective in changing behavior because they are not based on an even playing field.

MS. ABRAHAMSON opined that this program is not a good idea due to the number of factors involved. Furthermore, the funds could be more "direct to the student."

CHAIR SEATON stated funding for the third year of the AKSPIP program was not included in the governor's budget.

[9:24:27 AM](#)

MS. REARDON provided the funding overview and directed attention to the committee packet and a graph titled, "Adjusted Student Count for Charter Schools vs. Neighborhood Schools." She explained that the graph deals with the aspect of the foundation formula called the "adjusted student count." One step in the foundation formula, that adjusts the average daily membership (ADM) according to the size of the school, puts charter schools at a disadvantage. After the ADM, or school enrollment, is adjusted, this is the figure on which the remainder of the formula is based. Thus, charter schools are treated differently than a neighborhood school, and this adjustment has a huge impact on the finances of charter schools.

[9:26:28 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER asked for a definition of neighborhood schools.

MS. REARDON said a school run directly by the district is a neighborhood school. Referring back to the graph, she said

charter schools are treated identically through the foundation formula if they have 150 students or more. However, when student enrollment falls to 149 students, charter schools lose about 45 percent of state funds. She opined that this level of funding is "unsustainable." The reason for this treatment is that a smaller school is not regarded as a separate facility, but as a part of the largest school in its district.

[9:29:02 AM](#)

MARJORIE HAMBURGER, Juneau Community Charter School, informed the committee that some students from the Juneau Community Charter School chose to come and hear the overview. The committee took a moment to recognize the participants in the gallery.

[9:30:15 AM](#)

MS. REARDON further explained when enrollment at a charter school falls below 150, the host school district loses between \$500,000 and \$750,000. In the case of a one year drop in enrollment, this loss can be devastating to the school and the district. For a charter school that is always below 150 students, the funding level is so much lower than neighborhood schools it can not survive.

[9:32:29 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON expressed her understanding of the effect of enrollment on the foundation formula because of what has occurred in the public schools in her district.

[9:33:49 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE BUCH asked whether the issue of charter school funding was addressed by the task force [on education.]

CHAIR SEATON affirmed that it was considered, and several issues are involved. The task force recognized that "the right fix" is needed and left this issue to the committee.

MS. ABRAHAMSON, in response to Representative Buch, said the ADM is determined over four weeks.

[9:35:47 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE BUCH asked for the difference between the ADM and the adjusted student count (ASC).

MS. REARDON explained the ADM is the average number of students attending a school during the first four weeks of October. The adjusted student count is the increase or decrease in the ADM that the state makes based on the size of the school. The law requires the adjustment to acknowledge the economy of scale; it is less costly to educate a child in a larger school than in a smaller one. The smaller the school, the higher is the per-student adjustment. She directed attention to the handout titled, The Role of the "Adjusted Student Count" in School Funding that indicated for a school with between 10 and 20 students, the adjusted student count is 39.6; therefore the state base student allocation is 39 students. Furthermore, if there are 75 kids in a neighborhood school, the school will get credit for 122 students; a neighborhood school with 440 students will get credit for 471 students. She emphasized that the state does not expect a school to function based on the actual number of kids, but increases the enrollment number before it is multiplied by the other factors. Thus, a charter school with fewer than 150 students is "lumped in" with the largest school in the district and receives .84 percent credit for each student. The source of the .84 percent credit is from the "additional children" to the largest school. Therefore, when a charter school reduces enrollment from 150 to 149 credit for each child is reduced from a multiplier of 1.45 percent to .84 percent.

[9:42:20 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER recalled the maximum number of charter schools allowed in the state is 60 and questioned whether funding problems are the reason that only 24 exist.

MS. REARDON agreed funding plays a significant role. A charter school presents a risk to a school district if enrollment is not met. Also, this restriction does not allow addressing the specific needs of a smaller population of students in a medium sized community.

[9:44:12 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER opined the district has the option of "filling the gap" and if there is an alternative school for a specific population of 75 students, this restriction is on the charter school, but not on other alternative schools.

MS. REARDON agreed districts have various options for counting and formulating alternative programs, but a charter school is a separate entity.

[9:45:45 AM](#)

MS. TAYLOR added that alternative schools have a threshold of 200 students. Furthermore, even a small alternative program is formulated within a larger school and will retain the full credit for each student.

[9:46:28 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MUNOZ observed local property taxes and direct grants from the state support school facilities. She asked for the amount the Juneau Community Charter School (JCCS) pays for its facility.

[9:47:22 AM](#)

MS. REARDON said JCCS pays about \$60,000 a year for three classrooms. She estimated that some charter schools across the state pay much more. State funds can be subsidized by the local school district, but the state is funding less money for [charter school] students. She emphasized that the core of the problem is equity and it is hard for parents to understand why charter school students, who may be schooled in the same building, bring lesser amounts of money to the district.

[9:49:21 AM](#)

MS. ABRAHAMSON offered additional examples of facility costs to charter schools. In some cases, the charter school only pays utilities, maintenance, insurance, and liability.

[9:50:08 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER asked whether there was a rationale for this legislation.

MS. ABRAHAMSON stated that her understanding is that when the legislation was crafted in 1995, there was concern over whether districts would divide larger schools into smaller charter schools. Also, there was an effort to make charter schools more cost efficient.

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER anecdotally reported on his understanding of the evolution of this aspect of the formula.

[9:53:37 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON asked how many charter schools are in school buildings and how many are paying rent. In addition, she noted the various funding percentages for different charter schools.

CHAIR SEATON clarified the different funding rates and stated his intention for the committee's policy decision to establish equity.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON observed there are school funding inequities between regions.

CHAIR SEATON explained how the formula is applied to school size within each district, thus regional issues of rural versus urban are not applicable.

MS. TAYLOR further clarified school populations in the Railbelt are increasing; in fact, the Anchorage School District will not approve a charter school with an enrollment of fewer than 150, but in Juneau it is just the opposite.

CHAIR SEATON pointed out some teaching methods may require a lower school population and existing legislation may interfere with that.

[9:58:20 AM](#)

MS. ABRAHAMSON stated there are eight districts in the state that have charter schools. To her knowledge, eight charter schools are housed in district buildings. She concluded her presentation with an example of shared space in district buildings and then thanked the committee for its consideration of this topic.

[9:59:20 AM](#)

CHAIR SEATON reviewed the agenda for the next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 10:02 a.m.