

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

Anchorage, Alaska  
August 25, 2009  
9:03 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

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

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Representative Wes Keller

**OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT**

Senator Bettye Davis  
Senator Lyman Hoffman (via teleconference)  
Senator Joe Thomas  
Representative Kyle Johansen (via teleconference)  
Representative Anna Fairclough  
Representative Bob Herron (via teleconference)  
Representative Michael "Mike" Kelly (via teleconference)  
Representative Scott Kawasaki (via teleconference)

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

OVERVIEW(S): REPORTS/UPDATES BY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND  
EARLY DEVELOPMENT (EED)

- HEARD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

REPRESENTATIVE ANNA FAIRCLOUGH  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Participated as the Chair of the House Education & Early Development Finance Subcommittee.

LARRY LEDOUX, Commissioner  
Department of Education and Early Development (EED)  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified during the overview on the Department of Education and Early Development (EED).

SENATOR BETTYE DAVIS  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Asked questions during the overview.

CYNDY CURRAN, Director  
Teaching and Learning Support  
Department of Education and Early Development (EED)  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified during the Department of Education and Early Development (EED) overview.

PAUL SUGAR, Head Start/Parent Involvement  
Teaching and Learning Support  
Department of Education and Early Development (EED)  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified during the Department of Education and Early Development (EED) overview.

ERIK McCORMICK, Director  
Assessment and Accountability  
Department of Education and Early Development (EED)  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified and answered questions during the Department of Education and Early Development (EED) overview.

SENATOR JOE THOMAS  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Asked questions during the Department of Education and Early Development (EED) overview.

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

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified during the Department of Education and Early Development (EED) overview.

LES MORSE, Deputy Commissioner  
Department of Education and Early Development (EED)  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Spoke about the relevancy of the high school qualifying exam.

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

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified and answered questions regarding WorkKeys and the High School Graduation Qualifying Examination (HSGQE).

SAICHI OBA, Associate Vice President for Students  
University of Alaska (UA)  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 206.

DAVE JONES, Assistant Superintendent  
Kenai Peninsula Borough School District  
Soldotna, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified and answered questions during discussion of HB 206.

GEORGE TROXAL, Superintendant  
Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District  
Palmer, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions about compulsory attendance and expressed support for raising the age to 18.

JIM HICKERSON, Superintendent  
Bering Strait School District  
Unalakleet, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of raising the compulsory attendance age to 18.

CAROL COMEAU, Superintendant  
Anchorage School District  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of the amending the compulsory age to 18.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

9:03:27 AM

**CHAIR PAUL SEATON** called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. Representatives Seaton, Gardner, Wilson, Edgmon, and Buch were present at the call to order. Representative Munoz arrived as the meeting was in progress. Also in attendance were Senators Davis, Hoffman, and Thomas, and Representatives Fairclough, Kawasaki (via teleconference), Johansen (via teleconference), Kelly (via teleconference), and Herron (via teleconference).

OVERVIEW: Reports/Updates by Department of Education and Early Development (EED)

9:04:22 AM

CHAIR SEATON announced that the only order of business would be a report from the Department of Education and Early Development (EED). He summarized that this would include reports and updates on graduation rates, single site school districts, relevancy for the high school qualifying exam, an assessment of WorkKeys, and pertinent discussion of HB 206.

CHAIR SEATON requested that questions be brought forward throughout the presentation. He also reported that he and Senator Davis were appointed to the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education Legislative Advisory Panel, and would attend their first panel meeting on September 28-29, 2009, in Boulder, Colorado. At his behest, the agenda would include the topic "Consideration of a Needs and Merit Based Combination Scholarship Program;" a current proposal to the House Education Standing Committee. In response to a question, he clarified the intent of the agenda: to cover not only broad topics but specific issues that have been brought to the committee. He pointed out that although the Senate Education Standing Committee issues have not been coordinated with the House Education Standing Committee, participation by the Senate members was greatly appreciated, and that the information being reported should serve a benefit to both committees.

9:09:30 AM

REPRESENTATIVE ANNA FAIRCLOUGH, Alaska State Legislature, said that she was participating today in her capacity as the Chair of the House Education & Early Development Finance Subcommittee, with interest specific, but not limited, to the department's report regarding the pilot program introduced last year.

9:11:02 AM

LARRY LEDOUX, Commissioner, Office of the Commissioner, Department of Education and Early Development (EED), recognized the State Board of Education and EED staff members in attendance who were also available to respond to committee questions. He directed attention to the Alaska Education Plan [Included in committee packets], and noted that the plan was a blue print for moving forward on a number of issues, which he finds essential to the success of students in Alaska. He opined that the plan is a coordinated, cost effective, long term approach to school improvement, and that action teams have formed committees throughout the state to facilitate the administration of the plan. Furthermore, a Director of Current Technical Education had been appointed, and would be working closely with the Department of Labor & Workforce Development (DLWD) to ensure the appropriate career/skill focus for graduating students. In conjunction with the early learning pilot program, EED has established a coordinated leadership effort with Best Beginnings and the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) to address the needs of the young child and Memorandums of understanding (MOUs) defining these contracts were being formalized, and are slated for completion within the next sixty days. He included that Military compacts were also moving forward to address the needs of that population. Governor Parnell had emphasized his support for the prioritization of these educational partnerships, he reported.

9:13:57 AM

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX continued, stating that a plan for handling the swine influenza pandemic had received considerable attention. Protocol and plans for extended closure of a school, in the face of this type of medical crisis, are being prepared. The considerations included ways and means for the continued delivery of educational programs, should a school be closed for a week or a month. Today's reports would include the department's on-going work surrounding the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). He relayed that he had participated in a national, global education summit to assist the State of Alaska in partnering with national corporations for achievement of its goals. The department was in the process of completing a comprehensive review of all the regulations designed to implement law, with a goal to streamline and update the requirements. He mentioned his opportunity to review issues with the United States Secretary of Education, and deemed it a

worthwhile discussion. He applauded the major effort undertaken by library staff to reclaim and preserve the important archived records which had been soaked, and he reported that the department was in the final stages of completing a capacity study. Noting that the department's ability to achieve its mission as established by regulation had come under scrutiny following the Moore v. State hearing, he said, "We continue to spend time and energy on responding to ... [this] law suit." Finishing his report, he stated that the department continued to monitor correspondence and home school programs throughout the state. Responding to a request from the chair, he agreed to provide the committee with copies of the completed MOUs.

[9:17:17 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON asked whether the regulatory review had revealed any that could be repealed.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX answered that it was the department's intent to eliminate regulations that required excessive paperwork and staff time without contributing effectively toward the established goals. Additionally, requirements that were not clearly defined and problematic to districts were also being scrutinized.

[9:18:28 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON inquired if the Rural Outreach Coordinator position was in the recruitment stage.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX said that interviews were being held and a recommendation should be made to the governor within the next few weeks.

[9:19:15 AM](#)

SENATOR BETTYE DAVIS, Alaska State Legislature, asked if the department had applied for the first phase of funding from the Race to the Top federal grant program.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX explained that the United States Department of Education had recently posted the regulations regarding the Race to the Top program and that the applications were not expected to be available until later in the year. To a follow up question, he said that the department will rigorously apply for grant funds in every category of the federal program. He assured the committee that these efforts were a departmental

priority, and he opined it would require extensive staff time and energy.

[9:21:18 AM](#)

CHAIR SEATON suggested that a brief outline of the program and its status would be beneficial.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX explained that the Race to the Top Fund had been set aside as part of the ARRA to provide seed money and support for a comprehensive reform of the nation's educational system. It comprised of two rounds of application, with each round requiring that state departments and the private sector were partnering to meet nineteen application criteria. He noted that there were many attachments necessary to receive points toward grant awards.

[9:22:38 AM](#)

SENATOR DAVIS specified interest in the charter schools aspect of the grant, and she asked whether Alaska would qualify for funding.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX directed attention to the committee packet, and stated that Alaska was not currently inhibited by charter school limitations. However, he pointed out that should charter schools become a central focus of national school reform, in rural Alaska those partnerships may need further scrutiny.

[9:24:18 AM](#)

CHAIR SEATON moved to the department's update on the early childhood RFP (Request for Proposal) and pilot program.

[9:25:11 AM](#)

CYNDY CURRAN, Director, Teaching and Learning Support, Department of Education and Early Development (EED), directed attention to the committee packets for review of the briefing sheet titled "Alaska Pilot Pre-Kindergarten Project" (AP3). Of the 24 districts which indicated intent to participate, 12 actually applied, and 6 were funded. Each program will create and implement a parent and community involvement base. This is a critical aspect of recognizing and promoting the partnership of parents as first teachers regardless of whether the child remains at home or attends a public pre-school. A child outcome evaluation will be administered, utilizing the Dial 3 and the

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test to indicate progress in each program. Additionally, she reported, individual programs will be evaluated under the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS). Finally, she pointed out that the funds not awarded will be used for districts that are in intervention, or for program development within those districts. In response to a committee question, she stated that these programs will also be developed under the same AP3 goals.

[9:27:31 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER asked whether the schools on intervention are the ones targeted under the Moore v State case.

AN UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER called out, "Not necessarily."

REPRESENTATIVE MUNOZ recalled that, initially, the program expected to target 500 students, but that only about half of that number had been reached. She asked whether it was anticipated to meet the original target number.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX responded that although more than 500 children may be affected, the costs associated with working in rural Alaska were higher than expected and the number will be closer to 400. The expectation, he said, was that the parent resource centers developed by each district would provide a broad outreach of support, but that the department did not want to include those children in the report total.

[9:28:59 AM](#)

CHAIR SEATON referred to page 2 of the AP3 summary handout, and read from the seventh bullet point: "support parents that do not enroll their pre-K child in the school-based portion of the program." He asked how much of the funding and activities were used for the not enrolled.

MS. CURRAN explained that each of the grants included a parent involvement component, either through school enrollment or a parent resource center. The resource centers were to be developed with community, school district, and parental input. Through these centers, parents could access professionals, either on location or for home visits. The center might also include games and activities for parents to borrow. The expectation, she said, was for each community to determine specific needs and tailor the center accordingly.

CHAIR SEATON expressed his understanding that the program could apply to any young child, and was not limited to younger siblings of enrolled students. He requested clarification on what this meant for coordination with the targeted group, or was it considered to be an enrichment program for the broader community.

[9:32:22 AM](#)

PAUL SUGAR, Head Start/Parent Involvement, Teaching and Learning Support, Department of Education and Early Development (EED), explained that the intent was for each community to determine its needs and have the freedom to choose from a spectrum of tools. Further, once the community identified its needs and goals, it would develop methods and means to implement and disseminate the array of early childhood resource materials, and determine how best to engage the early childhood professional(s) employed at the local center.

CHAIR SEATON asked whether the target population had remained constant, or was to be adjusted to include the broad community; if expanded, how would the reporting be handled to quantify the activities.

MR. SUGAR responded that the intent was that the program would serve the early childhood age range. However, due to the spectrum of materials available, collateral benefit could be utilized that would extend beyond the range and scope of the project. At the end of each year, every program was required to submit a report of the activities: the schedule and attendance levels for each activity, an accounting of the use of materials, and other specific queries regarding the dissemination of the available resources.

CHAIR SEATON observed that the RFA was designed to measure improvement within a target population. As the programs apparently extended beyond that group, he surmised that another means for reporting and accountability might need to be considered.

[9:38:16 AM](#)

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX pointed out that the target population included school and home based children. The department anticipated a collection of appropriate statistics to evaluate the effects of the program.

CHAIR SEATON offered assurance that the committee was also concerned with every child. The ability and method of reporting program effectiveness was crucial, he stressed.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON asked for clarification on how the remaining funds were to be used; as the handout specified that they would be used to support early childhood work with chronically underperforming districts, how would these students/districts be targeted.

[9:39:53 AM](#)

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX explained that prior to the RFP's, money was set aside to assure that needs were being met for underperforming districts. It is not the intent to direct these funds to districts that already received grants, but rather to those which did not apply, or whose applications did not merit funding. Some of the money will be used to improve the quality of programs, as it had become evident for the need to emphasize quality. There are a number of programs that exist, but are not proving to be effective. Despite the millions of federal, state, and private dollars being spent, these programs are not delivering results. He pointed out that the department has become outcome based. The early learning guidelines have been established, and the department was working with communities to establish the best pathways for achieving these goals. When NCLB (No Child Left Behind Act) was passed, the federal government dictated how the standard was to be attained, but that the prescribed methods and means did not work for Alaska. EED was trying to establish goals, with high quality outcomes, to allow each community to find their own path for achieving the mark.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX stated that the department intends to assure that every student whether they are entering a school based program or alternative facility, comes ready to begin learning. Parents are the absolute focus of the department's efforts. By building the program on outcomes, each community can find its means to achieve the established goals. He listed some programs already in place, including Head Start, Early Head Start, Parents as Teachers, various faith-based private programs, and school based programs, and noted that these are programs for every community to utilize. He stressed again the focus for quality programs. He shared that partnerships were necessary to create programs to fit the needs of any community. He pointed out that the need for flexibility was evident in the grant applications. He underscored that the department intends to

work with Best Beginnings to craft a statewide response that will ultimately lead to the goal of having children ready to learn.

[9:43:42 AM](#)

CHAIR SEATON clarified that community programs were not being duplicated but rather each community tailors its own program based on the local needs.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX indicated that the established outcomes are uniform and are to be achieved, however the ways to attain these high standards will be generated by community implementation of the best suited programs and resources. Early learning programs are not new to Alaska, but what is new is to create partnerships to allow these programs to work together. He stressed his belief that the state should not have any program that was not aligned with the Alaska learning outcomes, but that each community can effectively arrive at a program that works and will be locally supported.

[9:45:23 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER recalled that legislation had been introduced to fund Parents as [Teachers] programs that are grant driven. She noted that many of the successful grant applicants referenced the local version of a Head Start program, and asked if any of the applicants are similarly building off of the Parents as Teachers.

MR. SUGAR responded that there were none that specifically stated the Parents as Teachers model of home visits, but that some funded programs utilized other home visit models.

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER recalled the success of the Parents as Teachers program. With approximately 40 of these programs in existence, and given the common goals and processes, she noted her surprise that it was not being implemented and dovetailed into the efforts being discussed.

[9:48:00 AM](#)

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX offered his understanding that some of the programs shared practices set out by the Parents as Teachers curriculum, but, he reported that the data does not indicate that Parents as Teachers, Head Start, or other programs were

effective alone. He clarified that no criteria excluded the implementation of this program.

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER asked whether the grantees would be providing services this year.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX lauded the efforts of the departmental staff involved and stated, yes.

[9:49:30 AM](#)

CHAIR SEATON pointed to the goals of the various targets in the RFP's. He asked how the department intended to evaluate achievement for each program; would each be measured against its intent, or compared program to program. He asked, if two communities listed common programs, but indicated a variance of achievement percentage, what would determine success or failure.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX explained the necessity to maintain a realistic goal, and that the target would depend on the starting point.

[9:51:56 AM](#)

MR. SUGAR opined that the percentages should be considered output as opposed to an outcome, and he detailed that these could be compared to national norms, measured after a seven month period.

[9:53:51 AM](#)

CHAIR SEATON offered a hypothetical situation, and asked how objectives would be measured.

MR. SUGAR explained that the output data could be used to guide the individual instructor, district, or parent and that the day to day activities could also be guided by this data to assist in targeting individual needs.

[9:55:30 AM](#)

CHAIR SEATON, returning to the variance indicated in the RFP's by the different grantees with regard for the target growth percentages, asked if the report would indicate growth compared to national norm, or whether a community met the proposed targets. He asked if there was another means to establish program success.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX responded that, as the department evaluated the programs, the committee would receive a comprehensive report which would include whether grantees met their local goals of improvement, and the overall impact of the program. He revealed how the department had plans for pre and post testing. He assured the committee that it would receive information about the effectiveness of individual programs, site by site, indicating whether programs met their goals. However, he stipulated the department intended that every program would attain 100 percent. The effectiveness of the program was not necessarily going to be whether they achieved their goals, but the effectiveness of helping to prepare the children for success in school. The percentages the districts used to fill out the application were an internal measuring tool for evaluation, but the department's goal would remain for 100 percent.

CHAIR SEATON expressed his understanding that the committee would receive an evaluation based on a growth model for all students in all of the programs.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX concurred.

[9:57:56 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON expressed her hope that the program administrators and districts had a clear understanding of the departmental goals, and how they related to the goals established in the RFP.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX explained that the constructs used when applying for a grant were very different than the expectation. He assured that every principal, teacher, and early learning specialist involved would be seeking 100 percent success.

[9:58:59 AM](#)

CHAIR SEATON expressed similar concerns and expectations.

[9:59:32 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER referred to the RFP handout, and asked for an explanation of Mediated Learning Experiences (MLE).

MR. SUGAR replied that this was a learning method that fell between learning by experience and exploration, and learning by

direct instruction; this approach provided output on either the concept or cognitive function development.

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER asked if it was similar to the Montessori approach and whether it was a trademark name.

MR. SUGAR explained that it was a term that had been used for the past 35 years, and that the basic approach was through interaction; a learning style that would become apparent in all aspects of the child's school life.

[10:03:29 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FAIRCLOUGH inquired if the applications depended on a certain student to teacher ratio.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX deferred.

MR. SUGAR responded that a 1:10 ratio was expected, and it has been stipulated that there be no more than 20 students in a classroom.

REPRESENTATIVE FAIRCLOUGH, referring to an application submitted by the Anchorage school district for two locations, noted that with staff increases the ratio would be 1:5. She stressed that this was a worthwhile investment, but that it would prove costly. In response to a question, she detailed the ratio calculation and maintained her interest for an explanation to the 1:5 versus 1:10 result.

[10:06:22 AM](#)

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX said he would provide the committee with an analysis of that specific information following consultation with the Anchorage School District.

REPRESENTATIVE FAIRCLOUGH reiterated the staff specifications that she utilized in analyzing the ratio.

[10:07:17 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON allowed that many programs could be successful given enough staffing. In evaluating these programs, staff increases should be kept in mind, as some schools may not be able to afford the additional staff to attain similar goals.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX concurred, adding that the pilot program was a learning experience. He reiterated that the target was to support parents through community based services and to mitigate the need for expensive school based programs.

[10:09:13 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FAIRCLOUGH pointed out that the Anchorage RFP also indicated the lowest cost per student ratio.

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER noted that Parents as Teachers was serving 31 communities, but that the measurable outcome may not match what was stated for the grant fund. However, one of the benefits of this program, she mentioned, was the three year training for parents to become certified educators. This was empowering to a small community, she opined. These programs run through many of the school districts which have not submitted an RFP and she pledged to investigate the situation.

[10:11:27 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON recalled the legislation that allocated approximately \$18 million to the Parents as Teachers program. He asked if there were a cost benefit analysis for existing programs that were not achieving expectations.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX offered his belief that "the costs will spread out" as the department learned more about how to deliver an effective program, and that there was not any assumption of an open check book to develop a program. He acknowledged the relationship of early childhood education and experiences to the graduation rate and he noted the high cost to society of drop-outs. He reiterated the need for quality programs and he opined that community based programs would reduce the need for school based programs. He announced the goal for a cost effective fit for each community. It was not the intent of the department to provide a school based program in every community. To a follow up question, he agreed that many of these questions would be answered as the program ran its course.

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON noted that a school district may encompass several communities.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX agreed that a district could acknowledge each school separately, in order to ensure that every student entered school ready to learn. He stressed that the outcome of

the program would be far reaching, as it forced each existing program to evaluate its quality and services.

10:16:54 AM

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON suggested that teen or pregnant mothers might be served by a parenting class, which may prove cost effective in the long run.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX acknowledged that young parents were always a challenge. He declared a necessity for flexible secondary programs to help young people be successful and individual programs for students who become parents.

10:20:27 AM

ERIK McCORMICK, Director, Assessment and Accountability, Department of Education and Early Development (EED), explained that the action team was formed to support the EED education plan, and was initially divided into four different sections: schools, students, community, and family groups, in order to identify the reasons for dropouts within each group. He reported that every reason was based in engaging students and rooted in children making connections with a mentor, a peer, or an activity. He reported that some districts were using existing data to predict potential dropouts, and he listed these indicators to include: a student's grade point average (GPA), credit deficiency, and reading level. He shared that these identifiers could be helpful to profile at risk students, as early as middle school. He explained that push-out activities such as attendance or discipline policies, were being reviewed.

10:22:48

MS. CURRAN added that the group identified specific actions and determined who was responsible for each action, and its timeline for implementation. She explained an upcoming community poster campaign to feature graduation, which would act as a reminder that each adult of the community was responsible for each student, and that simple actions, such as saying hello, calling a student by name, were an important involvement. Additionally, she reported that letters would be going out to constituencies detailing specific strategies, including work shadowing, and targeting intervention techniques, including mentorships, all of which would show students that someone cares. She stressed that any student who knew that someone cared was more likely to graduate. She pointed out that positive behavioral intervention

support and response to instruction and intervention are two programs that have tiers of support and affect everyone in a school. She reported that the committee would continue to meet to move forward with specific actions, and determine what can be accomplished in a given time frame. She shared that the next meeting would gather local and national resources about what is being done to help students graduate.

10:27:00 AM

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON read from the third bullet point of a departmental handout: "Examination analysis of policies and procedures that push-out students, based on the fact that learning is the constant and time is the variable." She asked for further details on this statement.

10:27:40 AM

MR. McCORMICK provided an example of a district policy that administratively dropped a student when they had ten consecutive days of absence and an example of a suspension policy which required a student to be off school grounds, which often resulted in a lack of interest to return. He suggested an alternative discipline policy to allow a student to serve an in-school suspension, and he pointed out that these types of policies were being scrutinized.

CHAIR SEATON offered his understanding that, around the country, schools that had high graduation rates and low dropout rates consistently assigned someone to follow each student's progress throughout their time in school. National statistics had indicated the success for mentoring or advisory programs yet, he indicated, only a few schools in Alaska were implementing this practice, as it was not a district requirement. He stressed the need to have a system that actively engaged each student, as this was the common denominator of schools that had a high graduation rate.

10:32:46 AM

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON asked if the action group would have a policy change proposal for the upcoming legislative session.

MR. McCORMICK did not anticipate having any recommendations for the legislature that soon.

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON asked if an increase of the compulsory graduation age to 18 tied into the graduation rate.

CHAIR SEATON relayed that the graduation working goals group did not identify that as one of the solutions.

[10:34:43 AM](#)

MS. CURRAN concurred that it was not a solution to immediately help students graduate.

REPRESENTATIVE MUNOZ asked about the process for recertification and how could the legislative committee become involved.

MS. CURRAN affirmed that these requirements were set by the state board of education. She explained that the department submitted recertification requirement amendments to the board. She shared that the current requirement for six semester hours, three of which must be at an upper division of 300 or above, did not specifically state a course requirement or standard.

CHAIR SEATON asked for details of the poster campaign.

[10:36:22 AM](#)

MS. CURRAN described that the brainstorming process resulted in the realization that raising a graduate was everybody's business, and she identified easily accomplished tasks to reach out to a young person in the community. She declared that the department was producing a poster for general distribution throughout the state to help remind everyone to take up the task. At the request of Chair Seaton, she agreed to provide the draft poster to the committee.

CHAIR SEATON directed attention to the second page of the goals handout and read: "increase involvement among culturally unique families and communities in Alaska," and "not only the family engagement plan but each school develops a comprehensive welcome plan." He recalled that the biggest disconnect for students was not being engaged as integral to the school.

10:39:14

REPRESENTATIVE BUCH concurred and underscored that the testimony by students reflected a lack of connection to the school [they left]. He emphasized that this needed to be addressed and every student should be guided towards an attachment to their school.

CHAIR SEATON acknowledged that for some schools, this was going to be difficult when there was already a high student turnover. However, it was important, he opined, to make an equal attempt to connect to these students also, and hope that they bring positive experiences with them to their new school.

10:41:16

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER noted that many students found school to be a positive alternative to home. She provided examples of children arriving early and being let in before hours because of the need to be some place. These were not necessarily good students, and they were at risk children, but they certainly come to school. One school, she recalled, eliminated its tardy policy because of older siblings need to attend to younger family members. These children were cared for at the school, and welcomed, however, they were still at risk of failure and not graduating, for a very different reason than being disconnected.

10:43:25

SENATOR JOE THOMAS, Alaska State Legislature, directed attention to the first goal on the page titled "Graduation Working Group Goals and Actions," and read the first goal: "to improve the connectedness and/or flexibility of our schools to meet the needs of all students." He noted that flexibility should include the idea of curriculum being individually adjusted to keep the students' interest, keep them in school, and better prepare them for what takes place after school/graduation. There was a void, he opined, that resulted in remediation at the university level and non-preparedness to enter the work force, which needed to be addressed, as well.

10:45:02 AM

MR. McCORMICK explained that individual learning plans (ILPs), as graduation plans, would incorporate curriculum that would be student specific. He shared that schools within schools was an intervention model reviewed, and he noted that the commissioner had suggested the idea of virtual school.

MS. CURRAN disclosed that the department was in the process of developing and planning a statewide virtual school, which would encompass many different components.

SENATOR THOMAS noted that the development of a project which allowed for expansion would prove to be more economical in the long run, and suggested creating a broad curriculum to maintain a student's interest. He opined that this would be more effective for a higher graduation rate. He stated his interest in offering realistic life-skills classes as a part of such a curriculum.

[10:48:22 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MUNOZ spoke of the need for cross cultural certification to prepare new teachers.

MS. CURRAN replied that the legislature had provided for that several years prior, and she elaborated that all teachers must take three semester hours in multi-cultural or cross cultural communication. She added that many districts were offering enhancement of this requirement to assist teacher success.

10:49:54

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON indicated a need for new brain and behavior research to be included with the continued training for teachers.

[10:51:15 AM](#)

MS. CURRAN replied that each district did its own needs-assessment, when planning in-service training. She relayed that EED would be working with the teacher preparation institution to review the training program approval process, which would be reviewed by the state board.

[10:52:41 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE BUCH mentioned that cross cultural training was highlighted during the group discussions, and that many of the aspects of the training were determined to be outdated. He stated his understanding that EED would be reviewing the program structure to more effectively serve Alaska's teachers, specifically those in the Bush.

[10:54:12 AM](#)

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX mentioned that a recent Harvard study indicated that there was no correlation between student achievement and a Masters degree by teachers. He expanded that

careful thought to the needs of the teacher and staff development revealed a correlation to student achievement. He opined that the old recertification process of six credits over five years, with the stipulation that half would be upper division courses, had not proven to increase teacher skills. The state board was reviewing changes to the recertification process to assure that teachers attend courses that would directly relate to their needs. He explained that this can be recognized from teacher evaluation and review, and to target specific areas and skill improvement. The salary schedules that are based on achievement of a Masters degree would be scrutinized for content and applicability to the individual teacher, he predicted. Responding to a teacher's ability to teach within a cultural context, he said, taking a three credit course in cross cultural communication was inadequate. The realization was that teachers needed to attend focused workshops, once they arrive in Alaska, which would better prepare them for the specific locale where they would be working. He suggested that this could occur during the summer. Finally, he underscored the need for everyone to become involved with students on an intimate level, and to consider that some students required a smaller school size. These steps were an important means to improvement of graduation rates and student success, he opined.

[10:58:51 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLY noted the need to improve the system and to deliver graduates who were prepared to enter the university without remedial work. He expressed concern that three and four year old children were going to enter the system, which will put a further financial burden on the state. Although it had been indicated that the onus would not be entirely on districts to pilot this program, he stated his belief that many people see it as a school based program. He underscored his support for a parent/family driven system as opposed to a school-driven system. In the name of pre-K education, he opined, this may end up being construed as universal early childhood babysitting. He emphasized his desire for these important cautions to be a factor for consideration as this project moved forward.

[11:05:18 AM](#)

EDDY JEANS, Director, School Finance and Facilities Section, Department of Education and Early Development (EED), clarified that the pilot target group did not go include younger than four-year-olds. Additionally, he emphasized that the pre-K

program was focused on the collaboration of what existed currently in the school district and communities, and bridging those gaps.

MR. JEANS launched into the topic of single site schools by describing the system as a whole. There are 53 school districts across the state, ranging from a student population of 48,000, in Anchorage, down to a district serving 15 students, in Pelican. Pelican is a single-site school, as well as a first class city. Of the 53 school districts, there are 19 regional education attendance areas (REAs), which are areas outside of the organized/incorporated areas in the state. Within those REAs, two of them are single site school districts: Annette Island, the only reservation in the state, and Kashunamiut, which served 318 students, and was created in 1987 via legislative action. During that same legislative time, the Yupiit school district was created as an REA, serving three communities. These last two districts are significant as they represent REAs within an REA, an unusual situation, and were the last of the BIA (Bureau of Indian Affairs) schools to be transferred to the state.

MR. JEANS continued to explain that there were 16 home rule/first class cities, which were cities in the unorganized areas not incorporated as boroughs but holding educational powers. Finally, there were 18 boroughs/unified municipalities in the state. In these unified municipalities there may be first class cities, but those cities do not have educational powers; that power had been given to the borough on an area wide basis. The educational powers, assigned to the school districts, came from two different statutes: Title 29 dealt with municipalities and described the powers for municipal schools, and for the unorganized areas, or REAs, educational powers were granted through Title 14 - EED. Thus, two systems were in play, those governed through municipal statutes, and those under the purview of EED.

[11:09:34 AM](#)

CHAIR SEATON asked whether the powers provided through the two statutes, effectively for the school districts, were the same, or were there conflicts.

MR. JEANS responded that the educational duties and powers were virtually identical. He added that Title 29, under municipality codes, granted the power of education, taxation, and planning to municipality. The unorganized REAs were awarded under Title

14, circa 1977, when the state transformed from state operated schools to the current system.

CHAIR SEATON clarified that regardless of the education powers being exercised there was no conflict between the governing statutes.

MR JEANS assured the committee that both authorities were in accordance and required a locally elected school board. One difference was that under the REAAs, Title 14 statute, there was a requirement to maintain a local advisory council in each community; an option under Title 29.

[11:12:09 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MUNOZ offered her understanding that communities in the unorganized boroughs do not participate towards the cost of maintaining the schools. She asked if that was also the case for the single-site districts in the unorganized borough.

MR. JEANS said that he disagreed with that characterization, but pointed out that the difference lies in the ability of a community to tax the residents and make contributions to the local school fund. In the unorganized areas, the impact aide money was generated in lieu of local taxes. Under the EED state funding formula, REAAs were required to contribute 90 percent of their federal impact aide money to education. He explained that regardless of how that funding was raised, the homes were not taxable, even if they were to be incorporated into boroughs. Although many may disagree, he stated his belief that it was a legitimate means for the REAAs areas to contribute to educational costs, although it may feel different and have varying effects from contributions made by a private tax payer. It does affect the state's funding formula in the same manner. First class cities are required to contribute a local contribution to education via a local tax source established by the community.

[11:14:07 AM](#)

MR. JEANS continued, stating that there were 16 home rule first class city school districts. These included two cities that served 50 or fewer students, Pelican and Tanana; two with 50 to 100 students, Hydaburg and Kake; four with 100-200 students, Hoonah, Klawock, St. Maries and Nenana; one with 200-300, Galena's residential program; two districts with 300-400, Craig and Cordova; one district with 400-500 Unalaska; and four

districts with more than 500 students, Dillingham, Petersburg, Nome, and Valdez. The local boundary commission had considered school district consolidation under a number of different studies. One was the model borough boundary study of 1979, a joint effort with the boundary commission and EED in a report dated February 2004; and there had been resolutions issued from the legislature requesting the boundary commission to submit recommendations for consideration. In general terms, he summarized, the local boundary commission would do a study on individual areas, submit this to the legislature, and if the recommendation was accepted then that area would automatically be incorporated as a Borough. If all of the REAAs in the first class cities, within those REAAs, were to incorporate as boroughs, and the rule was strictly borough government, there would be 37 schools districts, he stated.

[11:17:29 AM](#)

MR. JEANS relayed that some of the areas had incorporated as Boroughs, since the study was completed, and that Skagway had incorporated as its own separate Borough, but that Haines was now the only third class Borough in Alaska. He pointed out that communities had been annexed, noting that Ketchikan and Wrangell had extended their boundaries. He reported that the Model Borough Boundary study would have to be updated to move forward with any incorporation recommendations. He offered his opinion that the constitution envisioned the entire state divided into Borough governments. He opined that local boundary commission staff and some legislators were frustrated that it had moved so slowly, but that this responsibility lay with the legislature and the local boundary commission, not the EED.

MR. JEANS, in response to Chair Seaton, clarified that there was a perceived savings through consolidation of school district administrations. He referred to a study conducted in the 1980's which illustrated that the cost of administration would increase when more communities were served. He detailed that travel costs for school boards would increase. He opined that consolidation made sense in some areas, pointing out that Craig, Klawock, Hydaburg, and Southeast Island School District all operated on the Prince of Wales, but were not consolidated. He relayed that many parents and local communities desired to maintain control of the local schools. He allowed that there was some sharing of services.

CHAIR SEATON, noting that it appeared counterintuitive, asked to clarify whether the per student rate of state funding would increase with consolidation.

[11:23:12 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER confirmed that the funding structure for small school adjustments could use up any cost benefit of consolidation.

MR. JEANS offered to investigate that point further. He noted that the current funding formula was based on the student population within a school. He explained that consolidating single site schools into larger areas could affect the geographic cost differential. He supplied an example of the Chugach School District, as it had multiple school sites off the road system.

[11:24:36 AM](#)

CHAIR SEATON explained that the committee was seeking a knowledge base of single sites and the number of school districts, and then to relate this to any change or benefit for education in the communities. He emphasized that this was based on education, not funding.

MR. JEANS relayed that the regional education attendance areas were required to contribute 90 percent of the impact aid to education. He explained that there was a calculation for both first class city and borough that would reduce the amount of impact aid that the state could deduct. He surmised that state costs could go up when an REAA was combined with a first class area that had local contribution, there are not as many federal dollars deducted, noting that as federal dollars go down, state dollars go up.

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER referring to School Consolidation: Public Policy Considerations and a Review of Opportunities for Consolidation [included in the committee packets], pointed out the section on recommendations to the legislature and noted that page 58, item (e), recommended to remove the disincentives for school consolidation from the education funding formula.

MR. JEANS, in response to Representative Gardner, reported that this statement came from the local boundary commission, but he opined that it was a form of equity across all school districts. He reflected that without a required local effort, there needed

to be a cap on local contributions to maintain some form of equity.

[11:28:20 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON asked whether any single-site districts would be under 10 students.

MR. JEANS replied that Pelican had 15 students, but with a continued declining enrollment. In response to a question, he replied that the hold harmless bill was passed two years ago to provide transition funding for the communities with a student population below 10.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON asked what funding allowed a school to continue to remain open although its student population was less than 10.

MR. JEANS replied that the local school board made the decision to remain open however the funding mechanism did influence these decisions. He noted that as funding was decreased, the financial pressure could lead to school closure. He explained that the transition funding was for four years, and in response to a question from Representative Wilson, he reported that district funding diminished each year by an additional 25 percent. In response to a question from Representative Seaton, he noted that should the Pelican school population drop below 10 students, it would qualify for hold harmless because it was the only school in the district.

[11:33:18 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON asked if the EED had a role in redistricting.

MR. JEANS replied that EED did not have a role in redistricting, and opined that it was strictly based on census. In response to Representative Gardner, he explained that the two common waivers were for a small school district with an operating budget of less than \$3 million, and for a school district with an operation and maintenance budget which was 20 percent of the total operating fund.

REPRESENTATIVE MUNOZ surmised that a disincentive mentioned in the report was that the funding formula allowed for more funding for smaller schools. She pointed out that Kenai Peninsula

schools were faced with closing some smaller schools, but found that it would cost the district more to close the schools.

MR. JEANS, in response, observed that the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District was an anomaly, as it had grown very rapidly, but was now experiencing declining enrollment. He reported that the funding was an individual school based formula, so that closing a school was a disadvantage. He disclosed that the prior funding formula was based on communities, which would have been an advantage for the school district, in this case.

[11:36:50 AM](#)

CHAIR SEATON directed attention to the task force appointed to review the funding formula.

MR. JEANS clarified that the task force would review the geographic cost differentials, and not necessarily the entire funding formula.

[11:37:44 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MUNOZ referred to a letter, dated February 18, 2004, from EED to House Speaker Kott and Senate President Therriault, and noted that it said in part that the consolidation of ten city school districts would reduce the state education costs by more than \$262,000 each year. She continued and read that it would increase basic need by \$750 per student, and she asked if this would be paid by local contribution.

MR. JEANS reported that first class cities are required to make a local contribution to education. He observed that if the 10 smallest cities on the list were taken out of the formula, this would result in the \$262,000 savings; however, as there were higher geographic cost differentials, the basic need would increase. In response to Representative Munoz, he clarified that basic need was the state contribution.

REPRESENTATIVE MUNOZ, referring again to the letter, asked how consolidation would free up more than \$1 million of local taxes.

MR. JEANS explained that the education control would be placed in the existing REAA, so that the local tax money would no longer be required or allowed.

CHAIR SEATON observed that the anomaly was that the state would now have to pay for the basic need, instead of the local taxpayers.

REPRESENTATIVE MUNOZ questioned the economic gain.

MR. JEANS offered to research that issue further.

[11:41:38 AM](#)

LES MORSE, Deputy Commissioner, Office of the Commissioner, Department of Education and Early Development (EED), spoke about assessment issues. He spoke first about the relevancy of the high school qualifying exam. He pointed to the Comparison of the High School Graduation Qualifying Examination (HSGQE) and WorkKeys Assessments. [Included in the committee packets.] He presented that the first important point of HSGQE relevance was to consider what a state wide assessment did and the balance necessary. He noted that teachers will teach to the standards of the test. He discussed the concern of narrowing the curriculum. He observed that there are many important skills to attain by graduation, and although some are difficult to test, such as the ability to show up on time, the schools needed to assess for them.

MR. MORSE explained that the HSGQE was an exit exam, but that not all states had exit exams. He observed that there was a shift in some states from the comprehensive exit exam to end of course exams, which he defined as a series of exams at the end of specific courses. He pointed out that although this major shift was occurring, Alaska was maintaining the HSGQE as required by law. He relayed that the skills tested on the HSGQE included reading, and the sub categories: reading comprehension, identification and support for main ideas, application of multi-step directions, ability to make and support assertions, and analysis and evaluation of themes. He opined that relevancy was if it was important for the students, though he allowed that things could be missing. He discussed the writing skills tested, which included writing compositions using conventions of Standard English, and revising writing to improve expression, and the mathematics skills, which included computation skills, reading, interpreting and constructing graphs, principles of geometry and measurement. He pointed out that these specific skills were better defined on the comparison sheet mentioned above. He noted that Mr. McCormick would address statistics on student performance.

11:50:39 AM

MR McCORMICK pointed out that relevancy was questioned by the students who passed the HSGQE at the end of the sophomore year, and he noted that, in 2008, 1500 seniors had completed the school year, did not get a diploma, but had passed the HSGQE.

CHAIR SEATON pointed out that at the end of two years of high school, a high percentage of students have passed the HSGQE, yet they have not taken any of the advanced classes. He asked about the relevancy of the exam when these same students could not pass a college entrance exam two years later.

MR. MORSE said that generally, the reading and writing skills are aligned with the grade level expectation for ninth and tenth grade; whereas the math skills were a blend of eighth, ninth and tenth grades. He identified that the question was whether to measure a guaranteed foundational skill for everyone or build a test that drives instruction that will place students as to proficiency and will give greater feedback to a relative outcome after high school. The assessment could be more challenging but would offer more information. He presented the dilemma of the pass rate as a requirement of graduation versus a more robust assessment of career and college readiness.

11:55:42 AM

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER observed that 14 states had exit exams generally targeted to ninth and tenth grade students. She offered her understanding that the original exit exam proposal was watered down, and she reflected that, as 90 percent of high school dropouts had passed all three parts of the exit exams, they assumed they had mastered what they needed.

MR. McCORMICK, in response, explained that the shift from exit exams to end of course exams would increase the rigor and accountability and move toward alignment with national standards.

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER asked if the end of course exam would correlate with the course grade, and if so, why have the exam.

MR. MORSE reported that these exams were graduation exit criteria for some states, and often a percentage of the course grade. He shared that he did not know the relative pass rate to the grade earned separately.

[11:59:18 AM](#)

MR. McCORMICK, in response to Representative Johansen, offered his understanding that 40 percent of incoming freshmen from Alaska schools needed some remedial course work.

REPRESENTATIVE JOHANSEN asked how this compared to out of state students.

MR. McCORMICK replied that he would research this question.

REPRESENTATIVE JOHANSEN asked what was being done to determine why students who passed the exit exam as sophomores did not go on to graduate.

MR. McCORMICK, in response to Representative Johansen, explained that this was being researched.

[12:02:03 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MUNOZ questioned whether the exit exam was being administered too early, and instead be offered in a later year as an incentive to stay in school.

MR. MORSE surmised that it depended on the individual student, as early administration offered multiple opportunities and support staff for those who did not pass on the first attempt. He replied to Representative Munoz that data reflected 90 percent of the 2008 class had passed all three exam sections, and were eligible to graduate. He acknowledged that this did not account for drop-outs prior to the senior year.

[12:04:59 PM](#)

The committee took a recess from 12:04 p.m. to 1:13 p.m.

[1:13:13 PM](#)

CHAIR SEATON called the House Education Standing Committee meeting back to order at 1:13 p.m.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON asked the percentage of students who passed the exit exam and still needed remedial instruction in college. She asked for this to include the percentage of General Educational Development (GED) and high school graduates.

[1:15:35 PM](#)

MR. McCORMICK announced that a recent Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Department of Labor & Workforce Development (DLWD) would correlate a list of GED and high school graduates with permanent fund dividend (PFD) data, unemployment insurance (UI) records, and college attendance. He agreed that tracking remediation for students would be a natural next step.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON expressed the need to better understand the reasons for remediation.

[1:16:37 PM](#)

CHAIR SEATON, referring to the first paragraph, page 2, of Comparison of the High School Graduation Qualifying Examination (HSGQE) and WorkKeys Assessments [Included in the committee packets], read "the proficient score on the examination was designed to reflect what high school students should know as a result of their public school experience," and asked if this meant the end of grade 12.

MR. McCORMICK explained that the language was primarily from statute and that the test was designed to be high stakes. He allowed that after the first tests were given, there was statutory modification, and the exam became a basic competency test. He opined that the test should reflect that a student has attained tenth grade essential skills.

CHAIR SEATON asked to clarify that EED did not agree that the proficiency score on the exit examination reflected the entire public education career.

MR. McCORMICK agreed.

CHAIR SEATON asked if WorkKeys aligned well with the Alaska Performance Standards. He provided that the House Education Standing Committee had worked toward the implementation of WorkKeys to give students goals for evaluation and preparation for work without remediation.

MR. McCORMICK responded that it was still not possible to find a skill level equivalent to HSGQE. He said that a scale score from the HSGQE did not directly relate to a raw score on the WorkKeys.

CHAIR SEATON questioned whether the WorkKeys concepts of application and academic knowledge could be aligned to measure proficiency on Alaska Performance Standards.

MR. MORSE opined that the use of WorkKeys would require it be aligned to the Alaska Performance Standards, and to note any other skills that would appear on the test, so that educators would know what else was necessary for the HSGQE preparation. He explained that the Comparison page, of the HSGQE and WorkKeys assessments, is provided, should it be necessary to choose one or the other. He noted that the standards tested for in the HSGQE would still be tested for in the standards based assessment program, as this was still required under federal and state regulation.

CHAIR SEATON offered his belief that WorkKeys did not align with Alaska Performance Standards. He asked if this needed to be addressed through the education curriculum. He questioned that the HSGQE is aligned with the Alaska Performance Standards, but stated his understanding that the WorkKeys is not, and how could that be accomplished.

MR. MORSE, pointing to page 5 of the aforementioned Comparison, noted that this preliminary analysis would have to be validated. He also acknowledged that it needed to be clear which things in WorkKeys were not in the performance standards, and this was the beginning of that analysis.

CHAIR SEATON asked if this was the reason for the delay in implementation of WorkKeys in grade 11.

[1:29:44 PM](#)

MR. McCORMICK, in response to Mr. Morse, listed the three assessments in WorkKeys that lead to certification: reading for information, locating information, and applied mathematics. He pointed that out the HSGQE had a writing component which was not in WorkKeys, although WorkKeys did have a business writing and a writing assessment which were not part of the certification. He explained that the "L" in WorkKeys referenced the level. He pointed out that math [on page 8] did "match up fairly well." He directed attention to the HSGQE descriptors of Functions and Relationships, Geometry, and Probability and Statistics, and said that these did not "line up with WorkKeys."

MR. McCORMICK, in response to Chair Seaton, explained that this was a linear comparison only, math versus math, and reading versus reading, and did not include a cross category comparison.

CHAIR SEATON underscored that the House Education Standing Committee is focusing on preparing students for real world situations. He observed that whatever measurement tool is used must have standards, communications to teachers, and progressive testing to allow for improvement.

[1:35:39 PM](#)

MR. MORSE, in response to Representative Wilson, pointed out that the footer stated that the comparison was a preliminary analysis and would not be used in the curriculum until the skills were tested for work use.

[1:36:44 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX stated that one of the most important components of the state education plan were world class student graduation outcomes. This plan identified what students needed to know and do upon high school graduation. He shared that colleges reported that many students were not ready upon entrance to college. He reported that the starting place was the vision for the outcome, and then an assessment of achievement was developed. He stated that the HSGQE was not a college exam, but that it was a minimum exam. He stated that a review of the standards had begun. He presented a need to measure twenty-first century skills. He explained that these were the ability to problem solve, to be creative, and to work cooperatively, as well as the ability to be on time and to understand ethics. He observed that WorkKeys was a national attempt to measure some of these skills. He agreed that there was still a lot of work to be done, and that high standards were being developed. He cautioned that the standard had to be set before the assessment.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX allowed that WorkKeys might not be the best tool, as it was necessary to first identify the standards and expectations. He agreed that the HSGQE was not rigorous enough, was simply a minimum, and had no information on the ability to function in society.

[1:41:43 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER asked whether there was any value in retaining the HSGQE.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX reminded that first there needed to be an adjustment of the standards. He emphasized that accountability was also critical. In response to Representative Gardner, he stated that HSGQE was still useful, but that it needed to be re-evaluated and adjusted as a measurement for expected knowledge at graduation.

[1:44:03 PM](#)

CHAIR SEATON asked how the HSGQE compared to the measurement of efficiency for every grade level.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX replied that the most important assessment was student-based, and that school based assessments in grades three to ten were very effective for measuring performance and achieving standards. He opined that Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) was a construct that did not make a lot of sense for accountability. In response to a question, he explained that the HSGQE was a high stakes, minimum competency exam.

MR. McCORMICK, in response to another question, said that the Standard Based Assessment (SBA) were designed using the Grade-Level Expectations (GLE). He explained that HSGQE was not initially tied to the standards, but was re-focused to attempt to match the standards. He opined that the SBA was a more accurate measure, and was a better tool for analysis than the HSGQE.

CHAIR SEATON surmised that EED should be able to use the proficiency and growth models to produce something more valuable than HSGQE.

[1:50:21 PM](#)

SENATOR THOMAS asked how the HSGQE results would compare to a student's results in the sixth grade.

MR. McCORMICK replied that this had not been done.

SENATOR THOMAS questioned whether there was a similar exam to be administered earlier to compare to the sixth grade statistics.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX replied that research indicated that early assessments should be centered on inflection points, which he

described as learnings that must be mastered before the next skill level could be mastered. He noted that school districts throughout the U.S. were looking at end of course exams for more accountability.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON asked if there were a similar program to WorkKeys that the state did not have to pay for annually.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX established that it would be very expensive to create. He noted that a high stakes exam, such as the HSGQE, was always forced to a minimum level, or not enough students graduated. He said that a high stakes exam did not give any information about the skills and knowledge for success.

[1:56:32 PM](#)

MARCIA OLSON, Career and Technical Education Specialist, Teaching and Learning Support, Department of Education and Early Development (EED), in response to a question, reported that there was a delay to WorkKeys assessment implementation for another school year. She explained that the delay was to "work out some of the bugs with the actual implementation of the assessments." In response to Representative Gardner, she explained that ACT [WorkKeys is a commercial product offered by ACT.] was learning the logistical difficulties within Alaska, which included the timing for the shipment of tests, and the difficulty of using computers for administering the tests. In response to another question, she established that previously ACT had a CD-Rom based version, but that method had been abandoned. She allowed that currently the only two options were paper and pencil, or an internet access version, which was difficult for many Alaskan communities due to a lack of bandwidth.

[2:05:04 PM](#)

MS. OLSON, in response to Chair Seaton, agreed with Mr. Morse that it is important to share which skills are tested via WorkKeys, and which skills are not addressed on assessment exams. She reported that ACT publishes Targets for Instruction which lists the WorkKeys skills and offers classroom teaching strategies. She disclosed that more training is now being offered to the schools.

CHAIR SEATON opined that there were some other educational curriculum tools that aligned with WorkKeys to be a better fit

for some school districts. He asked whether these trainings were available.

[2:07:47 PM](#)

MS. OLSON replied that two other companies have developed online curriculum for training on WorkKeys assessments. She noted that Department of Education and Early Development had contracted with one company, World Interactive Network (WIN), to provide this curriculum to all K-12 public schools, and to the Department of Labor & Workforce Development job centers. She pointed out that the job centers also offered KeyTrain, a similar curriculum to WIN. She acknowledged that EED had also been reviewing KeyTrain. In response to a question, she said that the WIN software was available to all the public schools, and that more than half the Alaskan school districts had used WIN.

CHAIR SEATON asked whether the entire Kodiak Island Borough School District had used KeyTrain.

MS. OLSON offered her understanding that the Kodiak schools were using WIN and KeyTrain.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX reported that the Kodiak High School principal was available.

CHAIR SEATON emphasized that this was not just a test, but a preparation for success after high school.

[2:15:36 PM](#)

MS. OLSON explained the new Platinum level of certificates, which required a Level 6 score on all three of the WorkKeys assessments, and shared that Kodiak had the first Platinum recipient.

[Contains discussion of HB 206]

[2:16:52 PM](#)

CHAIR SEATON, referring to HB 206-High-School Students Taking Postsecondary Courses [Included in the committee packets], asked for clarification of the first paragraph which stated: "only high school seniors in their second semester would be eligible for the free courses."

[2:19:52 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX explained that high school students were able to take courses with college credits, and both the fee and the success were based on the relationship between the school district and the local college. He explained that some districts were offering a middle college degree, which allowed credits toward an associate degree while still in high school. He opined that many districts were very excited to formalize relationships for these programs. He shared that many students of these middle college programs could not afford any tuition or fees, and that school districts would be less inclined to participate if there was a cost.

CHAIR SEATON pointed out the question of how to extend this program to students across the state. He noted that there were benefits to the University of Alaska. He stated that the House Education Standing Committee was working to "activate more education and more collaboration between the University and the entire school system."

[2:27:11 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MUNOZ noted that the high school in Juneau offered an architectural and engineering program which allowed students to take courses for dual credit from both the University and the high school. She asked if the school district reimbursed the University.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX said that he was not aware of the details, but affirmed that the programs were very effective.

MR. JEANS agreed that this was a way to jump start a college career, and possibly graduate from high school with an Associate of Arts (AA) degree. He reminded the committee that the discussion was to keep students engaged in school, and he reflected on the HSGQE.

CHAIR SEATON deliberated that the need was to review both curriculum and assessment, as not all the students would continue on to college. He opined that it was necessary to broaden the interest for students.

[2:31:12 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX offered his belief that students needed to explore their interests, and that was an important factor for

students to stay in school. He surmised that schools were going to have to offer flexibility for students to engage in apprenticeship, work study, self exploration, and college classes. He opined that schools with limited choices did not work, as students could manage their learning in real time. He suggested that the modern high school student would master the basic skills by the sophomore year, and would need more opportunities to explore their interests. He stated that the inflexible school would not be successful, and that the University provided a great opportunity for all students.

CHAIR SEATON considered that to be a vision statement and he offered disagreement that rigid curriculum schools did not still exist. He asked if correspondence schools had become open ended and available to all students.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX replied that the University was a leader in developing distance courses. He offered his belief that the various distance course offerings had not been coordinated, had different quality and capability, and that not all were effective. It was the intent of the EED to develop a high quality, statewide, virtual education system, which was managed and owned by school districts, and would be a cooperation between the University, the school districts, and private agencies. He shared that there were a number of models to consider which would allow students to participate in qualified classes.

CHAIR SEATON asked whether all school districts would accept the course qualifications.

[2:37:15 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX replied that once the system was set up, it would be owned by all the districts. He ascertained that districts could join, and each would manage its course offerings. He referred to this as the "anytime, anywhere, any age, anyone system."

[2:39:04 PM](#)

SAICHI OBA, Associate Vice President for Students, University of Alaska, said that they were interested in an assessment that would help students and families prepare for post-secondary course work. He acknowledged that there was dual enrollment at the University, and that the most common way was to enroll as a non-degree seeking student. He explained that there were

specific programs for high school students, which included tech prep as a low cost alternative. He described the AHEAD (Alaska Higher Education Admission Decision) program in Fairbanks, which was for students who had completed 75 percent of their high school curriculum, with a minimum GPA of 3.0. He described the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) which allowed post-secondary institutions to formally admit high school students into a degree program.

[2:42:49 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER noted that Kenai Peninsula College had mentioned that should high school students be struggling with the college course work, the parents had no way of knowing and it could affect graduation from high school.

MR. OBA replied that he was aware of the issue. He emphasized that the communication needed to exist between a high school student and parents. He pointed out that each high school district should also be aware of the university program.

CHAIR SEATON considered the tendency toward five years for completion and graduation because of the lack of class requisites. He asked if non-degree courses affected college graduation.

[2:46:41 PM](#)

MR. OBA explained that the term non-degree seeking referred to the student status at the time of the course, and it did not affect the course work as all the course work could be applied to a degree program. He opined that the keys to the success of the university and the success of K-12 were linked. He expressed support for programs to help high school students find success in post-secondary education.

[2:49:33 PM](#)

MR. JEANS, in reference to HB 206 - Student Count [included in committee packets], explained that the current public school funding formula required one student count for a 20 day period in October. He shared that HB 206 would require two student counts, and funding would be based on the higher of the two counts. He detailed that the first count would still be in October, but would now average with the [new] prior February count, and that this average would be the funding for the school year. He shared that there had been an optional February count

from 1988-1998, which allowed districts with a student increase, to base their funding on the higher average. He pointed out that October historically had the highest student count. He suggested the second count would encourage district support for keeping students in school.

[2:53:52 PM](#)

MR. JEANS, in response to Chair Seaton, agreed that HB 206 requested two 20-day counts, which would allow for comparable counting time periods. He reminded the committee that the count was based on enrollment, not attendance, so there was not a penalty if students were absent.

CHAIR SEATON stated that it was undesirable to have a system which rewarded enrollment and not attendance.

MR. JEANS replied that a student was dropped from enrollment after an absence of 10 consecutive days without contacting the school district. He reported that the school districts expected parents to set up a learning schedule for children who would be on any extended school leave. He offered his belief that this addressed the enrollment issue.

REPRESENTATIVE MUNOZ agreed with a second count, yet she expressed concern for smaller schools.

MR. JEANS detailed that the two counts, February and October, would be averaged during the calendar year. He explained further that the October and upcoming February counts would be averaged for the school year, and then the higher average would be used. He expressed his understanding for the concerns of Representative Munoz.

CHAIR SEATON surmised that an optional count would be a better financial incentive to keep students in school, as there was not a downside to student decrease, but an upside to a student increase.

[3:00:55 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MUNOZ agreed with an optional count.

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER expressed support for offering a financial incentive to keep children in school. She suggested adding a hold harmless clause that stated the second count would not be used to lose funding.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON said that she could not envision the EED forcing closure of a school during the middle of the school year.

[3:03:01 PM](#)

MR. JEANS, in response to Representative Wilson, clarified that the EED did not close schools, that this decision was determined by the local school board. He noted that the second count considered in HB 206 could affect schools similar to Tenakee Springs. In response to a question, he clarified that the funding would be based on the average of the two counts, not the higher. He agreed with the concerns of Representative Munoz.

[3:07:15 PM](#)

CHAIR SEATON offered an example of the effects of increasing and decreasing student counts, using a two count system.

MR. JEANS noted that schools close to the minimum ten student level did not have a large fluctuation.

REPRESENTATIVE BUCH asked how many schools were on the edge for student minimums.

MR. JEANS estimated that there were ten schools statewide.

CHAIR SEATON offered an example of the recruitment of students for a small school. He offered his belief that the second student count was a financial incentive to keep students in school.

[3:11:26 PM](#)

DAVE JONES, Assistant Superintendent, Kenai Peninsula Borough School District, expressed support for the funding plan which the legislature had adopted three years prior. He referred to student count averaging, and noted that student population fluctuated during the school year. He opined that the two count system would result in less funding than the current program. He reported that contracts were written in May, but a school did not know its revenue until October. He suggested one financial incentive to be a count for 170 days from the previous school year. He opined that an October count would not result in a decrease for funding, but would allow for a funding increase due to enrollment.

[3:16:21 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER surmised that the proposed bill would allow funding, at the very least, for the prior year average. She asked if a spring student count was enough financial incentive to retain students.

MR. JONES, in response to Representative Gardner, reiterated that school student counts go down in the winter, and he expressed a concern that the means to retain students would not justify the financial gain.

CHAIR SEATON surmised that a school would not lose funding for its current school year, no matter what the February count; however, a student increase in February could be a financial gain. He offered an example from the Alaska Military Youth Academy, which revised its program to ensure there was not a loss of student population when it began the two count system. He asked Mr. Jones for any incentive suggestions to maintain the student count.

[3:21:06 PM](#)

MR. JONES repeated his suggestion for a 170 day count. He expressed concern with the February count occurring during the lowest student attendance period of the school year. He conveyed that the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District goal was to promote itself as the place of choice, with the best alternatives. He noted that should this second count have been taken during the prior ten years, his district would have had a financial loss.

CHAIR SEATON asked to clarify that this was based on enrollment and not attendance.

[3:23:05 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER asked if Mr. Jones recommended a later date for a second count.

MR. JONES relayed that enrollment began to increase in the spring, with its peak in October.

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER reflected that the February count had been selected as it was prior to the variety of spring school breaks which could interfere with the student count.

MR. JONES suggested that April or May would be a better time.

[3:24:23 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON asked where all the students went in October, as it appeared that all the schools had a drop in student count.

MR. JONES replied that every school district was convinced that the new students were already funded in another district. He offered assurance that districts did not stop student encouragement after the October student count.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON opined that the district superintendent needed to prioritize the maintenance of student enrollment so that all the district staff would investigate every instance of a student drop.

MR. JONES reported that when a district did not get a request from another district for a student record, it did not know where to respond.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON reflected on what happened to the students who were no longer enrolled anywhere.

[3:28:06 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MUNOZ noted that some populations, such as fishing and tourism, were seasonal.

MR. JONES concurred.

[3:28:48 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE BUCH reflected that for small districts, it was possible for someone to go to the student's home to check on them, but in larger communities there was often nothing done. He questioned whether students could be missing in their own communities.

CHAIR SEATON concurred that some students were missing from the schools, but still in the community. He shared that most state agencies had responded that this was not its priority. He reiterated that the purpose was to get students back in to a school.

[3:32:33 PM](#)

MR. JEANS relayed that there were unintended consequences with the second student count and gave an example of early graduation.

CHAIR SEATON asked which month was best for the second count.

MR. McCORMICK offered his belief that after February it was very difficult for EED to reconcile that much data in order to recalibrate the foundation entitlements for that current year. He acknowledged that other states used the 170 day prior year student count, and that it might achieve the committee goal.

[Contains discussion of HB 33.]

[3:37:01 PM](#)

CHAIR SEATON announced that the committee would next discuss the compulsory school age.

The committee took an at-ease from 3:38 p.m. to 3:45 p.m.

[3:45:56 PM](#)

MS. CURRAN said that the compulsory school laws in the nation were quite old and ranged in requirement, but that more and more states were considering an increase of the compulsory school age. She shared that half the states allowed an exemption with certain criteria.

MR. JEANS reported that the compulsory school age in Alaska was between seven and sixteen, and that there were twelve exemptions, which made it difficult to enforce attendance. He said that, as a parent, he viewed this as a law. He expressed his opinion that he had more influence on his children if the age was increased, and less if it was decreased.

[3:50:34 PM](#)

MR. JEANS, in response to Chair Seaton, read the 12 exemptions, which included: comparable education to public schools; attends school operated by the federal government; physical or medical condition which makes attendance impractical; in custody of court or law enforcement; temporarily ill or injured; been suspended or expelled; resides outside of transportation routes provided by school authority; excused by action of the school

board; has completed the 12th grade; enrolled in the state boarding school or state funded correspondence program; equally served by an approved educational experience; and, educated at home by parent or legal guardian.

SENATOR DAVIS asked if these were regulation or statute.

MR. JEANS replied that it was AS 14.30.010, although he admitted to not reading the statute exactly as written.

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER asked what was the penalty for violation.

MR. JEANS, in response, relayed that each five days of unlawful absence was a separate violation. He said that he believed this had been enforced, but only on a very limited basis.

[3:56:36 PM](#)

GEORGE TROXAL, Superintendent, Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District, stated that the district did give tickets and fines for truancy. He said that enforcement was very time intensive and didn't result in a subsequent increase in attendance, although it was a good policy. He shared that the parents of truants had expressed a wish for compulsory school attendance until 18. He offered support for amending the compulsory age to 18. In response to a question, he said it would be difficult to estimate the attendance increase from such a law, but that it would alleviate "some of the struggle in getting kids to school."

[4:00:00 PM](#)

JIM HICKERSON, Superintendent, Bering Strait School District, concurred with Superintendent Troxel to raise the age to 18, however, he acknowledged that raising the age won't have any consequence unless enforcement efforts are also increased. He offered his belief that currently for the rural school districts, there was not enough enforcement.

[4:02:25 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE BUCH asked what efforts were taken in dealing with the parents.

MR. HICKERSON replied that parents of younger students were encouraged to bring the students to school, but if the parents weren't willing then little can be done.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON asked at what age students stopped attending school.

MR. HICKERSON, in response, said that students as young as ten years stop coming, and although the district followed through, student truancy was not a high priority with support and enforcement agencies. In response to a question, he said that the total number of students not coming at all was small, but the number that missed 50-70 days each school year was very large.

CHAIR SEATON surmised that changes in the budget process would have to be made, and resources reallocated from instructional service to enforcement. He emphasized that the Department of Public Safety (DPS) had never included an increment for truancy enforcement, and would not enforce the truancy laws.

[4:08:20 PM](#)

MR. HICKERSON relayed that districts were now considering a school attendance/resource officer. He opined that DPS and the Office of Children's Services (OCS) were responsible to uphold the law, but because they refused, the school districts no longer asked.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX opined that violators of the current law would not be intimidated by a new law. He said that a law for compulsory attendance until 18 would support the parents trying to keep their children in school, but it would not change those in violation. He opined that it was a crisis when ten year-olds were not going to school, and that needed to be addressed, maybe with different legislation. He stated that there is no means to know how many students there are in Alaska, unless they register for school.

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON surmised that truancy enforcement could be less expensive than the cost to society in the long run.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX agreed. He offered his belief that success was the greatest narcotic, and that success would keep students in school.

[4:14:14 PM](#)

CAROL COMEAU, Superintendant, Anchorage School District, said that the Anchorage School Board had made this a priority because

the wrong message was being sent to students that it was acceptable to leave school at 16. She relayed that the school board had expressed that 18 or a high school diploma was acceptable. She detailed the difficulties faced by many parents in keeping their children in school, and she voiced support for amending the compulsory age to 18. She emphasized that, at a minimum, a high school diploma makes it easier to get a job, and be self supportive without resorting to crime. She stated that this sends a message to students that education and a high school diploma is very important. She said that graduation support staff had been hired for every high school, and for some middle schools, to assess student strengths and get them on the proper track.

MS. COMEAU, in response to a question, declined to speculate how many more students would attend school if the compulsory age was raised to 18. She relayed that the business community would certainly support the effort. She explained the intense effort being made to contact students who are truant and to educate them on the benefits of school.

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON observed that data could illustrate whether such an increase would accomplish the goal of decreasing truancy.

[4:25:12 PM](#)

CHAIR SEATON questioned how the district expected to enforce compulsory education, especially for 17 year olds who did not want to be there.

[4:26:17 PM](#)

MS. COMEAU offered her belief that it was the responsibility of the school district to find out why and correct the situation. She stated that it was most important to know the students and their interests. She said that the broad, comprehensive, instructional programs, including the art and music programs, have really contributed toward keeping students in school. She opined that, currently, children are not seeing any value in attending school. She conceded it is a huge issue, and stressed the need to help young people view the school system differently.

[4:30:34 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE BUCH expressed concern regarding the sustainability of many programs, including the in-school out reach. He reflected that at one time every high school in Anchorage had a vocational education program, and he suggested a return to this.

MS. COMEAU explained that the Anchorage School District, as well as other districts, had added career tech, replacing the vocational education programs, in all the comprehensive high schools. She listed the courses to include drafting, basic construction trades, accounting, and family consumer sciences. She noted that there was also a movement for these classes to be offered in more of the middle schools.

MS. COMEAU offered that should the results continue, she will suggest that these programs continue, even if it became necessary to cut in some other areas. She opined that the optimal size class of 15 students would never be attained; instead, it was necessary for teachers to better engage the students.

[4:37:42 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX announced the formation of a new position, the Director of Rural Education, a recognition of the need to connect more effectively with the indigenous Alaskan communities. He detailed that this would make parents feel connected to the education system in the community, increase partnerships, and improve communication of knowledge. He decried the lack of success in many rural communities and opined that this position would facilitate necessary conversations.

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON asked why the position would be stationed in Juneau rather than Anchorage.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX clarified that a part of the position required the development of partnerships, that the position was a key part of the school improvement system, and that the leadership team was located in Juneau. He pointed out that he also traveled extensively.

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON opined that the position should be centrally located, in Anchorage, not in Juneau.

CHAIR SEATON asked how the new director would work on the comprehensive improvement efforts in academically low performing districts.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX explained that the comprehensive improvement efforts targeted the effectiveness of teachers, leadership, coaches, and school boards. He pointed to the lack of communication with the cultural communities, and noted that many rural communities have a "poor feeling about education, because it does not always serve them." He opined that an increase in the ownership for the value of education in a rural community will lead to more success. He detailed that the new position will build coalitions and partnerships, consolidate research, and make meaningful contacts. He allowed that there may be painful discussions in the future. He expressed the goal of helping students succeed with rural community support.

CHAIR SEATON asked if it is open for each community to possibly accept a different model.

[4:47:26 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX said that he does not believe that any community will want its children to only be educated to pursue a subsistence lifestyle. He offered his belief that the pathway to educational success could be different in each village and culture. He suggested this will open the conversations with each community and honor each culture.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX, in response to a question, said that the Native corporations have education committees, which are discussing what is necessary for success in rural Alaska. He noted a lack of formal connections with the Native community. He cited a need for "heart" knowledge, and not just "head" knowledge of cultures. In response to another question, he said that the recruitment process is underway, and that the person will be identifying the partnerships and coordinating the resources necessary to meet the established goals. He clarified that the governor will make the appointment, and the state school board will endorse the selection. In response to Representative Munoz, he said the position will work with both rural and urban schools.

[4:53:41 PM](#)

CHAIR SEATON referred to "Funding Student Learning" [Included in the committee packets] and asked if there are elements of the current allocation that do not reward the year to year increase of student growth.

[4:56:25 PM](#)

MR. JEANS noted that James Guthrie, one of the contributors to the study, was complimentary of the financing system in Alaska. He explained that a large percentage of the assets were allocated to the districts with high numbers of at-risk students. He pointed out that Alaska supports a learning oriented finance system.

CHAIR SEATON, referring to pages 8-9 of the study, noted that it aligns resources, ideas, and energy with results of student growth. He requested an analysis of the success factors, by school size, of the school incentive program. He emphasized that recognizing the common denominators to higher than anticipated growth, for all the students, is essential. He declared the importance of incentives to these contributors.

Chair Seaton distributed the book, LIBERATING LEARNING, to all the members of the committee, and noted that it has been highly recommended.

[5:03:30 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MUNOZ requested a report on where Alaska stands in regards to national testing and the decision to opt out of national standards.

COMMISSIONER LEDOUX reported that EED is continuing to monitor the effort, and no decision has been made.

[5:05:01 PM](#)

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

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