

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
JOINT MEETING
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 18, 2009
8:03 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

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

SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Senator Kim Elton, Chair
Senator Bettye Davis, Vice Chair
Senator Charlie Huggins
Senator Donald Olson
Senator Gary Stevens

MEMBERS ABSENT

HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Representative Cathy Engstrom Munoz, Vice Chair

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Carl Gatto

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

OVERVIEW(S): UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA REPORT (REQUIRED BY SB241
PASSED IN 2008) ON EFFORTS TO ATTRACT, TRAIN, AND RETAIN PUBLIC
SCHOOL TEACHERS

- HEARD

OVERVIEW(S): ALASKA MILITARY YOUTH ACADEMY

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to report

WITNESS REGISTER

PAT JACOBSON

Board of Regents

University of Alaska

Kodiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Introduced the University of Alaska report.

JOHN PUGH, Chancellor

University of Alaska Southeast (UAS)

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Responded to questions about the University of Alaska report.

CYNTHIA HENRY, Chair of the Board

Board of Regents

University of Alaska

Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the presentation of the University of Alaska report.

MELISSA HILL, Director

University of Alaska Teacher Placement

Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Responded to questions about the University of Alaska report.

LARRY HARRIS, Dean

School of Education

University of Alaska Southeast (UAS)

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: responded to questions during discussion of the University of Alaska report.

LARRY LEDOUX, Commissioner

Office of the Commissioner

Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Responded to questions during discussion of the University of Alaska report.

CRAIG CHRISTENSEN, Division Director

Alaska Military Youth Academy (AMYA)
Department of Military & Veterans Affairs (DMVA)
Fort Richardson, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Participated in the presentation of the AMYA program.

JAMES JONES, Deputy Director
Alaska Military Youth Academy (AMYA)
Department of Military & Veterans Affairs (DMVA)
Fort Richardson, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Participated in the presentation of the AMYA program.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:03:10 AM](#)

CHAIR PAUL SEATON called the joint meeting of the House and Senate Education Standing Committees to order at 8:03 a.m. Representatives Seaton, Wilson, Edgmon, Keller, Buch, and Gardner were present at the call to order. Representative Munoz was excused. Senators Elton, Davis, Huggins, Olson, and Stevens were present at the call to order. Representative Gatto was also in attendance.

^OVERVIEW(S): UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA REPORT (REQUIRED BY SB241 PASSED IN 2008) ON EFFORTS TO ATTRACT, TRAIN, AND RETAIN PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS

[8:03:57 AM](#)

CHAIR SEATON announced that the first order of business would be an overview of the University of Alaska report on its efforts to attract, train, and retain public school teachers. [Included in the members' packets.] He introduced Senator Gary Stevens, the sponsor of Senate Bill 241, which legislated the necessity for this report.

[8:04:26 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS said that the bill, hence the report, was the collaborative result of a need to fill Alaska teaching jobs with Alaskan teachers.

[8:06:56 AM](#)

PAT JACOBSON, Board of Regents, University of Alaska, paraphrased as follows from a prepared statement [original punctuation provided]:

First, I want to assure you of the following:

1. The University's and the president's commitments to education and K-12 Outreach.
2. Staff at UA have taken tremendous care to ensure that the data before you is accurate and reflects the information you requested

As you know this report is in accordance with an act to report on the University of Alaska's efforts on preparing teachers. I am not going to read the report to you, though I will reference some of the information pages as I go through it.

I anticipate taking about 20 minutes to go through the report, provide insights as to the University's next steps and offer recommendations; I hope that will answer many of your questions regarding the report.

First, near the beginning of the actual SB241 bill, it speaks about the desire by the Task Force to improve the dialogue between two of our state agencies with key roles in education delivery. It has been my observation that the relationship between the University and EED has, indeed, taken a dramatic turn for the better in working together. I believe that could be attributed, in part, to SB241, but, frankly, I believe it would have occurred anyway. As I understand it, the collaborative relationship between the Dept. of Labor and the University began to improve after the appointment of Commissioner of Labor Click Bishop, a couple of years ago. And, the relationship between EED and the University began to improve greatly after the appointment of Commissioner of Education Larry LeDoux last summer. I believe these two commissioners, as well as University of Alaska President Hamilton have a genuine desire to have a positive, collaborative working relationship with each other and that that should be the case - it's an obvious, necessary fit that just hasn't happened to this extent, to my knowledge, ever before.

The Commissioner of Education hit the ground running and embarked on a statewide Education Summit in November, bringing in a wide array of stakeholders from around the state, including people from the Department of Labor. The University had a large presence at that summit and in assisting with it. It was a huge undertaking and I've heard nothing but glowing reports about it - I attended myself and felt it was very worthwhile. I can also tell you that our president and two other regents were also there, and actively participated in the dialog and planning.

With that I would like to begin with an overview of the report.

Through the Chair, the report is broken into the specific areas per the language in SB241. On page 1 you can review the highlights of the report. This will give you a quick overview of key elements I am prepared to cover with you today.

You'll note a couple of key bullets I would like to point out to you in that Highlights Section:

1. Teacher recruitment and retention in Alaska is a complex issue with no magic bullet. I'll explain that a bit more in just a second.

2. If we are to increase the number of Alaskan prepared teachers, more Alaskan students must go to college. I believe it was the president who said we need to create a culture that values education. The University Board Of Regents recognizes and embraces this fact, which is why K-12 Outreach is currently a top priority of the University of Alaska. I'm told it is very unusual for a university to make K-12 a priority in their proposed budget. We have done just that!

Starting on Page 3, you can see the report is divided up into four sections.

The first section is the TEACHER EDUCATION GRADUATION DATA, shown in detail on page 4.

This provides an overview of the output or supply; the number of teachers the University is graduating each

year in core content areas. Bottom line, there is an average of 190 graduates per year eligible to enter the K-12 teacher workforce. Slightly more than 1/2 are elementary. The University produces an average of 35 special education teachers each year. Special Ed also has a higher rate of turnover and is a federally designated teacher shortage area. And there is an average of 11 certificates in math and 24 in science awarded annually.

The second section is the GAP ANALYSIS: SHORTAGES IN THE TEACHING WORKFORCE, shown in detail on page 7.

The data in your report provides an overview of the gap between what the University is turning out and what the needs are. I am pleased to support the fact that we have taken extensive steps to address some of those challenges in collaboration with the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, one of them being the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project mentioned earlier; another is the Alaska Teacher Placement office. In areas where we may fall short in producing teachers, we do have highly effective programs in place to address recruitment and retention of teachers.

Teacher shortage areas in Alaska include: special education, mathematics, and science. Each year Alaska school districts hire about 900 to 1100 teachers, the majority of vacancies being in special education and secondary core content areas. The vast majority of the vacant positions is a result of teachers exiting the system, and the minority is from a group referred to as "movers". In 2010 roughly 34% of current teachers will be eligible for retirement. Nearly 2/3 of Alaska's teachers are over age 40.

It was rather disheartening, although not actually surprising to me, as a former teacher, to read that after four years of entering a teaching position, 49% of special education teachers weren't teaching special education any more, and of those, only 8% remained in the Alaska system, but were teaching outside of special education; 35 produced each year, but districts need to hire 100 new special education teachers annually. That number has improved dramatically with an additional 35 special education

teachers coming from UAS. You may wish to ask Chancellor Pugh to elaborate later.

It should be noted that simply producing more teachers in these areas may not address the issue of retention. The Alaska Statewide Mentor Project reported that, 'through grant funding, the Mentor Program has been able to increase focus on mentoring special education teachers by pairing special education certified mentors with early career special education teachers. Working with a sub-sample of about a third of all new special education teachers, the Mentor Program has retained over 80% each year. That's encouraging.

An additional complexity, regarding secondary-math and science teachers, is that there is considerable competition, and, thus, opportunity for these folks elsewhere, as well as in the field of education. As we all know, not everyone who earns a degree goes on to use that degree in that field. As the report indicated 11 math teachers graduate each year, but 48 are needed; 24 science teachers graduate each year, but, 41 are needed across the districts in the state.

Recruitment efforts need to increase, but, ultimately, even if all University of Alaska education graduates took jobs with Alaska schools, districts would still need to recruit from outside the state to fill the gap.

A further complication is that the number of high school students peaked in 2008 and is expected to decline over the next decade. Consequently, as the number of candidates available for postsecondary degrees and training declines, it will become even more challenging for UA to produce a trained workforce for key Alaska jobs.

The third section is EFFORTS TO ATTRACT, TRAIN, AND RETAIN QUALIFIED SCHOOL TEACHERS and begins in detail on page 10 of your report.

To increase the number of teachers prepared in Alaska, more Alaskan students will need to enroll and complete degree programs in education. The University has a wide array of programs and activities designed to support teacher recruitment and retention of K-12

educators - you have a listing in your report. And, I repeat, the University has made K-12 Outreach and Bridging Programs a priority for future operating requests to the legislature.

In the category of Teacher recruitment and retention, you will see that the University has over 120 programs in one of three areas including:

- K-12 Student Outreach and Bridging Efforts
- Teacher Professional Development
- Educational Resources and Teacher Recruitment and Retention

K-12 Outreach and Bridging programs support efforts to attract and prepare more K-12 students for college. These are expansive and again, the University is committed to seeing more Alaskan graduates becoming life long learners. There's another, significant challenge: many of Alaska's high school graduates are not prepared to meet this challenge. The university must expand current efforts to ensure that students who enter the institution accomplish what they set out to do, and in a timely manner. Helping students early is a key step.

Teacher Professional Development is expansive, there are a variety of programs for science and math teachers, and professional collaborations taking place through out the university system.

One area that would warrant some attention is in educational resources and teacher recruitment and retention. We can and need to look for ways to grow our own teachers. This is important because studies suggest that teachers trained in Alaska stay in Alaska, and preliminary research is promising in that it suggests Alaska trained teachers demonstrate positive gains in student achievement.

Yet, we still need more opportunities for rural training.

The fourth section is THREE TO FIVE YEAR PLAN FOR TEACHER PREPARATION and is found on p 13.

Senate Bill 241 (2008) reads, "The report must include an outline of the university's current and future plans to close the gap between known teacher employment vacancies in the state and the number of state residents who complete teacher training. The information reported under this subsection may also include short-term and five-year strategies with accompanying fiscal notes and outcome measures."

Our system-wide teacher education planning group is new this past year. The Deans of Education, lead by Chancellor Pugh, and with support and coordination from Melissa Hill, have been meeting for the past year with K-12 administrators to talk about ways the University and K-12 can align workforce needs and collaborate on priorities in the area of workforce.

What we know:

Teaching in rural Alaska will continue to have higher rates of turnover, due in part to limited housing, assimilation, etc.. Data also suggests that those teachers and principals trained in state stay longer, as I've indicated, and those trained in rural areas stay longer there, too.

Our University can and must do a better job of recruiting and growing our own teachers. The Alaska Statewide Mentor project is a proven, positive influence and expansion of the program could help to ensure that all teachers receive the support they need in the first two years. There are still factors which are out of the realm of the University, such as compensation, housing, and technology infrastructure.

Our workforce, Alaska's workforce and the quality of that workforce rests on the shoulders of our educational institutions; from Early Childhood through K-12 to higher education, but we cannot do it alone. Communities and parents play a vital role and collectively we can all do our part to promote the teaching profession, to recognize the workforce that is training our workforce right out of the gate.

The University's budget request includes funding for supplemental instruction for "gateway" or preparatory

college courses, undergraduate research, early alert programs and increased remediation.

Bottom Line: The University needs more resources to help students succeed. We did include a section at the end of your report, which has recommendations and a fiscal note request, which I will address briefly now.

One recommendation would be to invest in education studies and research, which could allow for expanding and updating data collection systems and workforce development studies. Education is an important issue in Alaska. I applaud our state leaders in their effort to have a standing committee on education. Both EED and policymakers require studies and research in education. We fully expect to be leading this effort; however, existing resources are limited and without fully funding the University of Alaska budget and per the legislative language of SB241 of the 25th session, it is evident that current resources do not fund existing staff to conduct such studies - I can assure you that UA will focus on any effort to improve teacher training and related workforce development to meet the state's needs.

Another recommendation would be to invest in Special Education Teacher Preparation, specifically, funding to support adding special ed teacher prep programs at UAF, the only school of education in the university system that does not have a special education program.

Another recommendation is for Expansion of Scholarship Opportunities for Education Majors, having specific emphasis on shortage areas, as well as a review of current loan forgiveness programs, and sustaining and increasing funding for programs that are effective in preparing and supporting teacher recruitment and retention.

I received the final report just a few days before you did. I can tell you that the Board of Regents Academic and Student Affairs Committee will be reviewing it in detail and looking at all of our options. Immediate steps will include having a meeting with the chancellors, provosts and deans to discuss where we go from here. It is evident that

change is needed. Important University outcomes include:

- better cooperation and coordination with EED.
- better outreach and engagement with K-12 educational professionals.
- increasing the numbers of education graduates!!!!

In Next Years Report - here is what you can expect to see:

- expansion of the quantified efforts in K-12 outreach
- reports on the effectiveness of specific programs such as the mentor project
- a fully developed 3-5 year education plan for teacher preparation
- overall larger picture --- a university system that can meet the needs of the newly formed standing committees on education.

In conclusion,

As I stated at the beginning, the University embraced this bill from its infancy and has worked hard and seriously on fulfilling the requirements for this, the first annual report to you. We believe it was and is a very good bill and look forward to reports to and interactions with you in future years. This was just the first year and, while I believe it was an informative report, I also believe future reports will get better. It was well worth our effort and time.

[8:27:14 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS addressed Chancellor Pugh, pointed out the lack of consistency that he had observed, and asked if all the programs being introduced throughout the University system were taught to the same standards.

[8:28:18 AM](#)

JOHN PUGH, Chancellor, University of Alaska Southeast (UAS), said that the standards for "best practices" were still being debated within some teaching programs. He offered an example of special education, and noted that there was now statewide agreement for that standard. He explained that the program had previously been statewide, but it had been consolidated to just

the Anchorage campus. He shared the realization that this move was not successful for meeting the needs of students statewide, so that the program was re-introduced into the three main campuses. He identified both the special education and the early childhood education programs as having great success and a statewide "best practices" standard. He stated that the best practice standard for a secondary education program was a five year program to allow time for course work, and an internship. He allowed that there was still national debate over the best practice standard for the need of a five year elementary education program. He reported that the UAS elementary program was a five year program, and as the other campuses were not five year programs, the Board of Regents had ordered the University to re-develop the undergraduate elementary education "best practices" program.

[8:31:41 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS asked for consistency throughout the statewide university system.

[8:32:23 AM](#)

SENATOR ELTON observed that the report established which programs were necessary, and he asked if a review would discover the incentive for students to choose a teaching career. He noted that the average pay for a teacher was \$57,000, which was an impediment, not a motivation.

[8:34:36 AM](#)

MS. JACOBSON noted that a beginning nurse made \$10,000 more than a beginning teacher.

[8:35:03 AM](#)

CHANCELLOR PUGH said that a lot of money was spent developing the health science and engineering programs because private industry had contributed advertising money. He said those industries offered high paying internships and scholarships to assist in attracting students. He relayed that future teacher association programs encouraged teaching students, but there were not a lot of scholarship, loan forgiveness, or summer job incentives. He allowed that this was not a new problem.

[8:37:52 AM](#)

SENATOR DAVIS asked what it would take to have a special education course at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF).

CYNTHIA HENRY, Chair of the Board, Board of Regents, University of Alaska, reported that Senate Bill 241 highlighted this need, however, it was not included in the governor's budget, and she solicited the help of the committee to establish this program at UAF.

[8:40:13 AM](#)

SENATOR DAVIS suggested beginning in the lower grades to instill a sense of pride for young people interested in attending the university system. She suggested classes that would track students toward college in Alaska.

MS. JACOBSON replied that high school students in some areas of Alaska received dual credit toward college. She reported that University of Alaska, in collaboration with Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE), provided information with college encouragement to the elementary schools.

CHANCELLOR PUGH described the fifth grade program in Southeast Alaska, titled "I'm Going to College," which was funded through ACPE and brought elementary students to the university campus for a day. He stated that the primary new financial request was for K-12 outreach programs. He pointed out that the number of Alaskan high school graduates going to university in Alaska had grown from 42 percent to 63 percent; however, Alaska was still ranked the lowest in the nation for students continuing on for postsecondary education.

[8:44:26 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON asked if the special education classes in Juneau and Anchorage were accessible via distance [learning] education. She opined that it was not necessary for each campus to have identical classes, if the classes were available through distance education. She expressed her desire to ensure that class credits were transferrable to each campus.

CHAIR SEATON asked if the distance education program provided the special education endorsement.

CHANCELLOR PUGH said that all the UAS programs were distance education programs and were available everywhere in the state. He explained, however, that every teacher needed to have one

month of practical experience in the special education field, and that this was only available in about 50 communities. He emphasized that special needs children were in every class and that all teachers needed some special education background. He offered his belief that in some programs it was necessary to have at least one specialist on each campus.

CHAIR SEATON asked to clarify that a student receiving a UAF teaching certificate could gain their special education endorsement via distance learning.

CHANCELLOR PUGH agreed.

[8:49:29 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER asked three questions: how many special education teachers had graduated; was there a demand for special education classes at UAF; and, referring to the mentoring and retention mentioned on Page 8 of the report, did the mentoring program work, as 41 percent of the special education teachers were leaving in the first four years.

MELISSA HILL, Director, University of Alaska Teacher Placement, in response to Representative Gardner, said that the mentoring sub population did not include all special education teachers.

[8:51:54 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER questioned that if 80 percent were retained, were 41 percent still leaving.

MS. HILL agreed, and she stressed that the special education teaching positions were challenging, even with the mentoring program. She observed that any response to this teacher turn over would require a review of the challenges and requirements for special education teachers.

[8:52:55 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER asked for a comparison of retention rates for mentored and non-mentored first year teachers.

MS. HILL said that she would provide this information.

[8:53:18 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER restated her other two questions.

CHANCELLOR PUGH responded that special education graduates had been doubled by adding the UAS program and he explained that the discrepancy was in the data collection process. He noted that rural districts reported that existing teachers were requesting special education training. He ascertained that teachers who came from Outside were a high percentage of the turn over rate. He explained that, as a result of a nation wide teacher shortage, teachers were being offered signing incentives across the nation.

[8:56:10 AM](#)

CHANCELLOR PUGH, in response to Senator Huggins, said that the praxis were required.

[8:56:30 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGGINS asked about a long term strategy.

CHANCELLOR PUGH said that educational technology was the focus.

[8:57:54 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGGINS reflected that there needed to be a discussion about educational leaders.

[8:59:25 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:59 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.

[9:00:54 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS questioned whether only 6 percent of Native Alaskans who entered the university went on to graduate. He allowed that this group of Native students was a resource for village teachers, and he asked what could be done to attract Native students to the education field. He emphasized that money was not an excuse, as the state did fund the university and there were high expectations.

[9:03:11 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON opined that some special education teachers were dropping their certifications because of the federal requirements.

MS. HENRY replied that there was a high burnout in special education, due to behavioral and learning problems, as well as an enormous amount of federal paperwork. She suggested that one solution would be to have two teachers, but she recognized the cost involved. She mentioned that classroom aides were also helpful but they were limited in their legal qualifications.

9:05:12 AM

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON cited the sobering statistics from the report and asked what would happen when 34 percent of the teachers retired in the next year. He stressed that teachers in the rural areas had difficulty meeting the living costs, and he noted that the retirement system did not encourage teacher retention.

9:07:09 AM

CHAIR SEATON offered his belief that there were vacancies in the teaching programs, and he asked her opinion for the lack of students entering the teaching profession.

MS. HENRY, in response to Chair Seaton, said that although the university maintained various statistics, only anecdotal information was available regarding student program choices. She said that choices might be based on salary and benefits, or the influences from the private sector. She noted that student grants were not available for middle income students. She also suggested that the prestige of teaching was not what it had been in the past. She opined that an Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) survey, though expensive, could be enlightening.

9:11:45 AM

CHAIR SEATON suggested that a survey of the university staff would be helpful. He ascertained that, although the best practices standard was for a five year teaching degree, it may be a disincentive. He asked if the dual credit program would offer a solution.

CHANCELLOR PUGH, in response to Chair Seaton, said that he did not see that as a solution, as teachers required additional course work to attain the standard. He disclosed that many second career people chose teaching as these people already had degrees and only needed to obtain a teaching endorsement.

[9:16:05 AM](#)

CHAIR SEATON stressed his concern for the extra year that a teaching student must attend, without any financial incentive. He asked how loan and scholarship programs could be directed toward teaching degrees. He noted that the governor was interested in a pilot program for pre-kindergarten, and he pointed out the need for the university to consider how these early childhood education programs would be structured.

[9:18:51 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER referred to teacher retention, and she acknowledged the Preparing Indigenous Teachers for Alaska Schools (PITAS) program. She asked how students would learn about this program.

[9:20:14 AM](#)

LARRY HARRIS, Dean, School of Education, University of Alaska Southeast (UAS), explained that the PITAS program was in its seventh year, and that it recruited Alaskan Native students, primarily in Southeast Alaska. He reported that, with the receipt of a new grant, other areas of the state would be targeted. He announced that the program had been expanded to include currently certified teachers who were seeking additional endorsements.

[9:21:57 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE BUCH asked if high school students, through distance learning, had access to the PITAS program.

MR. HARRIS suggested that high school students could be prepared through the dual credit program.

[9:24:00 AM](#)

CHAIR SEATON pointed out that the retirement system had been alluded to as a concern and factor toward recruitment and retention. He cautioned to the use of anecdotal information versus statistics. He stressed the need to review data and speak from informed sources.

REPRESENTATIVE EDGMON, in response to Chair Seaton, reported that his statements were anecdotal however, they were spoken by his constituents.

CHAIR SEATON clarified that he did not want to accept one side or the other before the introduction of data.

[9:27:57 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 9:27 a.m. to 9:31 a.m.

[9:32:16 AM](#)

LARRY LEDOUX, Commissioner, Office of the Commissioner, Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), reported on reasons that affect student enrollment in teaching careers. He suggested that recognition and merit based scholarships were helpful for motivating students toward a more rigorous curriculum. He mentioned that teaching was no longer seen as a positive career direction. He referred to studies which reflected that secondary teachers made that choice in their third year of university, whereas elementary school teachers made that choice early in their schooling. He mentioned that the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) program was a means to bring positive attention to the profession. He shared that students being able to visualize themselves as successful teachers was very successful, as seen with the summer school cadet teacher program. He suggested implementing a program that granted an associate of arts (AA) degree along with a high school diploma. He directed attention to the second career professionals, especially with the job losses in the current economy.

CHAIR SEATON requested that these ideas be put into a memo.

[9:38:51 AM](#)

MR. LEDOUX, in response to Representative Buch, said that the formal dual-credit program was Middle College, a concept that was being used around the nation, and that could be a distance learning program. He also shared that many high schools and colleges in Alaska had created partnerships for classes.

[9:39:39 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE BUCH opined that that the incentive to teach should begin much earlier than high school.

^OVERVIEW(S): ALASKA MILITARY YOUTH ACADEMY

9:40:08 AM

CHAIR SEATON announced that the final order of business was an overview which would include a Power Point presentation entitled "National Guard, Alaska Military Youth Academy, Youth Challenge Program. [Included in members' packets]

9:40:24 AM

CRAIG CHRISTENSEN, Director, Alaska Military Youth Academy (AMYA), Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA), said that AMYA was a part of the National Guard Youth Challenge Program. He explained that the first class graduated in 1994, and that it was located at Camp Carroll on Fort Richardson. He said that there were 186 beds available.

9:42:07 AM

JAMES JONES, Deputy Director, Alaska Military Youth Academy (AMYA), Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs (DMVA), said that this program was originally funded by the Department of Defense, as it was determined that the high school drop out rate was a domestic threat to the nation. He explained that it had since become a shared state and federally funded program.

9:43:26 AM

MR. CHRISTENSEN spoke about slide 3, "A multi-phased Intervention Program--17 1/2 months." He highlighted that the mission of the Academy was to "intervene in and reclaim the lives of Alaska's at-risk youth and produce program graduates with the values, the skills, the education, and the self-discipline necessary to succeed as adults." He emphasized that the program was not a boot camp, that participation was voluntary, and that it was not a juvenile justice program. He explained that this was a highly structured, quasi-military model that fostered the development of leadership skills, ethical values, and strict discipline.

9:44:44 AM

DR. JONES referred to slide 4, "High School dropouts between ages 16-18 years old." He explained the eligibility for each candidate: high school dropout; age 16-18; unemployed; drug free; not on parole or probation for juvenile offenses; no felony charges, convictions, or under indictment for capital offenses; and physically and mentally capable of completing the

demanding program requirements. He added that the program was voluntary and by invitation.

[9:45:48 AM](#)

DR. JONES detailed the three phases of the program. He described the first two week phase as a pre-challenge rustic camping experience. He noted that this phase included a staff assessment of the candidate. He recounted that the next phase was a twenty week residential challenge phase which began with an educational and learning style assessment to determine a candidate's placement within ability groups. He allowed that this phase maximized classroom time, developed mid and long range goals, and encouraged emotional, physical, and educational maturation. He explained that the final phase was a twelve month period of living in the community, with a mentor. He said that each student, over 18 years of age, was given an opportunity to enter an apprenticeship program. He allowed that 11-18 percent of these students chose the military.

[9:49:28 AM](#)

MR. CHRISTENSEN referred to slide 5, "8 Core Components," and identified that the eight core components of the program were critical intervention areas that affected the life of a youth at risk. He listed the components to include: academic excellence, physical fitness, job skills, service to community, health and hygiene, responsible citizenship, leadership/followership, and life coping skills and he elaborated on each of these points. He mentioned that students of age did register for the draft and to vote.

[9:52:21 AM](#)

DR. JONES highlighted some of the successes that the academy had observed in their graduates for "Academic Excellence" and "Physical Fitness," on slide 6.

[9:54:15 AM](#)

MR. CHRISTENSEN referred to slide 7, "Job Skills," and said that there were vocational and academic opportunities. He noted that there were culinary arts, carpentry, Emergency Trauma Technician (ETT), and other job shadowing programs available to the candidates. He said that the "Service to the Community" component was also very important.

[9:55:46 AM](#)

DR. JONES pointed to slide 8, and spoke about basic instruction in "Health & Hygiene." This included establishing a healthy diet and smoking cessation, as the campus was smoke free. He commented that "Responsible Citizenship" was also a value the academy taught. He elaborated that this included a visit to the Anchorage Assembly to watch the government process.

[9:57:17 AM](#)

MR. CHRISTENSEN spoke about slide 9, "Leadership/Followership," and said that several opportunities for leadership were provided during the residential component, to help with building skills and knowledge. He mentioned that "Life Coping Skills" included student meetings with the residential behavioral counselors, which focused on becoming successful, positive adults.

[9:58:31 AM](#)

DR. JONES pointed out slide 10, "High School Diploma or GED" and said that the AMYA was an accredited special purpose school that offered a high school diploma. He proudly reported that the students had competed in the annual GCI Academic Decathlon and had taken first place in the small school division, and that AMYA had awarded more than 1600 high school diplomas or GEDs since 1994.

[9:59:40 AM](#)

MR. CHRISTENSEN directed attention to slide 11, "Mentorship Program," and he opined that the single element for success was the mentorship. He explained that the mentorship continued even after the student returned to their community. He explained that the communication included discussion and validation of the life plans and its progress. He reported that this was the second largest mentoring program in the nation, eclipsed only by the Big Brothers Big Sisters organization.

[10:01:29 AM](#)

DR. JONES said that AMYA was the toughest school in Alaska and that the students voluntarily chose to stay. He pointed to slide 12, "Successful Graduates," and said that more than 2,630 students had graduated in the last 15 years.

[10:02:10 AM](#)

MR. CHRISTENSEN explained slide, 13, "Success = Positive, Durable Placement, Goal 90%+," and stressed that the program success was for the young adult to be positive with a direction in life, and contributing to society. He allowed that the program goal was to have a 90 percent or above success rate. He proudly stated that the AMYA was recognized as the most progressive challenge program in the nation, was number one in the nation for recruiting and contacting high school dropouts, and was nationally ranked in the top three challenge programs for placement success of the resident program graduates.

[10:05:19 AM](#)

MR. CHRISTENSEN, in response to Representative Wilson, said that there were 33 academies in 29 states.

[10:05:37 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON asked how the learning styles were determined.

DR. JONES said that there was a written learning style assessment, administered by the academic section, and then a peer partner was assigned to each student.

CHAIR SEATON requested that the assessment be forwarded to the committee.

[10:06:30 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON asked how much time there was from the assessment to the determination.

DR. JONES replied that he would forward that information.

[10:06:46 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE WILSON asked how the mentors were chosen.

MR. CHRISTENSEN replied that the families were informed in the application package of the need to make a mentor choice. He added that AMYA also had a list of available mentors.

[10:07:35 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE BUCH asked if AMYA had any insights as to why students dropped out.

DR. JONES, in response to Representative Buch, said that discussions with students revealed three common denominators: the belief that teachers did not care about them as individuals, that demands were not made on them, and that other dynamics had not allowed them to focus on education.

ADJOURNMENT

[10:11:24 AM](#)

There being no further business before the joint meeting of the House and Senate Education Standing Committees, the meeting was adjourned at 10:11 a.m.