

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE
ANCHORAGE, AK

October 23, 2009

3:04 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Kevin Meyer, Co-Chair
Senator Joe Thomas, Co-Chair
Senator Bettye Davis, Vice Chair

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Charlie Huggins
Senator Donald Olson
Senator Gary Stevens

OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT

Representative Seaton
Representative Buch

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE BILL NO. 109

"An Act repealing the secondary student competency examination and related requirements; and providing for an effective date."

HEARD AND HELD

Community Discussion of Compulsory School Attendance Age/Truancy (SB 102)

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 109

SHORT TITLE: REPEAL SECONDARY SCHOOL EXIT EXAM

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) DAVIS

02/17/09	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/17/09	(S)	EDC, CRA, FIN
03/16/09	(S)	EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 211
03/16/09	(S)	Heard & Held
03/16/09	(S)	MINUTE(EDC)
04/01/09	(S)	EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 211
04/01/09	(S)	Heard & Held
04/01/09	(S)	MINUTE(EDC)

10/23/09

(S)

EDC AT 3:00 PM Anch LIO Rm 220

WITNESS REGISTER

TOM OBERMEYER

Staff to Senator Davis
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Commented on SB 109 and SB 102 for the sponsor.

EDDY JEANS, Director

School Finance
Alaska Department of Education and Early Development

POSITION STATEMENT: Commented on SB 109.

THERESA HOLT

Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education

POSITION STATEMENT: Supported SB 109.

RHONDA STARK

State Home School Association

POSITION STATEMENT: Supported SB 109.

LAUREL VORACHEK, Executive Director

Assessments and Evaluations
Anchorage School District

POSITION STATEMENT: Supported SB 109.

MIKE HENRY, Executive Director

Anchorage School District's High Schools

POSITION STATEMENT: Supported SB 109.

JOHN ALCANTRA, Government Relations Director

National Education Association Alaska (NEA)

POSITION STATEMENT: Supported SB 109.

ACTION NARRATIVE

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CO-CHAIR KEVIN MEYER called the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:04 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Davis, Thomas, and Meyer. Representatives Seaton and Buck were also present.

SB 109-REPEAL SECONDARY SCHOOL EXIT EXAM

[3:07:10 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR MEYER announced consideration of SB 109.

TOM OBERMEYER, Staff to Senator Davis, read the following into the record:

SB 109 repeals the Alaska secondary student competency examination, also known as the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam (HSGQE) or 'Exit' exam. The HSGQE was initiated in 2001 and became fully effective in 2004, following the trend for more assessment in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. It was never clear that the Alaska HSGQE would improve performance and measure whether students would be better prepared for college, much less determine conclusively that students were receiving diplomas but lacking basic skills. The HSGQE has become a 'high stakes' hurdle that has harmed many students in Alaska while exacerbating a court finding in 2007 that the State was violating students' constitutional rights to an education without providing proper assistance and direction. (See Moore, et al. v. State of Alaska, 3AN04-9756).

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It may be argued that State does not need the HSGQE, as the State and all school districts already require many assessment tests to determine student progress and competency. At the same time there is a trend away from exit exams. The Center on Education Policy (CEP) report in August, 2008 that most states are moving toward end-of course exams which assess mastery of content of a specific high school course in lieu of exit exams. The current Alaska HSGQE reportedly has been changed by the Board of Education and made less difficult than at inception. As a result, the HSGQE has become somewhat redundant, time-consuming, and expensive to administer. To save time and money, beginning in the spring of 2006 sophomores took a test that combined the HSGQE with a standards-based reading and math assessment required by the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Although students took only one exam, some questions counted for one or the other or both exams to satisfy state requirements. (See Legislative Research Report 06.233, 'History, Results, and Cost of the HSGQE,' June 28, 2006). The HSGQE reportedly has

detracted from the standard curriculum and has also promoted 'teaching to the test.'

The Department reported in 2007 that over 1,100 students statewide failed to pass the HSGQE after five opportunities, while 8,524 passed. See Moore, supra, exhibit 2514, p. 13 of 58, 'Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law and Order.' These numbers excluded all students who had dropped out or transferred to another school before passing. The court in Moore determined that the State was violating the substantive due process rights of students by denying high school diplomas to students in chronically underperforming school districts. Students were failing the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam, while the State was failing to provide the oversight, assistance, and direction with clear standards to guide districts attempting to meet content and performance standards. As a result, the court concluded that the Department was ultimately failing to "maintain a system of public schools" as required under the Alaska Constitution, Article VII, Section 1. Finding insufficient proof of compliance with its 2007 court order, the court in Moore on February 4, 2009 gave the Department 60 days to establish compliance with its constitutional duties and to file with the court 'revised district intervention plans that address and incorporate as appropriate remedial measures related to each of the problem areas identified in these Findings.'

Alaska's experience with high school exit exams is not new but widespread. Fearful that hundreds of thousands of students would be left behind by one set of standardized, time-pressured tests in New York, an article appeared in the New York Times headed 'Albany Legislators Seek to Dilute New, Tougher Graduation Exams.' It was stated in the article that 'an unusual bipartisan coalition of state lawmakers, whose constituents ranged from inner-city residents to affluent suburbanites, is pushing to scale back new more stringent graduation requirements for nearly all public high school students.' New York Times, May 12, 1999.

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The Center on Education Policy (CEP) reported in August, 2008 that in the 2007-2008 school year 23 states required students to take and pass exit exams to receive a high school diploma. Three more states, Arkansas, Maryland, and Oklahoma, will begin withholding diplomas within the next few years, leading to a total of 26 states with such policies by 2012. Additionally, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and Oregon are considering exit exams, but Oregon and Pennsylvania are opting to use multiple measures. The CEP reported that 68 percent of the nations' public high school students attend school in the 23 states with such policies. By 2012 approximately 75 percent of the nation's public high school students will be affected, including 84 percent of low income students and students of color.

The Center on Education Policy (CEP) recommends more funding should be allocated to research aimed at better understanding the impact of exit exams, considering the vast number of students affected by state-mandated high school exit exams. State governments, the CEP reports, should move immediately to collect and release data on final passage rates on these and the rate of students using alternative paths to graduation. As they implement more end-of-course exams, the CEP recommends that states address the need for greater rigor in the content of their exams and provide for greater coordination of high school requirements with college preparedness and work readiness demands.

While dropping the HSGQE does not remedy underlying problems in delivering quality education in underperforming districts already identified by other assessments, it does remove the risk that a student can be denied a diploma after 12 years of education by one exam. Eliminating the HSGQE may also encourage youth to stay in school long enough to get a diploma and reduce the dropout rate. After complying with court-ordered requirements in Moore, and perhaps after experience with other on-going assessments, the Department and the Board of Education may better determine whether an exit exam or HSGQE Exam is in the best interests of the state, recognizing that more states seem to be moving away from exit exams toward end-of-course exams.

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SENATOR DAVIS explained that she initially introduced the bill to get input from the public as to whether the HSGQE was working. She brought it back because that question hasn't been answered.

CO-CHAIR MEYER asked what percentage of students have passed the exam.

MR. OBERMEYER replied about 95 percent passed, but only 69 percent graduated.

CO-CHAIR MEYER asked how special needs are accommodated when taking the test.

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REPRESENTATIVE SEATON related that the High School Graduation Working Group recommended eliminating the high stakes nature of the high school qualifying exam and perhaps replacing the exam with levels of WorkKeys.

EDDY JEANS, Director, School Finance, Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, said the State Board of Education and Early Development (State Board) has been discussing this issue and a task force has been working on how to improve graduation rates. One issue is that many students view the HSGQE as the termination point for attending school, but the State Board is looking for an assessment tool to help students improve their education. Information from that tool would be shared with parents and private industry as to the student's achievement levels.

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MR. JEANS said he isn't prepared to say that the State Board is looking at replacing the HSGQE with WorkKeys or that it believes that the WorkKeys can replace the HSGQE as a high stakes test. The question is whether the state needs a high stakes test or if there is another way to get the information to parents and future employers about students' education abilities.

The HSGQE is a minimum competency exam and includes questions from 8-10 grades. It is embedded in the standards-based assessment test that's given to all 10th grade students. It's also offered as a stand-alone test to those students who don't pass on the first try.

MR. JEANS explained that the HSGQE is part of the state's \$6.7 million/year, six-year contract with Data Recognition Corporation (DRC) to administer and score its standards-based assessments.

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SENATOR DAVIS asked when the DEED will issue an opinion on the HSGQE.

MR. JEANS replied the State Board has been discussing that issue and will likely be closer to a definitive answer in the December meeting. It wants a tool that provides information that can go on students' transcripts to inform parents and the private sector about the students' academic attainments other than the HSGQE, which is simply pass/fail.

CO-CHAIR MEYER asked what percentage of students passed the HSGQE, and how children with learning disabilities are handled.

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MR. JEANS said he would get that information to the committee, but Eric McCormick, the director of assessments, has said that more students fail to graduate because they didn't complete high school credit requirements than those who didn't pass the high school qualifying exam.

Special education students typically have the terms for taking tests written into their IEP (individualized education program). When the high school qualifying exam initially passed the special education community brought a lawsuit against the state to ensure that students had alternative means to attain a high school diploma. That was narrowed to allow some kind of portfolio assessment for some students, but most have accommodations within their IEP.

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CO-CHAIR THOMAS asked if the HSGQE is used for any other purpose like evaluating how teachers are prepared or the relevance of the subject matter.

MR. JEANS explained that Alaska has an assessment system with standards that were developed by Alaskans that measures what students should know and be able to do in each grade level. Reading, writing, and math assessments are conducted annually in grades 3-10 and student achievement is measured against those standards, which have grade level expectations. The existing system can track individual performance and provide information

to teachers so they can develop individual instruction programs to target areas in which a student is underperforming. The high school qualifying exam is a separate and different assessment tool. It is intended to measure minimum competency in reading, writing, and math to issue a high school diploma, nothing more.

Addressing Senator Thomas's question, he said that the state's assessment system does provide information about what individual children know and can do based on the expectations the state established.

CO-CHAIR THOMAS asked what the \$6.7 million/year breaks down to per student.

MR. JEANS replied he'd provide that information later; the assessments are only done in grades 3-10 and he didn't know the enrollments in those grades.

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MR. OBERMEYER directed attention to a May 1, 2009 legislative research report that indicated in 2007/09 the average cost per student was \$123. He highlighted for the record that in 2002 the exam was refocused to emphasize essential skills and minimum competencies. The report states that each year between 2002 and 2006 an average of 71 percent of sophomore students tested proficient in reading, 86 percent in writing, and 70 percent in math. In 2005 about 61 percent of sophomores taking the full exam passed all three parts of the exam, and about 11 percent did not. In 2006 about 68 percent of sophomores passed all three parts of the exam, and about 7 percent did not pass any part.

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REPRESENTATIVE SEATON asked what percentage of sophomores who passed the exam might need remediation before getting a job or furthering their education.

MR. JEANS replied very few sophomores would be ready to enter the work force or go on to higher education after passing a minimum competency exam. There isn't a direct correlation between required remediation and students who have passed the high school qualifying exam, he added.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON questioned what a high school diploma qualifies a person to do and observed that it's a struggle to understand whether the high school qualifying exam really means something to future employers.

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MR. JEANS related that the HSGQE was never intended to measure whether or not students are ready for post secondary education; it was intended to assure private sector employers that a student with a high school diploma could, at a minimum, read, write and do basic math. As previously mentioned, the State Board is interested in looking at other kinds of assessments to provide employers and the University system with better information on what students can do when they leave high school. For example, WorkKeys provide information about a student's proficiency on four levels that are labeled bronze, silver, gold and platinum. Obviously, he said, a student that has platinum scores on his transcript is likely to be more trainable than a student with silver scores.

CO-CHAIR MEYER said he hopes to hear from the Chamber of Commerce or someone from the private sector on this issue as this bill progresses.

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THERESA HOLT, Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education, supported SB 109. She explained that she just spent the last couple of weeks reading the Center for Education policy reports on the exit exams and all the state report cards for the last 10 years and concluded that the exit exam has not actually increased the graduation rate and doesn't decrease the dropout rate.

The Center for Education policy says that, in general, exit exams have a negative impact, and after it was implemented in 2004, the dropout rate increased significantly. Since then it has slowly decreased, but it is still not to where it was before the exit exam was implemented. The HSGQE also significantly impacts students from minorities, low income homes, and especially students with disabilities. While she had only 2006 data, she said Alaskan children of Caucasian decent passed the HSGQE at an 86 percent rate their first time taking it. African Americans passed at a 58 percent test rate; Latinos passed at a 73 percent pass rate and Native Americans passed at a 60 percent pass rate.

MS. HOLT stated that the Council is especially interested because individuals with disabilities passed at a 30 percent rate. Research from the Center for Education Policy states that exit exams don't have an impact on academic achievement and are hardly worth the cost. They don't help students become gainfully employed especially in those subgroups that traditionally have a

hard time becoming employed anyhow. Passing the exit exam doesn't help students get into college, but failing does keep them out - especially the students in the subgroups.

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She related a story that happened on Disability Mentor Day about a boy who had passed all his classes, had a good grade point, volunteers everywhere and who had a scholarship to a college - except if he didn't pass one portion of the exit exam he would lose his scholarship. He has one chance left. If he doesn't pass, he won't go to college because he doesn't have enough money.

She reminded them that not having HSGQE won't save the system that much money, because they still have to have a 10th grade test. But they would save on the cost of the retests. She said that the exit exam requirement came with no extra funding and asked them to consider the hidden costs that districts incur because of it - such as time away from class (three entire days)- that really impacts those students who need to be in class the most. It also disrupts the general education students who have passed it, because they go to class but can't really do work because then the students who are taking the test would have to make up three entire days of work.

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Some other costs are for time that teachers spend after school tutoring students who are close to passing. It costs a significant amount of money to raise the scores on these kinds of tests - and passing it doesn't mean you would be a good employee. Not passing it wouldn't mean that you wouldn't be a great employee.

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MS. HOLT said everyone must take the test with no modifications, although if you are blind, for instance, you can have the test in braille. The second time around a student can apply for modifications like having the test read or doing it in a quiet room. The third time could be an alternative assessment, which could be something like showing work that meets the same standards. However, she know of one student who is doing that at the exclusion of everything else in his senior year of high school.

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Graduation rates also affect school districts. If districts don't have enough students passing they don't get AYP funding.

She suggested that instead of the high-stakes exit exam they could have a test that drives instruction, teacher evaluations and improvement.

CO-CHAIR THOMAS asked in looking at the results of the test if anything surprised her about how the student was already performing - for instance, the student who had a scholarship but couldn't pass the exam. It is not serving any purpose if it works against them and doesn't even increase the graduation rate.

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MS. HOLT responded that the problem is that the state has changed how it monitors graduation rates in the last 10 years. So, the high school report card has a column for "high school completion" which is a number that could be tracked throughout the 10 years, but the 2004/05 graduation rate is determined by a "cohort" that starts with all the students who started in the ninth grade and follows them through high school. So the number on the top of the fraction is the number of students who graduated with a diploma and the number on the bottom is the number who started in ninth grade. This is a very different number than if you measured the number of students who graduated from the number of students who are enrolled in twelfth grade. There is no way to compare what the graduation rate was before the exam with the rate of after.

CO-CHAIR THOMAS said it would seem they could come up with some way to better track the graduation rate.

MS. HOLT remarked that the federal government clarified all the different definitions used among the states on this issue and Alaska chose the cohort method, which is a very good number to use. She said the Council's priority is to look at policy change and it is surveying all of the education organizations and pressing them to take a position, and she would pass that information on to the committee.

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RHONDA STARK, State Home School Association, testified that she knew a young man who completed all graduation requirements but couldn't pass the exit exam. He left campus without graduating and, even though he is a hard worker, he is not able to enter an apprenticeship program.

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LAUREL VORACHEK, Executive Director, Assessments and Evaluations, Anchorage School District, supported SB 109. Her point of view was from the perspective of what is in the best interests of the student. Her district currently has several mandated tests: the HSGQE, the HSGQE retest, the standards based assessment, the TerraNova, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA), and the revised Alaska Developmental Profile (ADP). In addition, since most of the assessments she just mentioned are end-point assessments, her district has added various assessments at interim points to monitor progress of its students towards mastery of the grade level expectations. For next year they have added WorkKeys and WIN.

She said she has served on the committee within the state that has worked on the implementation of the WorkKeys and the feedback has been unanimous: they can't manage both the HSGQE and the WorkKeys. She just left the Assessment and Accountability meeting that was occurring with members from around the state and their feedback was interesting as well. She urged them to not go shopping for another assessment to replace the HSGQE, but rather look at what they have and see if it can meet their needs in better ways.

MS. VORACHEK said it's very clear that one of the unintended consequences of the HSGQE is that some parents and students have set their sights at only passing it. Once a student has passed all three, it can actually be a stumbling block for encouraging him to take higher level course work, and HSGQE means absolutely nothing outside of this state. It provides no information on preparation for college or work readiness and to students it is just another test.

She also does a survey of graduates and has found that 82 percent said that the HSGQE did not have any impact on their course selection.

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On the other hand, Ms. Voracheck said, the WorkKeys is another mandated assessment coming from the department. It is recognized nationwide; it uses a common language between educators and employers; it provides information to students that can motivate them to take courses to improve their skills. Students are able to see how their skills compare to skills in specific careers necessary to enter the workforce at an entry level position or have the skills to continue to further their education in specific fields beyond high school. When this was piloted at

West High School two years ago and in getting ready to use it district wide she found that the information on careers in it peaked students' interest. It provides valuable information for course planning for a senior year no matter whether students are going on to college or into technical training.

Students can retake this assessment and it provides them motivation to work toward higher levels because they are ready certificates that are nationally recognized. Bronze is at level three, silver is at level four, and gold at five and platinum at six. If a student gets a bronze level, he has incentive to work on improving skills and then retaking the assessment and showing a higher level on his transcript.

The tests in WorkKeys include locating information, reading for information, and applied mathematics. The reason these three tests are chosen, and writing isn't, is because the ACT college entrance exam has profiled all the jobs in the country and found that 85 percent of them require skills in locating information. This is an area that is under-addressed in their curriculum and is addressed very little in the HSGQE.

Reading for information is at 81 percent and applied mathematics is at 75 percent; writing is at 17 percent. If they want to insure that students have the essential skills for entry level jobs, WorkKeys provides that information. This assessment also indicates college readiness. They have done a statistical concordance that shows the relationship between the ACT college entrance exam and WorkKeys. ACT is intended for college-level readiness, WorkKeys for work force readiness, but through the concordance table she gets information that tells her whether or not her student is probably on track to reach the college-readiness benchmarks - something she doesn't get from the HSGQE.

In closing, she asked them to consider the impacts all the mandated assessments have on the district and said don't go shopping for more. If you are going to mandate an assessment, let it be something that provides useful information for course planning and motivate students to continue to work and improve their skill level. HSGQE doesn't provide a lot of motivation.

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CO-CHAIR THOMAS asked if she was around when the HSGQE was first put in place.

MS. HOLT answered yes; she was involved with the pilot program in Kodiak.

CO-CHAIR THOMAS asked what people thought about it at the time.

MS. HOLT answered that the HSGQE really came from business concerns that students don't have essential skills when they graduate. Educators didn't ever think it would provide anything meaningful in terms of instruction and course planning.

CO-CHAIR THOMAS asked if she remembered testifying against it.

MS. HOLT replied she wasn't involved with testimony at the time.

CO-CHAIR THOMAS asked if she remembered hearing that business concerns was not necessarily the most proper motivation for mandating the HSGQE or was it just accepted because other states were using it.

MS. HOLT replied that she was not involved in the testimony at the time.

CO-CHAIR THOMAS asked if she felt that WorkKeys and ACT assessments give her a good feel for a student's readiness for college or the workplace.

MS. HOLT replied that WorkKeys is already another mandated assessment, but it provides information on both college and workforce readiness. It's a valuable tool in multiple arenas.

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CO-CHAIR THOMAS asked if those tests could be tweaked to be more appropriate or not because of the mandate.

MS. HOLT answered that WorkKeys is a national assessment and she didn't think it needed to be tweaked. She discouraged requiring passing the assessment for graduation rather than just using it as an assessment tool to prepare students for what they want to do.

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MIKE HENRY, Executive Director, Anchorage School District's High Schools, said he opposed the HSGQE when it was enacted. All principals and administrators were opposed to it. When it was adopted, they tried to follow the mandate and get as many kids to pass it as possible, but it came at a big cost that involved more than money. Those students that didn't pass the HSGQE are missing out on many quality elective courses because they are in classes that "pretty much teach to the test." Much time and

money has been spent trying to move students to that level, but he wanted to be able to give those students back the opportunity to attend the King Career Center instead of being in remediation classes. He said they don't mind having high standards for some students, but this HSGQE has not done that. It has not been an encouragement for students, educators or parents.

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JOHN ALCANTRA, Government Relations Director, National Education Association Alaska (NEA), said he is confident of the Association's unanimous support for SB 109 when it meets in January. He worried that sophomores would pass the HSGQE and then cruise for the rest of their time in school. How many days of instruction have they lost now?

CO-CHAIR MEYER said this update brings the process further along and he looks forward to hearing the bill during session. He set SB 109 aside.

SB 102-RAISE COMP. SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AGE/TRUANCY

CO-CHAIR MEYER asked Senator Davis or her staff to brief the committee on SB 102 even though it wasn't in this committee now.

SENATOR DAVIS remarked that SB 102 is now in the Finance Committee.

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TOM OBERMEYER, Staff to Senator Davis, sponsor of SB 102, said they now have a committee substitute (CS) that is an act relating to compulsory school attendance age. He read the following sponsor statement:

SB 102 increases the Alaska compulsory school attendance age from 7 to 16 to age 7 to 18. At the same time it necessarily amends the crime of contributing to the delinquency of a minor from the maximum age 16 to 18. This bill will not preclude parents from homeschooling children, or using charter or alternative schools, or any other of the twelve enumerated exceptions to compulsory education under AS 14.30.010(b), including completion of grade 12 or graduation from a secondary school before age 18.

Three thousand two hundred and eighty three Alaska students dropped out and 62.4 percent graduated in the 2007/08 school year per the Alaska Department of

Education and Early Development (DEED). Nationally, the graduation rate is 70 percent or higher. The highest dropout rates in Alaska are among minorities with Alaska Natives at double the rate of others. These numbers have not changed much in many years and Alaska's compulsory school attendance age has not changed in decades.

Seventeen states have increased the compulsory school attendance age to 18. Nine states maintain age 17 and 23 states maintain age 16 per the U.S. Department of Labor, February 10, 2009. The legislative intent by states which have increased compulsory school attendance age to 18 is to encourage more students to stay in school long enough to graduate, attend institutions of higher education, and decrease dropout rates, juvenile crime, and teen pregnancy. Studies have shown that students without a diploma earn less than 75 percent of those with a diploma; they are more likely to live in poverty, go to jail, and have health problems.

The National Education Association's "Twelve-Point Action Plan for Reducing the School Dropout Rate" lists as a first priority to *"mandate high school graduation or equivalency as compulsory for everyone below the age of 21."* It reported:

'Just as we established compulsory attendance to the age of 16 or 17 in the beginning of the 20th century, it is appropriate and critical to eradicate the idea of 'dropping out' before achieving a diploma. To compete in the 21st century, all of our citizens, at a minimum, need a high school education.'

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON said that Representative Munoz had introduced a similar bill.

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CO-CHAIR MEYER asked how this bill would affect kids who want to join the military at age 17 (with their parents' signature). Do they still have to stay in school to the mandated age of 18?

SENATOR DAVIS said she assumes there could be an accommodation for that just as parents now sign to allow their children go into the military before they are age 18.

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REPRESENTATIVE SEATON remarked that the current compulsory school age has so many "outs" that he's quite sure that a parent could say they are homeschooling their child through the military and it would be accepted. He noted that the packets have copies of the recent Anchorage School District study that looked at cohort analysis from eighth grade students in 2002. That study found that 9.7 percent of students dropped out in, 24.5 percent dropped out in ninth grade, and 23.9 percent dropped out in tenth grade. Almost 60 percent of the dropouts in the Anchorage School District dropped out under compulsory school attendance. So raising the compulsory age might not be the way to attack the problem when a majority of the problem occurs in the lower grades.

Furthermore, he said that police departments and troopers have indicated in a zero fiscal note that they don't intend to even ask for more resources to enforce this. "I have a lot of concerns, you know, it seems that we're going forward with a law that everybody is planning to ignore."

CO-CHAIR MEYER said that's interesting because it would seem that this measure would save money for them.

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SENATOR DAVIS said there are two sides to this issue; schools are interested in increasing the compulsory age believing that they can do more for kids if they are able to keep them until age 18. She wants to hear all points of view; it's an issue that needs to be discussed.

CO-CHAIR THOMAS said he can understand Public Safety's response; their view is budgetary and short term. He believes it will be tough for parents to keep their kids going to school if they want to drop out. That being said, he would like to see statistics on why students drop out, because they would help give direction in deciding how to remedy dropping out other than just demanding that kids stay in school. He also noted that the University is concerned that the kids they are remediating have passed the HSGQE and have a diploma yet they are not able to think critically or analytically.

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MR. OBERMEYER highlighted that the Boston Globe recently announced that a special state commission will recommend measures to lower the dropout rate in Massachusetts that has approximately 10,000 students quitting school each year. They

bring up the same things that have been discussed here in talking about the need to raise the school age with strategies to hire case managers in schools so students can experience more personal attention. Their goal is to halve the dropout rate. The costs are transferable to government because if these kids are not in school they are going to be in jail, at the lower end of the economic scheme, on Medicaid and on other social service programs that will cost government money anyway.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON said many of those questions are answered in the Anchorage School District's memo number 96 that is available on line.

[4:54:03 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Co-Chair Meyer adjourned the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting at 4:54 p.m.