

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

March 11, 2011

8:08 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Representative Alan Dick, Chair
Representative Lance Pruitt, Vice Chair
Representative Eric Feige
Representative Paul Seaton
Representative Sharon Cissna
Representative Scott Kawasaki

SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Senator Kevin Meyer, Co-Chair
Senator Joe Thomas, Co-Chair
Senator Bettye Davis, Vice Chair
Senator Hollis French
Senator Gary Stevens

MEMBERS ABSENT

HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Representative Peggy Wilson

SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

All members present

OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT

Representative Mike Chenault
Representative Peggy Wilson
Senator Linda Menard
Senator Charlie Huggins

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATIONS(S): HIGHER EDUCATION AND CAREER READINESS TASK FORCE

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

LOLLY CARPLUK, Coordinator
Alaska Native Teacher Preparation Project (UAF)
Mountain Village, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: During the presentation, introduced herself as a member of the task force and explained the project.

BARB ANGALIAK, President
NEA-Alaska
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the presentation.

WENDY REDMAN, Executive Vice President
Statewide Programs & Services
University of Alaska (UA)
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the presentation.

DONALD HANDELAND, Student Representative
Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development
Sitka, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: During the presentation, introduced himself as a member of the task force.

DR. KEITH HAMILTON, President
Alaska Christian College
Soldotna, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the presentation.

SENATOR LINDA MENARD
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: During the presentation, introduced herself as a member of the task force.

MIKE HANLEY, Commissioner
Office of the Commissioner

Department of Education and Early Development
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the presentation.

EDDY JEANS, Education Policy Coordinator
Office of the Commissioner
Department of Education and Early Development (EED)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: During the presentation, introduced himself as a member of the task force.

DON BANTZ, President
Alaska Pacific University
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the presentation.

STEVE BRADSHAW, Superintendent
Sitka School District
President
Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA)
Sitka, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the presentation.

STEPHANIE BUTLER, Director of Operations
Alaska Commission on Post Secondary Education (ACPE)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: During the presentation, introduced herself as a member of the task force.

PETER FINN, Chair
Alaska Coalition of Student Leaders
University of Alaska
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified via teleconference during the discussion.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:08:37 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR THOMAS called the joint meeting of the House and Senate Education Standing Committees to order at 8:08 a.m. Representatives Dick, Pruitt, Feige, Seaton, and Kawasaki, and Senators Thomas, Meyer, Davis, Stevens, and French were present at the call to order. Representative Cissna arrived as the meeting was in progress.

[8:09:03 AM](#)

PRESENTATIONS(S): Higher Education and Career Readiness Task Force

[8:09:45 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR THOMAS announced that the only order of business would be a presentation from the Higher Education and Career Readiness Task Force.

[8:10:27 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS, noting that the task force had met six times, explained that its mission was to identify the causes behind the low retention rate and the lack of educational preparation which necessitated remedial courses at the university level. He declared there to be three major issues: why were students not prepared for the college level courses; was counseling prior to college necessary for students to better understand what was required; would scholarships and loan programs assist in the efforts. He reported that the task force had compiled all the suggestions, and divided them into five areas: parents and their involvement, teachers and improvement, school districts, State of Alaska, and the University of Alaska. He reported that the task force had earlier discussed parents and the university, and was now prepared to discuss the remaining three areas. He asked the members of the task force to introduce themselves.

[8:14:52 AM](#)

LOLLY CARPLUK, Coordinator, Alaska Native Teacher Preparation Project (UAF), said that the grant that she administered included financial assistance to Alaska Native interns in their final year of study prior to entering teaching. She pointed out that the grant was unique as it included a research component to assist with refinement of the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) teacher program.

BARB ANGAIK, President, NEA-Alaska, declared that she was a veteran of 30 years teaching in Alaska.

[8:16:22 AM](#)

WENDY REDMAN, Executive Vice President, Statewide Programs & Services, University of Alaska (UA), said that she was representing UA.

DONALD HANDELAND, Student Representative, Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development, stated that he was currently a senior in high school.

DR. KEITH HAMILTON, President, Alaska Christian College, stated that the college served, almost exclusively, rural Alaska students.

SENATOR LINDA MENARD, Alaska State Legislature, stated that she represented the Wasilla and Palmer area.

[8:17:41 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS introduced himself as the Chair of the Higher Education and Career Readiness Task Force.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON introduced himself as a member of the task force.

MIKE HANLEY, Commissioner, Office of the Commissioner, Department of Education and Early Development, stated that EED would continue the work which had begun with the former commissioner.

[8:17:55 AM](#)

EDDY JEANS, Education Policy Coordinator, Office of the Commissioner, Department of Education and Early Development (EED) introduced himself.

[8:18:22 AM](#)

STEPHANIE BUTLER, Director of Operations, Alaska Commission on Post Secondary Education (ACPE), introduced herself.

SENATOR STEVENS noted that Representative Cissna, Representative Kawasaki, and Senator Davis were also present.

[8:19:25 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS introduced Peter Finn, Chair of the Alaska Coalition of Student Leaders at University of Alaska Anchorage, and Fred Villa, Associate Vice President for Workforce Programs,

University of Alaska Anchorage, who were participating via teleconference. He referred to the final report of the task force, which was due to be released on April 1, 2011 and asked if there were any specific areas to be discussed.

[8:20:26 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR THOMAS asked for a response to a number of issues, including teacher preparedness which allowed reimbursement for national certification, and counseling to prospective teaching program candidates which helped explain the many issues for the teaching profession.

SENATOR STEVENS reported that the task force recognized the importance of the mentoring program, the assistance to prospective teacher candidates, and establishment of the annual dialogue with the UA Board of Regents. He opined that maintaining better communication with the UA Board of Regents and the Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development was equally as important as communication with the administrations.

[8:23:41 AM](#)

SENATOR DAVIS, reflecting on a report from the UA Board of Regents lauding accomplishment with the reading programs, expressed concern with reading at the K-12 levels, and asked if the techniques for success at the university level had been shared with teachers at the elementary and high school levels.

[8:24:32 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS, agreeing with the importance of reading programs, replied that the task force was focused on work place career readiness.

[8:25:35 AM](#)

MS. REDMAN explained that teacher preparedness was a complicated issue, which needed to be addressed on a national level, similar to the campaign to elevate the image of nurses in the workplace. She pointed out that support was the most important aspect for retention of teachers in Alaska, which was addressed by the teacher preparedness. She expressed concern that UA was only supplying 28 percent of Alaskan teachers, and emphasized that this rate needed to be improved. She declared that it was a more complex issue; although more students were graduating with a degree in teaching, it was unclear why these graduates were

not becoming teachers. She offered her belief that teacher education is the highest priority in order to respond to the needs of the Alaska public school system.

[8:28:31 AM](#)

MS. ANGAIK expressed her support for a consistent "mentor project," and declared that it had a significant impact on the first and second year teachers' ability to understand students and education. She reported that it had been shown that teachers with the national board certification had improved student achievement in their classrooms, as the standards for certification were very high and the year long program was very rigorous. She shared that only 120 teachers in Alaska were nationally board certified, and she recommended support for making funds available for the program.

[8:31:39 AM](#)

STEVE BRADSHAW, Superintendent, Sitka School District, President, Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA), stated his support for the effort toward national board certification of Alaska teachers. He recommended focusing on the mentor program, and he suggested, as an improvement for education, to append the mentor program with the national board certification. He lauded the [teacher] professional development days as legitimate improvements of the educational process as it allowed for the alignment of testing with teaching, and he requested flexibility for the allocated time.

[8:34:03 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA, reflecting on the creativity of a small, independent private school, asked for ways to enhance the system.

[8:35:27 AM](#)

DON BANTZ, President, Alaska Pacific University, explained that he had recently been at Evergreen State College, which had a very innovative teacher training program. He reported that the national teacher dropout rate was 50 percent in the first two years of teaching. He reflected that new teacher graduates became discouraged when they entered "this mind numbing bureaucracy, so they had to be parents because the parents weren't doing the parenting. They had to do curriculum committees and teaching to the test, all the things they knew

didn't work, yet that's what they were forced to do." He emphasized the need to address the root cause, as even training the best teachers in the world was pointless if they left teaching in a short period of time. He opined that private schools still had a role to play, with small classes, flexibility, and creativity in the teacher education program. He offered his belief that it was known what worked in teaching, but that it was difficult to implement in a large bureaucratic system.

[8:38:33 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS pointed out that all the institutions in Alaska were represented at this meeting, colleges, universities, and vocational programs, and that there were many paths toward completing an education. He opined that the teacher education structure was different at each, and that was good.

[8:39:01 AM](#)

MR. BANTZ stated that a two year post-Bachelor program was necessary to develop a good teacher, yet the competition for teaching candidates was with on-line programs which now offered a nine month program.

MR. BRADSHAW emphasized the necessity to change the attitude that teaching was easy, and prospective students should understand that it was a difficult profession. He stated: "we need to get back on track and focus on our children; it's more about the kids than anything else." He concluded by stating that not everyone can be a teacher, even those who think they can.

[8:40:37 AM](#)

MS. ANGAIK, sharing the responses from teacher exit interviews, stated that the number one reason that teachers leave was because they did not feel supported, though not necessarily by the administrators.

[8:42:44 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS pointed out that the draft copy of the task force report included all the suggestions that had been received. He noted that he agreed with some of the suggestions, and disagreed with others.

SENATOR STEVENS listed better preparation of students for either a college career or a job as the highest priority, with the aforementioned counseling prior to college, and scholarships and financial aid as the next most important items. He suggested the need for more post-high school academies to "help students come up to speed."

[8:44:19 AM](#)

COMMISSIONER HANLEY opined that it was necessary to fully recognize "where the exact shortcoming is," and he asked, "Who are those students? Where are they coming from? Are they our traditional students coming out of high school [or] are they the non-traditional students coming back to school to add some skills." He stated that it was necessary for EED, with the cooperation of UA, to immediately answer these questions. He suggested tracking the necessary classes, including math, reading, and writing, to understand the depth of the need, with the possibility of backtracking this information to specific schools, and then working directly with those schools. He expressed his agreement with summer school courses, or academies, to immediately confront the problem. He concluded by stating the need for more early literacy programs.

[8:46:39 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS pointed to statistics which indicated a very low success rate for students who take remedial college classes.

[8:47:28 AM](#)

MS. REDMAN, in response to Senator Stevens, said that a key was to look at what has been proven to work: intensive summer programs for early college experience, and realistic assessments of skills while in high school. She offered her belief that UA should cultivate innovation and identify whether developmental courses were producing successful students. She reported that, nationally, 50 percent of high school students were taking one or more developmental courses. She stated that bridging programs for incoming university students were a cheap and effective means for increasing skills.

[8:50:27 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON said that he was encouraged with the university response. He directed attention to national data which suggested remedial courses for very specific areas of

need, not necessarily as a pre-requisite, which reflected better long term success.

[8:53:03 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS directed attention to the discussions on student counseling.

[8:54:00 AM](#)

PETER FINN, Chair, Alaska Coalition of Student Leaders, University of Alaska, [Testimony indistinct, but reconstructed from the committee secretary's log notes.] said that general advisory and college counselors were available, and there were counselors for course work. He offered his belief that the surprises most often occurred when students attempted to transfer credits.

[8:56:21 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS stated that the legislature was addressing the issue of financial assistance and scholarships. He offered his belief that supportive legislation would arise after the task force report was released on April 1.

[8:57:16 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the joint meeting of the Senate and House Education Standing Committees meeting was adjourned at 8:57 a.m.