

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

April 4, 2011  
8:05 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Alan Dick, Chair  
Representative Lance Pruitt, Vice Chair  
Representative Eric Feige  
Representative Paul Seaton  
Representative Peggy Wilson  
Representative Scott Kawasaki

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Representative Sharon Cissna

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

PRESENTATION(S): SUPERINTENDENT ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT

- HEARD

HOUSE BILL NO. 199

"An Act amending the funding for statewide residential educational programs."

- MOVED CSHB 199(EDC) OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 198

"An Act relating to the special education service agency."

- MOVED OUT OF COMMITTEE

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HB 199

SHORT TITLE: FUNDING FOR STATE BOARDING SCHOOLS

SPONSOR(s): EDUCATION

03/16/11	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/16/11	(H)	EDC, FIN
03/23/11	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106
03/23/11	(H)	Heard & Held
03/23/11	(H)	MINUTE(EDC)
03/30/11	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106

03/30/11 (H) Heard & Held  
03/30/11 (H) MINUTE(EDC)  
04/04/11 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106

BILL: HB 198

SHORT TITLE: SPEC. EDUC. SERVICE AGENCY FUNDING/SUNSET  
SPONSOR(S): EDUCATION

03/16/11 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
03/16/11 (H) EDC, FIN  
03/23/11 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106  
03/23/11 (H) Heard & Held  
03/23/11 (H) MINUTE(EDC)  
03/30/11 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106  
03/30/11 (H) Scheduled But Not Heard  
04/04/11 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106

**WITNESS REGISTER**

CAROL COMEAU, Superintendent  
Anchorage School District  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented a PowerPoint overview of the Anchorage School District.

ELIZABETH SWEENEY NUDELMAN, Director  
School Finance and Facilities Section  
Department of Education and Early Development (EED)  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified during discussion of HB 199.

ERIC GEBHART, Superintendent  
Nenana City School District  
Nenana, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified during discussion of HB 199.

CRAIG CULBERT, Assistant Superintendent  
Galena City School District  
Galena, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified during discussion of HB 199.

SHEILA PETERSON, Staff  
Representative Alan Dick  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified during discussion of HB 198, on behalf of the bill sponsor, the House Education Committee.

PATRICK REINHART  
Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special Education  
Division of Senior and Disabilities Services  
Department of Health and Social Services  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 198.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[8:05:06 AM](#)

**CHAIR ALAN DICK** called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:05 a.m. Representatives Dick, Wilson, Feige, Kawasaki, and Seaton were present at the call to order. Representatives Pruitt arrived as the meeting was in progress.

**PRESENTATION(S): Superintendent Anchorage School District**

[8:05:33 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK announced that the first order of business would be a presentation from the superintendent of the Anchorage School District.

[8:06:12 AM](#)

CAROL COMEAU, Superintendent, Anchorage School District, presented a PowerPoint, titled "Anchorage School District." [Included in members' packets] She reported that the school district was the 94th largest in the United States, with more than 6,000 employees, 49,091 students, and more than 100 schools and programs. She offered her belief that the poverty rate was increasing, as 1 in 3 students were from low income families. She noted that there were 91 languages spoken by the students, and that 14 percent of the students received special education services. She directed attention to the student diversity, which brought its challenges, but was also an asset for working in a global environment. She said that 53 percent of the student population represented ethnic groups other than White. She directed attention to a graph which depicted the rise in graduation rates to 69.69 percent, and a decline in the dropout rate to 3.59 percent.

[8:09:45 AM](#)

MS. COMEAU described the efforts and the funding for the 10 pre-school programs. She declared that the program resulted in better prepared kindergarteners. She explained that all the student progress was analyzed, so that intervention could be offered more quickly to increase student achievement should it become necessary. She reported that elementary summer school would be offered for five weeks, for remediation only.

[8:12:49 AM](#)

MS. COMEAU directed attention to the slide titled, "Middle School." She reported that stimulus funding had been budgeted for extensive training for middle school principals by the Center for Educational Leadership at the University of Washington. She shared that this training focused on improving the quality of classroom instruction. She pointed out that the career guides had been reinstated for support to students with career technical education preparation and planning. She said that summer school, summer camp, and after school programs would also explore other career options. She mentioned the success of the middle school summer school program for remediation in reading and math.

[8:14:38 AM](#)

MS. COMEAU moved on to the next slide, "High school." She reported that targeted programs had been selected, graduation support coordinators had been hired to help keep kids on track for graduation, and the career and technology education curriculum had been expanded. She noted that more than 5000 students attended summer school in the prior year. She said that the on-line courses had provided flexibility for many students.

[8:17:36 AM](#)

MS. COMEAU said that a number of students were not literate in English or their own language. She explained that the secondary newcomers center had been established to work through the language barrier. She explained that students were moved from their home school each day for half day intensive class time. She pointed out that each student was assigned an English as a Second Language (ESL) counselor, and that the parents were also welcomed to attend evening English classes.

[8:20:13 AM](#)

MS. COMEAU relayed that 14 percent of the student population were using special education services, and that extra counselor positions had been added at the high school level. She detailed the Collaborative Autism Resources and Education (CARE) training to help address the growing population of autistic students. She said that special education support continued in summer school.

[8:21:58 AM](#)

MS. COMEAU reported on Title VII, Indian education, and mentioned a new grant project, Project Ki'l, which focused on Alaska Native boys. She discussed that Project Pugigtut, meaning smart people, an online high school success program with culturally responsive core courses, had been implemented. She spoke of the technological and staff support for both of these programs. She reported an increase to the number of students returning to school.

[8:24:51 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON asked that an analysis of the data results from the pre-k programs be forwarded to the committee.

MS. COMEAU replied that, as there were no standards based assessments until the third grade level, there was a limited amount of data available, other than anecdotal.

[8:26:38 AM](#)

MS. COMEAU, in response to Representative P. Wilson, said that the Explore assessment was specific to student strengths and areas of interest. She said that Explore and WorkKeys were developed by ACT, although there was no relationship.

[8:27:48 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON, referring to the special education students, asked if the Consortium for Digital Learning (CDL) had demonstrated use of the ipad touch.

[8:28:54 AM](#)

MS. COMEAU said that it was being considered. She mentioned the one-to-one laptop initiative which had been presented earlier by the CDL.

[8:29:40 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON explained that an iPhone could be recycled as an iPad touch type instrument.

**HB 199-FUNDING FOR STATE BOARDING SCHOOLS**

[8:31:22 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK announced that the next order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 199, "An Act amending the funding for statewide residential educational programs."

[8:32:36 AM](#)

ELIZABETH SWEENEY NUDELMAN, Director, School Finance and Facilities Section, Department of Education and Early Development (EED), clarified that the statute covered the programs that operated for the full school year.

[8:33:50 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KAWASAKI asked how the amounts in the statute were originally established.

[8:34:24 AM](#)

MS. NUDELMAN replied that these were stipend rates from another program.

REPRESENTATIVE KAWASAKI, noting that the stipend amount would be determined on a regional basis with an established cap, asked about money that was granted but was then found to be not necessary.

[8:35:11 AM](#)

MS. NUDELMAN replied that it had never been an issue.

[8:35:31 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FEIGE inquired about the actual costs of the housing and food programs.

[8:35:40 AM](#)

MS. NUDELMAN offered to provide the information to the committee.

REPRESENTATIVE FEIGE stated that, as the programs had been operating for a number of years, it would be good to have an understanding of the actual costs.

[8:36:47 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON, directing attention to Exhibit F [Included in members' packets], asked if EED agreed that the figures provided were accurate.

[8:37:57 AM](#)

MS. NUDELMAN said that EED had not reviewed the document, but she noted that the program costs had continually exceeded the cost of the stipend.

[8:39:06 AM](#)

ERIC GEBHART, Superintendent, Nenana City School District, directed attention to page 2 of a handout titled "Nenana Student Living Center 2010 Actual Expenditures [Included in members' packets]. He pointed out that the revenues and expenses for the actual amount for 2010 and the budgeted amount for 2011 were listed side by side. He confirmed the revenue deficiency for 2010 of \$704,868, and the projected deficiency in 2011 to be \$819,593.

CHAIR DICK asked where the operating money was obtained.

MR. GEBHART replied that it was from foundation funding, and local funding from the city, among others.

[8:41:19 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRUITT, referring to the budget document being discussed, noted that the expenses were for nine months, and he asked how many months the requested stipend would cover.

MR. GEBHART replied that, although nine months were currently taken, a tenth month would be welcomed and was necessary.

[8:42:13 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FEIGE, referring to the budget document, inquired about the increase in wages, salaries, and benefits.

MR. GEBHART, in response, said that there were increases in salaries and health insurance, as well as the addition of another staff.

[8:43:07 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK pointed out that staff needs extended beyond the school year.

[8:43:36 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FEIGE, referring to the aforementioned cost increase for additional staff, asked if the number of students had also increased.

MR. GEBHART replied that some services were currently not being met, including the need for a counselor and a certified person for academic support.

[8:44:34 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK reported on his visit to the facility, and said that he had found it to be a bare bones operation with a need for additional staff.

[8:45:14 AM](#)

CRAIG CULBERT, Assistant Superintendent, Galena City School District, reporting on the program costs, stated that the food cost for 255 students was \$17,136, of which the state paid about \$5800. He detailed that a four year grant, received through Senator Lisa Murkowski's office, would most likely not be renewed.

[8:46:27 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK asked about the fuel costs.

MR. CULBERT replied that about \$1.1 million worth of fuel had been donated from the military, but that future costs would also need to be addressed. This would bring the deficit total to almost \$2 million.

[8:47:46 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK agreed that the bill would make time available to research a long term solution.

MR. CULBERT said that EED had the valid costs for comparison.

[8:48:56 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK closed public testimony.

[8:49:17 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON moved to adopt Amendment 1, labeled 27-LS0594\B.1, Mischel, 3/21/11, which read:

Page 1, following line 2:

Insert a new bill section to read:

**"\* Section 1.** AS 14.16.200 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

(c) In addition to the programs eligible for reimbursement of costs under (a) of this section, the department may approve three district-operated statewide residential educational programs that began operating after July 1, 2011, for reimbursement of costs incurred by the district in operating the program under regulations adopted by the department."

Page 1, line 3:

Delete "**Section 1**"

Insert "**Sec. 2**"

[8:49:28 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KAWASAKI objected for discussion.

[8:49:33 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON explained that proposed Amendment 1 would allow a procedure for EED to accept up to three applications and proposals for full year programs.

[8:51:31 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KAWASAKI asked if there were any other boarding school programs between 2005 and 2011.

[8:51:42 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON replied that some residential programs had been offered but not on a year around basis. He explained that the proposed amendment removed the restriction for any applicant who met all the qualifications, but did not require EED to accept any applications.

[8:52:37 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KAWASAKI asked if the specified dates in the proposed amendment excluded any schools.

[8:52:58 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON agreed that there was no intent to exclude, however, the date in the proposed amendment could be amended to encompass all the schools.

[8:53:29 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK asked if the proposed amendment would affect the fiscal note and inhibit the bill's passage.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON offered his belief that the proposed amendment would not cause any changes, but that EED would be able to better answer.

[8:54:41 AM](#)

MS. NUDELMAN opined that the proposed amendment would not increase the fiscal note, as EED would solicit proposals with stated criteria.

[8:55:56 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON moved to adopt Conceptual Amendment 1 to proposed Amendment 1, which read:

Page 1, line 6:  
Delete "July 1, 2011"  
Insert "January 1, 2005"

[8:56:26 AM](#)

There being no objection, Conceptual Amendment 1 to proposed Amendment 1 was passed.

[8:56:40 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KAWASAKI removed his objection to proposed Amendment 1.

[8:56:46 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FEIGE asked for an explanation as to how this would have a zero fiscal note.

[8:57:23 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON, in response, said that proposed Amendment 1 merely stated that EED may solicit applications with a process for approval; hence, it was permissive, but not mandatory, language. He agreed that a future fiscal note to fund may be necessary.

[8:58:30 AM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease.

[8:59:12 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON moved to adopt Amendment 1, as amended.

[9:00:02 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRUITT objected and asked to clarify what was being added to the bill. He stated that there was no additional funding, as it merely stated that three more schools could be approved.

[9:00:36 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON explained that proposed Amendment 1 removed the existing statutory restriction for adding eligible schools. He offered his belief that it should not require re-titling.

[9:01:23 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRUITT asked if the process could lead to approval prior to FY 2012.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON replied that EED had testified that the process was lengthy, and that EED would not approve an unfunded program.

[9:02:21 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRUITT opined that a long term outlook would reflect a return to the current stipend level after 2013.

[9:02:50 AM](#)

MS. NUDELMAN explained that, at a future date, if new residential programs were added to the statute and funded via appropriation, then the costs would increase.

REPRESENTATIVE PRUITT offered his belief that there were costs associated with this proposed amendment, even if they did not occur this year.

[9:04:10 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRUITT removed his objection.

The committee took a brief at-ease.

[9:04:42 AM](#)

There being no further objection, Amendment 1, as amended, was passed.

[9:05:15 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KAWASAKI acknowledged that there was a current existing need, but he offered his belief that boarding schools had not yet been determined to be the best approach to the needs of Alaska education. He said that he would not oppose the bill.

CHAIR DICK expressed his agreement.

[9:06:34 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRUITT moved to report HB 199, as amended, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, CSHB 199 (EDC) was reported from the House Education Standing Committee.

[9:07:23 AM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease.

**HB 198-SPEC. EDUC. SERVICE AGENCY FUNDING/SUNSET**

CHAIR DICK announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 198, "An Act relating to the special education service agency."

[9:08:57 AM](#)

SHEILA PETERSON, Staff, Representative Alan Dick, Alaska State Legislature, reviewed the proposed bill, stating that it removed a sunset requirement and increased state funding to the Special Education Service Agency (SESA). This program offered support to small school districts with high special needs children. She reported that funding to SESA had remained static for the prior 13 years, and that the proposed bill would compute the funding to now be .4 percent of the base student allocation.

[9:10:36 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK opened public testimony.

[9:11:20 AM](#)

PATRICK REINHART, Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special Education, Division of Senior and Disabilities Services, Department of Health and Social Services, stated the support of the Council for HB 198. He reported that the Council was represented on the Board of Directors of SESA. He directed attention to the handout, titled Special Education Service Agency Recommendations for Statutory Change. [Included in members' packets]

[9:12:39 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK closed public testimony.

[9:12:45 AM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease.

[9:13:19 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON moved to report HB 198 out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal

notes. There being no objection, HB 198 was reported from the House Education Standing Committee.

9:14:35 AM

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:14 a.m.