

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

January 25, 2012

8:02 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Representative Alan Dick, Chair
Representative Lance Pruitt, Vice Chair
Representative Eric Feige
Representative Paul Seaton
Representative Peggy Wilson
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 Gary Stevens

MEMBERS ABSENT

SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Senator Hollis French

OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT

Representative Tammy Wilson

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION: ALASKA EARLY CHILDHOOD COORDINATING COUNCIL

- HEARD

PRESENTATION: STATE INTERVENTION IN SCHOOLS

- HEARD

HOUSE BILL NO. 256

"An Act repealing provisions relating to the power and duties of the Department of Education and Early Development to intervene in a school district to improve instructional practices."

- SCHEDULED BUT NOT HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

STEPHANIE BERGLUND, CEO

thread;

Representative

Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council (AECCC)

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided the presentation on behalf of the Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council (AECCC), and responded to questions.

CYNDY CURRAN, Director

Division of Teaching and Learning Support

Department of Education and Early Development (EED)

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Responded to questions, during the presentation from the Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council (AECCC).

PAUL SUGAR, Head Start/Parent Involvement

Teaching and Learning Support

Department of Education and Early Development (EED)

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Responded to questions, during the presentation of the Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council (AECCC).

SHIRLEY PITZ, Co-Chair

Health and Mental Health Committee

Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council (AECCC)

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Responded to questions, during the presentation of the Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council (AECCC).

DEE FOSTER, Co-Chair

Health and Mental Health Committee

Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council (AECCC)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Responded to questions during the presentation on State Intervention in Schools.

SHIRLEY PITZ, Co-Chair
Health and Mental Health Committee
Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council (AECCC)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Responded to questions during the presentation on State Intervention in Schools.

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

POSITION STATEMENT: Responded to questions during the presentation on State Intervention in Schools.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:02:33 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR KEVIN MEYER called the joint meeting of the House and Senate Education Standing Committees to order at 8:02 a.m. Present at the call to order were Representatives Dick, Feige, Kawasaki, and Seaton, and present from the Senate Education Standing Committee were Senators Meyer, Davis, Thomas, and Stevens. Representatives Pruitt, P. Wilson, and Cissna arrived while the meeting was in progress.

Presentation: Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council (AECCC)

[8:03:16 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR MEYER announced that the first order of business would be a presentation from the Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council (AECCC).

[8:05:30 AM](#)

STEPHANIE BERGLUND, CEO, thread; Representative, Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council (AECCC), paraphrased from a prepared statement, which read [original punctuation provided]:

As part of the Head Start Reauthorization Act of 2007, states were required to establish State Advisory Councils on Early Childhood Education and Care, which have also come to be known as Early Childhood Advisory Councils. The state Advisory Councils on Early childhood Education and Care are required to: conduct a periodic needs assessment; identify opportunities for, and barriers to, collaboration and coordination of early childhood programs and services; develop recommendations for increasing the overall participation of children in early childhood programs; develop recommendations for a unified, statewide early childhood data collection system; develop recommendations for a statewide professional development system; assess the capacity and effectiveness of 2- and 4- year old public and private institutions of higher education; and to make recommendations for improvements to early learning standards and develop high-quality comprehensive early learning standards.

Our mission is to promote positive development, improved health outcomes, and school readiness for children prenatal through age eight by creating a culturally responsive, comprehensive, and accessible service delivery system that links service providers, empowers families, and engages communities. The AECC [Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating] shall support the creation of a unified, sustainable system of early care, health, education, and family support for young children and their families.

Our purpose is to facilitate the integration and alignment of all of those services, planning efforts, resources, policy development, and funding as well as establish connections between health, mental health, education, and family support systems and public and private partners. Historically, there have been many groups working on behalf of young children, throughout our state and this Council brings together representatives of those groups to work together in moving early childhood initiatives forward.

There have been many accomplishments of the Council to date: met face-to-face four times; established committees to carry out Council work between meetings; identified Council priorities; worked to further early

childhood inventory project; and worked on an early childhood resource directory.

As part of our tasks we have identified some priorities that we would like to collectively work toward and work together with the state to move forward. There [are] seven priorities:

1. Expand early childhood services to 5,000 new children and families through in home and out of home services. Action steps identified are: describe what already exists; determine the number of children on the waiting lists of existing programs; survey existing programs' capacity to expand; and create a communication plan of how we could see that access increase.

2. Identify methods to increase the pay in early childhood settings, particularly for those with higher degrees. Action steps related to this priority include: gathering and promoting existing models; identify roadblocks or inhibitions to using existing resources on pay (such as fuel costs, some permitting costs, etc.); and consider both pay for programs and individual early educators.

3. Implement the QRIS (Quality Rating and Improvement System) plan including an implementation time-line of activities and funding. Action steps that have been identified are to establish the AECCC as an advisory entity for moving the QRIS forward, and create an implementation timeline.

4. Increase awareness of the Alaska Early Learning Guidelines (ELGs) by coordinating efforts (public and private) to include the "universal" early care and learning workforce (parents, extended family, community). Action steps that have been identified for this priority are: promote the creation of a public awareness campaign; promote alignment between the ELGs and the K-2 standards; and make the ELGs more user friendly for parents.

5. Embed "Strengthening Families" protective factors through systems across the board to include grant proposals, policies, materials development, and sustainability of long-term funding efforts. Action

steps around this goal include: establishing a process for embedding the protective factors in statewide systems, and promoting the protective factors in the larger community.

6. Support and promote a local partnerships grant process to invest in early childhood and family support. Action steps include: raise awareness of local partnerships and their role within communities; expand the partnership network; advocate for a funding mechanism with training, technical assistance, and appropriate oversight; and identify the State's role and responsibilities.

7. Seek to ensure every child will have full access to well-child exams that follow the Alaska Periodicity Schedule which is based on the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Action steps include: raise awareness of the importance and availability of well-child exams; reduce the barriers to accessibility of well-child exams; and expand availability of early health and developmental screenings at local health fairs and in other community settings.

There have been five active committees working to support the overall goals of the AECCC, and those committees are: Program/Policy, a committee of the whole determines final recommendations; Workforce Development, is looking at the development of entry level through PhD, professional development, including issues around high quality services and compensation; Family Support, looks at improving outreach and increasing services available to Alaskan families with young children beyond existing educational opportunities; Early Care and Learning, focuses on learning and development opportunities for young children; and Health and Mental Health, looks at issues surrounding general health, oral health, mental health and behavioral health affecting young children and their families.

The inventory project has been helpful in identifying early care and learning services and mapping those throughout the state. Program types that have been identified in the Inventory include: Head Start/Early Head Start; Licensed Child Care Centers, Homes, and Group Homes; Military Child Care Centers and Homes;

Parents as Teachers; Infant Learning/Early Intervention; and Pre-elementary programs including: Pilot Pre-Elementary Programs (AP3), School District Pre-elementary Programs, and Private Pre-elementary Programs. The services were identified in the inventory by: program type, the number and ages of children served and, when available, capacity.

There have been three phases of the inventory to date: Early Care and Learning Program Inventory (June 2011) - 394 communities in 53 school districts across 9 program types; Regional Analysis (Fall/Winter 2011-2012) - regional numbers and percentages of children participating in programs by program type as compared to statewide numbers; and Community Analysis (Winter/Spring 2011-2012) - numbers and percentages of children who participate in these programs by community; distribution by program type of all children participating in those programs; and the threshold has been for communities of 2000 or more comparing enrollment and distribution with the aggregate and regional and state data.

[8:16:43 AM](#)

MS. BERGLUND provided an image of the resources directory, available online. She said it is an interactive site that allows parents and community members to access information about the availability of programs and services in their areas. Screen icons can be selected, which enable the user to learn more about an area or specific programs, as well as to make contact for further information. A strategic report is being compiled for reporting to the governor and legislature, which will include: identifying opportunities for, and barriers to, collaboration and coordination of early childhood programs and services; provide recommendations for increasing the overall participation of children in early childhood programs, a unified, statewide early childhood data collection system, a statewide professional development system, and developing and improving high-quality comprehensive early learning standards; and assess the capacity and effectiveness of public and private institutions of higher education for preparing an early childhood workforce. She finished by stating that the council is using existing needs assessments, as well as the Early Care and Learning Inventory, to produce the report that is due June 30, 2012.

[8:19:00 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA asked what percentage of the council is comprised of parents and grandparents.

MS. BERGLUND responded that several of the members are parents, and some are grandparents.

[8:21:11 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FEIGE referred to the seven priorities, and asked if they represent the top seven items being worked on or the seven main thrusts of the organization.

MS. BERGLUND explained that the seven points are purposefully broad, and represent service delivery and system wide goals to work toward.

REPRESENTATIVE FEIGE asked what will be cut from the priority list, considering the inevitability of future funding cuts.

MS. BERGLUND replied that research demonstrates how investing in early childhood education, provides a strong return by producing a responsible member of society. She said she would consider a means for continued, increased investment in early childhood, rather than cutting services.

[8:24:20 AM](#)

SENATOR DAVIS asked for elaboration on the progress points being reported. Also, she inquired what the state participation and financial contributions have been to the progress being made.

CYNDY CURRAN, Director, Division of Teaching and Learning Support, Department of Education and Early Development (EED), answered that the state council members are responsible for their own costs to attend the meetings, and perform. Funding was available to contract out the inventory project, and existing department technicians created the on-line accessible format; on request of the governor. She explained that EED funding has not been directly impacted.

SENATOR DAVIS inquired about the original funding source.

MS. CURRAN deferred.

[8:26:44 AM](#)

PAUL SUGAR, Head Start/Parent Involvement, Teaching and Learning Support, Department of Education and Early Development (EED), responded that the funding for the inventory projects was drawn from the Head Start program, comprised of federal dollars and some general funds from the state.

[8:27:15 AM](#)

SENATOR DAVIS asked about the progress of the rating system and how close it is to being implemented.

MS. BERGLUND said a draft plan was initially developed and is currently being revised by an active committee; an implementation plan and timeline will be included in the revision.

SENATOR DAVIS noted that expansion calls for an additional 500 youths, children, and families, and queried how many are currently being served.

MS. BERGLUND responded that the intent of the recommendation was to identify the current number and track the increases in services. She said one of the action steps is to complete that information.

[8:28:50 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON referred to priority 4, which is to align with k-12 standards, and asked whether the council is considering early childhood education in a strictly academic sense.

MS. BERGLUND conveyed that early learning guidelines exist for child development from birth to age five, and then the K-12 standards are in place. The council focuses on child development from birth to age eight, and aligning these standards is what is being undertaken, in the academic as well as social emotional realms.

[8:30:18 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON cited the research indicating the need for sufficient Vitamin D, in the northern climes. Vitamin D has been identified as an integral supplement to ward off a variety of health issues, including dental carries. He asked whether

preventive health issues, such as this, are being brought to the fore.

8:31:18 AM

SHIRLEY PITZ, Manager, Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems, Prevention Programs, Office of Children's Services, Department of Health & Social Services (DHSS), as division manager of a department that is a co-facilitator of the council, responded that the need for Vitamin D is not part of the core program. However, the approach being taken is to cultivate medical home access for families, which will provide consistent medical care. She indicated that the health care provider would then be responsible for promoting preventive medical measures.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON pointed out that the legislature unanimously adopted a joint resolution to support health models for disease prevention. He stressed that the legislative expectation would be to see the department take active measures for implementation of applicable models. The intent of the resolution is for disease prevention to be a state focus, and not left as a hope that doctors might take up the cause. He said his office would provide the council with detailed information on early childhood preventative health topics.

8:33:33 AM

SENATOR STEVENS noted that the councils report will be available in five months, including the information on a data collection system. He said this is crucial information, and asked whether the council is collecting new, or assembling existing data, and what the data is expected to indicate. Further, he requested that the information be made available as soon as possible.

MS. CURRAN replied that existing needs assessments are being assembled for the report, which will provide information on what is occurring system wide, throughout the state regarding early childhood; it will paint a broad picture of the initiatives that are going forward. Data results will be reported to the governor at the end of the fiscal year, June 30, 2012.

8:35:18 AM

CO-CHAIR THOMAS requested that any ineffective programs be reported, as well, to allow the legislature to improve efficiency. Further, he asked that the details of the

priorities reported on today, versus a broad stroke report, be provided.

CO-CHAIR MEYER underscored the need to identify which programs are the most effective.

Presentation: **Presentation: State Intervention in Schools**

[8:38:26 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR MEYER announced that the final order of business would be a presentation on State Intervention in Schools.

[8:38:40 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK stressed that many schools in Alaska need help to be in compliance with the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Some Alaskan schools are in intervention status, and, he reported, that every district in the nation will be out of compliance by 2014. Citing the importance of high standards and the need for rigor in the classroom, he opined that uniformly high expectations can be difficult to attain, and a practical approach is important. The intervention model currently being used by Department of Education and Early Development (EED), he opined, is punitive and needs to become cooperative. With that in mind, he reported how work was undertaken during the legislative interim to improve the situation, but without a satisfactory outcome. Five districts have come under intervention: Yukon Flats, Lower Yukon, Yukon/Koyukuk, Northwest Arctic, and Yupiit; the Northwest Arctic and Yukon/Koyukuk have since been released leaving three involved in the process. He suggested that it would be impossible to understand intervention without first understanding the foundational elements of Alaska's educational system, and the history of how it has evolved. Integral to the elements that impact Alaska's intervention model are the history of the development of Rural Education Attendance Areas (REAA's), the introduction of NCLB, and the two prominent legal cases Moore, et al. v. State of Alaska, 3AN-04-9756 CI, (2010), and Kasayulie v. State of Alaska, 3AN-97-3782 CI, (1999). Indicating the bullet points, contained in the committee packet handout and slide presentation, he explained that in 1905 two educational systems existed: territorial and federal. By 1951, a shift from the federal, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), system to the territorial system began, as a result of the Johnson-O'Malley Act of 1934. The curriculum used in the BIA schools was the standard used in the Lower 48, and imposed on the rural village

children of Alaska. A system for state operated schools (SOS) was created in 1971, but only four were in rural settings. This was also the year that Representative Dick arrived in the village of Lime. As an example of how things were handled prior to the REAA system, he described how Lime's first school was established. Lime had 16 school children, and despite local pleas, the children were flown each fall to McGrath, where they were taken into houses and attended school. The system was difficult on the families involved, having their children away for an extended time, as well as on the students living away from their village. Through continued efforts Lime received its first teacher, a gentleman from California, who was not familiar with the area or Native culture. An existing 20'X24' building served as the school house, and doubled as the teacher's residence. It was outfitted with wooden blocks for furniture and minimal teaching supplies. Books were gleaned from Stony River village, not supplied by the state, as there was little or no infrastructure, or other support, afforded the effort. He said that the village members considered this an unspoken message that the school was expected to fail. With failure, the state could then reinstitute the expedient system of relocating students to McGrath for the school year; a consolidation of teaching effort. However, the Lime teacher persevered through the year, the community did not give-up, and response was eventually received from the state in the form of a new one room facility, at a budgeted cost of approximately \$170,000. Following completion of the building, some funds remained, and the village made a request to have an additional room added, but the advice was not taken up by the state officials. Instead the funds were spent on upgraded roofing materials. Although the village had no design influence regarding the construction, he recalled that general gratitude for a new structure was evident. The Lime school funding was authorized, during the transition year of 1975 under the auspices of the Alaska Unorganized Borough School District (AUBSD), which operated for one year and served to usher in the REAA's. Two lawsuits were the impetus for change. The initial lawsuit, Molly Hootch, et al., Plaintiffs, vs. Alaska State Operated School System, et al., Defendants (1972), was settled by decree under the follow-up suit Anna Tobeluk, et al., Plaintiffs, vs. Marshall Lind, et al., Defendants, (1976). The court required the state to act, and, in 1976, 21 REAA's were developed. He pointed out that in 1985 the BIA discontinued funding schools in Alaska. This was also the year that the Yupiit School District came into being comprised of Akiak, Akiachak, and Tuluksak. The implementation of the new system brought an element of excitement and adjustment to the area, as well as positive and negative

changes. New teachers were brought in, new ideas were spawned with emphasis on teaching students within a familiar frame of reference, and, he reported, he authored a book at that time, VILLAGE SCIENCE; an educational reference to assist teachers in developing curriculum based on a frame of reference relevant to a students' setting. However, due to the new independence and autonomy, a level of accountability was lost, and, he opined, some superintendents took advantage of the new found power; effectively lording over the newly established school boards. Initially, the school boards did not have a clear understanding of function. He said it took about 12 years for the school boards to become effective as the developers of policy and procedures, establish mission statements, and to set goals. The school boards maintain stability within the community, throughout the upheaval of administrative changes. By 1988 it was apparent that the school boards could be helped through training, and with that training they were able to act appropriately and responsibly. He interjected that 1988 was also the year that Carl Rose became a figure in Alaskan education. In 1991, Governor Walter Hickel directed then Commissioner of Education, Jerry Covey, to develop a plan for improvement of state schools, and to include content standards. From slide five, he paraphrased from the language which read [original punctuation provided]:

During the early years of REAA's, we discovered that school districts need accountability. During more recent years, we have also discovered that total authority cannot be given to DEED. The Department also needs accountability.

8:49:45 AM

CHAIR DICK summarized the situation, paraphrasing from slide 6, language which read [original punctuation provided]:

DEED strategies are not working in Yupiit and other intervention districts.

Test scores have gone down in Yupiit in the past three years.

The frustration level on the ground is high.

DEED personnel have brought division between the local administration and teachers.

Teacher turnover is high, so professional development brings only short term benefit.

Simple requests for cooperation have been ignored.

Judge Gleason in the Moore Case: Called for a trustee to oversee the workings of the district [and] insisted, over fifty times, on cooperation and collaboration.

DEED installed a trustee that has not been able to work with the district, yet DEED continues to ignore requests for collaboration and cooperation by the district.

[8:52:05 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK continued paraphrasing, from slide 7, to present the history of school board relationships [original punctuation provided]:

Originally, the Alaska State Legislature was the school board for the REAAs.

In 1975 the Alaska Legislature delegated that authority to an elected school board of each REAA district, providing local control and oversight for local schools.

Each REAA school has an advisory school board that makes recommendations to the REAA Board.

The State of Alaska has a Board of Education to whom the Department of Education answers.

[8:52:54 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK provided a slide to indicate where the nine State of Alaska Board of Education members live. The members are intelligent, concerned, dedicated, and hardworking individuals; however, he pointed out, not a single member resides in any of the three intervention districts. He opined that this equates to a lack of firsthand knowledge and understanding of the situation.

[8:54:10 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK said the inception of NCLB required states to develop a timeline, establishing how each district would reach proficiency standards by the year 2014. State education departments were required to create a method and means to chart annual yearly progress (AYP) within a district. He stressed, "The point is, the state got to choose the pathway by which compliance with proficiency would occur." All the states were allowed to choose what tests would be administered, define proficient, and graph the progress achieved. Alaska's students are administered proficiency tests in grades 3-8, and again in high school.

[8:55:26 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK opined that, although NCLB has positive and negative aspects, the most important message it carries is "if what [it is] you're doing isn't working, do something different." He provided a timeline and description of what occurs when AYP, to meet NCLB, standards are not met in a district, and included some observations on the process: Year 1, a notification is received [by the district] from the department; Year 2, students are allowed to select and transfer to another school to better meet individual needs - not a realistic option in Alaska, due to the rural locale of many schools; Year 3, students can request that the district provide free tutoring - districts nationwide have indicated a tutoring request rate of less than 15 percent; Year 4, corrective action is taken and changes to staff or curriculum may be required - representing ascending levels of severity to fix the situation; Year 5, restructuring will occur and the district must choose from five options, which are: 1) convert the facility to a charter school, 2) replace the principal and staff, 3) turn the school over to private management, 4) turn the school over to the state, or 5) other restructuring. The Alaskan districts under intervention have chosen option 5. He reasserted that by the year 2014, no district in the nation will be in compliance with NCLB, as every district will have at least one student whose academic challenges will cause the failure. He said:

There is a real and deep fear in Alaska, even among some of the best school districts that, as 2014 approaches, the department will use its authority to intervene and to interfere with the local school budget.

CHAIR DICK reported that a superintendent, with one of the highest performing schools, in Alaska, has requested petitioning

for exemption from NCLB to avoid the consequences of state intervention. Other superintendents have expressed a similar concern, he said.

[8:58:20 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK summarized the previously mentioned lawsuits, Kasayulie and Moore. Through Kasayulie the court established that the state's method of funding capital projects for education violates the education clause and the equal protection clause of the Alaska State Constitution and Title VI of the Federal Civil Rights Act of 1964. Kasayulie is about buildings. He interjected concern for the current school building in Huslia, which is in desperate need of repair, and avowed that he would not permit his own child to enter the building. Under Moore the state was found in violation of the education clause, failing to identify the schools that are not providing children a meaningful opportunity and failing to demonstrate a concerted effort to remedy the situation. Citizens for the Educational Advancement of Alaska's Children (CEAAC), was the group that brought this case to light. He emphasized that Moore is about instruction.

[9:00:37 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK referred to slide 12, to highlight the defendant and plaintiff platforms of the Moore case. He related [original punctuation provided]:

[The] State said, 'You wanted and got local control, with the REAA's. Now you want us to fix your problem?' 'We have spent a tremendous amount of money, approximately \$1 million, on this case, and that money could have gone to instruction.'

CEAAC said, 'Every child, both urban and rural has a right to a quality education in preparation for higher education or a meaningful career of choice. The State has a role in insuring that teachers are prepared, and districts receive the support they need to provide that education.' 'If you had worked with us in the beginning, we would not have needed a court case.'

CHAIR DICK emphasized that the educational atmosphere has been highly toxic with emotion and contention; particularly regarding Moore. Educational issues have gone to court that should have

been settled in-house, and which have caused an undercurrent for subsequent arguments, he suggested.

9:01:47 AM

CHAIR DICK reported that concern exists regarding the 2010 disbursement of \$7 million, appropriated by the legislature for education. He stated his understanding that, despite three districts undergoing intervention, over \$4 million was reported to have been returned to the public school fund. Finally, he said focus has been brought regarding the appointment of a trustee, Darrel Sanborn, to the Yupiit district. Highly regarded as an exceptional, experienced educator, Mr. Sanborn has been identified in the district as the icon of departmental authority, earns \$193,000 annually, and is present in the area for 10-14 days a month. Chair Dick referred to the Alaska State System of Support (SSOS) operating manual, available in the committee packet, and suggested that EED has not followed its own procedures for intervention, particularly in the Yupiit district. He reported that, having reviewed the manual, he posed a number of questions to the department and correspondence ensued, but did not bring about a satisfactory outcome. Positive support strategies need to be offered to districts in need. The SSOS sets forth six domains, which are: curriculum, assessment, instruction, professional development, leadership, and a supportive learning environment. These are important areas to be focused on by the overseers of education, he said. However, the department does not appear to be following the manual, and to illustrate the fact he identified ten elements for EED to consider, which are: 1) alignment of curriculum to standards, 2) accurate assessment, 3) educational and financial plans, 4) expertise through coaches, 5) good instructional techniques, 6) supportive learning environment, 7) parent involvement, 8) good professional development, 9) visionary leadership, and 10) instructional strategies that are aligned to curriculum and address the needs of diverse learners. He stressed that these points have been identified in order to generate dialogue, and said:

I'm hoping ... I will be able to demonstrate ... how I believe the department has not followed its own manual for the best interest of intervention districts. ... I'm going to make positive suggestions for action in intervention districts that must include collaboration and cooperation. ... I'd love to point out what's wrong and how to fix it; aligning our mission, methodology and metric in all of Alaska's schools.

CHAIR DICK praised the dedicated teachers and superintendents, for the efforts that are being made to bring education to children in Alaska. He opined that the answer to an effective education is simplicity. He paraphrased from the final slide, which read [original punctuation provided]:

Just as tone of voice is important in interpersonal communication, the "Spirit" in which intervention is carried out is critical in dealing with school districts that need help.

[9:06:42 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR MEYER indicated that the presentations today will provide good background for the House and Senate education committees, as these issues are a focus for the session.

[9:07:58 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA harkened to the rich history that the culture of the Alaska Native holds, how it has spanned centuries and continues to this day. The Native populations have educated themselves to endure life in one of the harshest environments on earth. She underscored that this represents a priceless human resource to learn from, and draw upon, and reminded the committee that Alaska does not only offer an abundance of natural resources.

CHAIR DICK agreed, and said it is important to respect the frame of reference of the people who are receiving the education. It is expected that research stands behind an educational approach, however, when he inquired about research regarding the education of Alaska's indigenous people, he discovered that apparently none exists. For 40 years, he maintained, these Alaskans have been expressing a need, and by addressing that need, and delivering a relevant education, he opined that there will not be a need for intervention.

[9:10:57 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR MEYER returned the gavel to Chair Dick.

The committee took an at-ease from 9:10 a.m. to 9:12 a.m.

[9:12:54 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON referred to slide 14, indicated the highlighted points, and asked if there was a reason for the color coding.

CHAIR DICK responded that his intent was to elaborate further on the highlighted points, had time allowed.

[9:14:07 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA reported that on a recent tour of the Northway School, it was pointed out to her that annual gatherings of Native teachers, which at one time occurred, are no longer funded. Gatherings to support, promote, and cultivate Native teachers is important, she opined. Additionally, along the Yukon, some of the principals are local, bringing an understanding of the area that might otherwise be lost. She stressed the importance of hiring indigenous educators, to fully serve the rural communities.

[9:17:51 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK offered his view that cultural standards of education, adopted by EED, are primarily treated in an ornamental, and perhaps optional, manner rather than being mandatory and incorporated into the daily life of the student. Further, the rural content coaches are often unable to relate content to the culture on an integral level and, thus, provide every student with the relevant education which they deserve. He reported how brain research now indicates that when a child receives a fragmented education, and is not able to connect the fragment to a relevant frame of reference, it becomes an obstruction to learning. He opined that boulders are being placed in the road for some Alaskan students, and it happens in both urban and rural schools. However, instruction can be brought with relevancy in every subject while maintaining high educational standards.

[9:20:30 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON interjected how it has been said that education is broken throughout our nation. A problem is apparent when students arrive at university and are required to take remedial classes; representing a waste of time and money. She urged the need for educational reform, and implored the committee to expect, and be prepared to resist, the pushback which will arise inherent to the changes that must occur.

[9:22:17 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK said that the department is asking the districts to align the local curriculum with the educational standards, and rightfully so. However, the standards must first be aligned with reality, or a relevant education cannot be manifest. If a student harbors the continuous question of, "what do I need this for," educational disconnect will continue. The Board of Education is currently taking testimony on the educational standards, however, he said, the problem resides in how the standards were initially derived. He stressed the need to have the standards vetted by people who are connected to the cultural realities existing for the students.

[9:23:43 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON provided a personal anecdote of having taken the cultural orientation classes that were offered at one time. The instruction was focused on how to accept the different culture that a new teacher entering Alaska must embrace, rather than direction on how to teach or work with the culture. She stressed the need for a relevant education that relates to whatever location a student inhabits; throughout the grade levels.

[9:25:04 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK provided an anecdote to underscore how a fatalistic aspect entered the Native culture when the great plague of 1919-1920 swept the state; effectively diminishing the ability to establish foresight and maintain hope throughout the Native communities. In order for Native people to succeed, students must be taught to develop and carry a personal vision for the future. The best sources for this teaching are the elders of the communities. When a teacher understands the facets of the culture, such as this example, he opined, shifts will occur and significant change will manifest.

[9:29:53 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 9:29 a.m. to 9:31 a.m.

[9:31:23 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON referred to the inventory project, mentioned in the overview, and asked if and how the programs are

being compared; by effectiveness and output, or simply a listing of the different programs occurring across the state.

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA asked whether the council is considering the cultural issues mentioned by Representative Wilson, and Chair Dick; is there a way to address this in an early childhood, or home, setting.

[9:33:02 AM](#)

DEE FOSTER, Co-chair, Health and Mental Health Committee, Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council, as a director of a mental health center that serves children and families, reported that childhood trauma is tremendous in Alaska. The center serves approximately 500 severely emotionally disturbed children each year, and about 75 percent of those are under the age of 12; many are 5 and under. She said the premise of the council is that a child is not ready to learn until they are emotionally stable enough to attend and focus. It is understood that the family must be involved along with the professionals that support the child.

[9:34:35 AM](#)

SHIRLEY PITZ, Co-chair, Health and Mental Health Committee, Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council, added that one of the important aspects of the early childhood programs, such as Parents as Teacher, Head Start, and Imagination Library, is how the facilitators work closely with the families to help children get a good start. She indicated that not all parents choose to participate in the programs offered.

[9:35:26 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON asked whether teachers receive direction specific to childhood trauma. She provided an example of how a child who has experienced trauma, based on having a parent who routinely arrives home and opens the door in a drunken rage, would find it unsettling, unsafe, and perhaps display an inability to focus, if seated near the classroom door. A teacher would need to be aware how to effectively support a child who has been traumatized.

MS. FOSTER indicated that a network of educational support exists, as well as a well-funded program, which addresses these issues and is directed to care providers/teachers to provide an understanding of how to identify behavior patterns and work with

traumatized children. Further, she underscored how critical early childhood mental health is to healthy development, and that it is a specialized field in which a work force is still in a formative state.

[9:38:26 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA agreed that it is important to have mental health educated professionals available; however, personal experience is also an important aspect for understanding. She asked if there is an effort to bring people from the mental health department into the educational realm.

MS. FOSTER responded that mental health providers are invited into the schools, and have collaborated in the Anchorage, schools for about 11 years.

[9:40:35 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON queried if there are concerted efforts to involve technology systems, in relation to childhood mental health. Given the myriad of technical devices now available, applications could be provided, and offered in a culturally relevant manner; including applications for parents.

MS. FOSTER answered that telemedicine now includes mental health, and is an area that could be expanded in order to serve more people.

MS. PITTZ explained that one method being used, the Early Childhood Mental Health Learning Network, provides a monthly format for otherwise isolated workers to connect with like professionals, via teleconference, as well as annual conferences. The Early Childhood Mental Health Institute is being held in Anchorage, April 11-13, 2012, she said, and invited committee members to attend.

[9:43:41 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON underscored the governor's and legislative expectation that information is effectively utilized, in a proactive manner by the council, to eliminate problems before they occur.

MS. PITTZ explained that the council is addressing the gamut from early intervention to prevention. Two programs are specific to this nature: The Early Childhood Consultation

Project, in which professionals enter ongoing programs to observe early childhood programs and offer assistance on creating a nurturing environment as well as commenting on behaviors displayed; and TACSEI (Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention for Young Children), which trains early childhood professionals how to develop a nurturing safe environment and how to recognize behavioral patterns that indicate a child is at risk and how to intervene appropriately. These are both small programs that could be expanded, she said.

[9:45:40 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON asked if the university incorporates these aspects into the teacher training programs.

MS. PITTZ responded that the council focuses on early childhood educators, but the university has embedded the social and emotional domain into the educational preparation courses.

[9:46:57 AM](#)

PAUL SUGAR, Head Start/Parent Involvement, Teaching and Learning Support, Department of Education and Early Development (EED), EED, in response to Representative Seaton's earlier question, said the inventory project is a multi-phase, multi-dimensional, effort. The project identifies the available programs, and utilizes the latest census information. It is not intended as a project that is focused on outcome specific data on children. The department has worked closely, for some years, with the Head Start programs. He reported that this year the Head Start program has agreed to utilize a common tool to assess the four year olds. It is a nationally developed assessment that can be applied from birth through kindergarten. The assessment tool has 38 objectives which cover the 74 specific goals within the Alaskan early learning guidelines, and meets all the federally stipulated Head Start requirements; providing full alignment. Additionally, two thirds of the state pre-K pilot program uses this tool.

[9:49:21 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FEIGE inquired how the inventory information, and the forthcoming council report, will be disseminated to the public and decision makers; outside of the legislature.

MR. SUGAR answered that will be via the mapping project, also referred to as the Early Childhood Resource Directory. A public

promotional event will be developed, and public interaction, through the website is expected to ensue; unmapped can be added, services no longer available can be deleted. Additionally, health related services will be integrated into the same site, through cooperation with the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS).

[9:50:53 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FEIGE noted that keeping this type of site updated may be a challenge, given the dynamics of the child care profession, and he asked what approach will be used to keep the information current.

MR. SUGAR said it is expected that interaction will occur via the website where communities can provide information to ensure accuracy. Currently the data is being maintained through an existing site manager, at EED.

[9:51:49 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FEIGE inquired about early child care licensing requirements, and suggested that the licensing department would be a source to assist in maintaining current information.

[9:52:43 AM](#)

MR. SUGAR said that child care licensing sources have provided information for the data base, as have the early intervention program, some of the military child care programs, and efforts are being made to connect with tribal child care programs.

[9:53:29 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON remarked that reports are being issued regarding how the benefit of attending a pre-school, and receiving early socialization skill opportunities, manifests in a higher probability for employment as an adult. He asked whether the data will include this type of information, or allow tracking that will provide data on that type of extended basis. He said it would be important to understand the employability that results from early childhood programs.

MR. SUGAR indicated that different types of data are being collected and, as programs continue, the use of a unique identifier number, assigned to each participant should allow further tracking and reporting.

9:56:05 AM

CHAIR DICK announced the upcoming committee meeting.

9:56:41 AM

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:56 a.m.