

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 24, 2012  
8:04 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

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

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

PRESENTATION: KLAWOCK CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

- HEARD

HOUSE BILL NO. 330

"An Act establishing a Joint Legislative Task Force on Education Standards; requiring the Department of Labor and Workforce Development to provide information and resources to the task force; establishing state education standards; amending the authority of the Department of Education and Early Development to adopt education standards; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HB 330

SHORT TITLE: STATE EDUCATION STANDARDS

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) DICK

02/17/12	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/17/12	(H)	EDC, FIN
02/24/12	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106

**WITNESS REGISTER**

RICH CARLSON, Superintendent  
Klawock City School District  
Klawock, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided the presentation of the Klawock City School District.

CHAIR ALAN DICK  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Introduced HB 330 as the prime sponsor.

STEWART MCDONALD, Superintendent  
Kodiak Island School District  
Kodiak, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified by request on HB 330.

GRANT FUNK, Teacher  
Hooper Bay, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 330.

PEGGY COWAN, Superintendent  
North Slope Borough School District  
Barrow, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 330.

JOE BANGHART, Superintendent  
Denali Borough School District  
Healy, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of HB 330.

DR. CHIP MCMILLAN, PhD, Assistant Professor  
University of Alaska Southeast  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified on HB 330.

MIKE HANLEY, Commissioner  
Department of Education and Early Development (EED)  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified on HB 330.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[8:04:41 AM](#)

**CHAIR ALAN DICK** called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:04 a.m. Representatives Dick, Kawasaki, Seaton, and Feige were present at the call to order. Representatives P. Wilson and Pruitt arrived as the meeting was in progress. Representative Cissna attended via teleconference.

**Presentation: Klawock City School District**

[8:05:21 AM](#)

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

[8:06:28 AM](#)

RICH CARLSON, Superintendent, Klawock City School District, began the presentation with a geographic and demographic outline. The district is located on Prince of Wales Island, with a total population of about 850 primarily Alaska Native Tlingit, in the Southeast Region of Alaska. Klawock is the smallest single site district, with a k-12 enrollment of 136. The staff is comprised of 18 certified and 14.5 classified employees. He termed the district as being impoverished, with 73 percent of the students eligible to receive a free or reduced school lunch. Additionally, 19 percent of the students are classified as special needs. He presented the mission statement indicating that it holds the belief of providing a well-rounded education, with a focus on educating the whole child toward being a productive member of the community. The administration is dedicated to academic achievement, while also presenting students with a hands-on relevant education. In that endeavor, the mission statement is the driving force behind every program, and school sponsored activity.

[8:09:28 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON asked about the source of the mission statement, and whether the community is involved in supporting the mission goals.

MR. CARLSON responded that it was developed about nine years ago through a collaborative process that included community members, district staff, and the school board. Following a number of revisions, it has become an enlivened, important aspect of the Klawock educational system.

[8:11:00 AM](#)

MR. CARLSON reported that the average yearly progress (AYP) requirement has been achieved in eight out of the last nine years; the dropout rate was zero last school year, 2010-11 and is generally low; attendance rates are high, over 90 percent, which is above the state average; and the graduation rate is always high, over 90 percent. Among accomplishments of the district, he said that 100 percent of the teachers meet the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) definition for highly qualified. Also, Klawock was named among "America's Best High Schools" for 2009, by U.S. News and World Reports magazine. The district has a teacher turnover rate of less than 10 percent, nearing zero, and occurs primarily when someone retires. Student accomplishments include athletic championships in regional and state competitions. Also, the student council has received the national Student Council Award of Excellence, as well as other distinctions. He said one of the unique aspects of the district is the focus on providing a real world experience by addressing soft skill acumen as well as acquired abilities for job application. Soft skills represent the work ethic necessary to hold a position of responsibility. The high school teachers are required to base 10 percent of a student's grade on employability skills using a matrix specifically established for this purpose, which includes: attendance, punctuality, being prepared, time on-task, respect, cooperation, teamwork, and productivity. In addition, he said that Klawock offers an extensive variety of extra-curricular activities, which include: academic decathlon, baseball/softball, basketball, battle of the books, cross country, band/choir, Native arts, spelling bee, student council, volleyball, and wrestling.

[8:14:46 AM](#)

MR. CARLSON described the weekly communication and recognition assemblies, which are held every Monday morning for the 7-12 grade students and faculty, providing an overview of the coming week's activities and events. He stressed that an important aspect of these gatherings is the recognition that is given to each student for the past week's accomplishments. Each individual is honored for an achievement, and birthdays are celebrated. The students and faculty of the k-6 classes have a similar gathering on Friday mornings. These informal assemblies connect everyone into the everyday, integral aspects of the school. Additionally, the students gain a sense of ownership, which helps to create a generally positive school atmosphere. Regarding the educational application of technology, he said

that Klawock was one of the first schools to participate in the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB) one-to-one program [through the Consortium for Digital Learning], and today every student in grades 1-12 has a personal laptop computer. The kindergarten students have easy access to iPads in the classroom. Mr. Carlson said that the art program is consistent with the mission statement, and stated his belief that the district has one of the premier Native Arts programs in the state; led by Jon Rowan, a renowned wood carver.

8:17:05 AM

MR. CARLSON relayed that Klawock has a long history of providing a quality vocational education program. The program focuses not only on the development of the technical skills, but also on work ethic, cooperation, and pride in what is accomplished. Noting faculty development, he explained that the district has a number of committee meetings, which are conducted once a month on a Saturday, so as not to interfere with the instructional day. A variety of topics may be taken up such as technology, school improvement, staff development, and career/technical education. The meetings are in depth, beginning at 9:00 a.m., continuing through a working lunch time, and adjourning at 3:00 p.m. During the past 11 years, this approach has proven to be extremely successful, and lends an integrated approach to all facets of education. He said that, similar to other single site schools, the building doubles as a community center, hosting weddings, funerals, community meetings, and basketball. Finally, he provided the challenges that the district faces, beginning with the loss of federal funding from the Secure Reserve School Act (Forest Receipts) and the expected flat funding from the state. The anticipated deficit will cause a serious reduction in staff, and preparations are being made for a 20-25 percent cut in the teaching staff. Also, the waning economy is causing families to move resulting in a declining enrollment. Lastly, keeping up with the state and federal regulations is burdensome. Despite these challenges, he said that the district is proud of the schools accomplishments, and committed to continued improvement. Finishing, he said he has taught in rural Alaska for 31 years, and the progress in Alaska's educational system has been tremendous during his tenure. However, the future appears to be somewhat devastating with the program cuts that are imminent. Declining oil funds contribute to this, but he said the future is the children and that investment needs to be a priority.

8:23:38 AM

CHAIR DICK asked whether the district contracts to Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC) for any services.

MR. CARLSON responded yes, for special education, preventive maintenance, as well as a significant number of special contracts. He stressed that without SEARHC the district would not be able to provide the current level of services.

[8:24:24 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON referred to the flat funding, and asked why it presents some schools with more of a challenge than it does other schools. Additionally, she queried whether other programs were cut in order to maintain the vocational programs that are offered.

MR. CARLSON replied that programs have not yet been cut, but this year will be the breaking point. Further, he said that the flat funding has allowed a maintenance level of services to continue, but will no longer be enough to cover inflationary costs; thus placing programs and positions on the line.

[8:26:58 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FEIGE asked what other funding sources are available to support the district.

MR. CARLSON indicated that federal impact aid and city contributions are received. He explained that the federal funds are received via the Secure School Rules, which allows the city to tally the impact aid as part of the local contribution. When the impact aid is not provided, the local funding is significantly reduced and the state foundation formula, in turn, is reduced. The impact to the district, in losing Secure School Rules contributions, compounds to a loss of about \$425,000, from a \$3 million budget.

[8:29:01 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KAWASAKI questioned how much of the 20-25 percent cut in classified staff is attributable to the loss of federal receipts, due to program expansion, or from the decline in enrollment.

MR. CARLSON answered that it is primarily due to the loss of the federal Forest Receipts, and that none can be attributed to the declining enrollment, or to new/bolstered programs.

REPRESENTATIVE KAWASAKI mentioned that a bill has been introduced to increase the base student allocation (BSA) and asked what type of impact it might have, and if it passes whether cuts would still be necessary.

MR. CARLSON noted that passage of SB 171 will be helpful; however, receiving a \$100.00 increase on the BSA is a minimal amount considering the low number of students in the district. The BSA increase would provide the district with about \$34,000, when the deficit is closer to \$400,000.

[8:32:22 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON acknowledged the successes that the district has attained, the successful Saturday committee meetings, and other innovative actions that have been implemented. He asked whether the Alaska Performance Scholarship is a goal for the students.

MR. CARLSON answered yes; however, because of the district's size, courses need to be taken on line, which creates some problems including: high costs, ineffective delivery methods, and not as robust as the students require.

### **HB 330-STATE EDUCATION STANDARDS**

[8:35:04 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 330, "An Act establishing a Joint Legislative Task Force on Education Standards; requiring the Department of Labor and Workforce Development to provide information and resources to the task force; establishing state education standards; amending the authority of the Department of Education and Early Development to adopt education standards; and providing for an effective date."

[8:36:43 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:36 a.m. to 8:37 a.m.

[Chair Dick passed the gavel to Representative Pruitt.]

[8:37:32 AM](#)

CHAIR ALAN DICK, Alaska State Legislature, speaking as the prime sponsor, introduced HB 330 paraphrasing from the sponsor statement, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

The State educational content and performance standards are the foundation of our educational system. Upon them are built a massive superstructure:

The writing of the Grade Level Expectations (GLE's);

The choice of expensive curricula in 53 different districts;

Thousands of teacher hours aligning new curricula to the new standards;

Hundreds of thousands of dollars of professional development;

Millions of dollars of new assessment tools;

Millions of dollars using those tools annually (\$7.5M/yr over a six-year period);

Over \$1.2B annual funding supporting the system driven by the new standards; and

The quality of instruction for over 130,000 students.

The cost-to-date of producing the standards the Department of Education & Early Development is proposing for adoption has been \$270,886. The standards were created in eight separate meetings attended by a sliver of stakeholders. The superstructure built upon them as well as annual maintenance will cost multiple billions of dollars and directly impact every facet of instruction statewide.

My research has clearly shown that the proposed standards have not been properly vetted by industry and those involved in the career destinations of our students. All curriculum presented to students should have a clear pathway to potential careers.

Educational funding and student performance are under continual intense scrutiny. These subjects are the source of great consternation for parents, educators and policy makers. It only makes sense that the foundation of our educational system for the next six-year cycle should be of the highest quality and directed at fulfilling our mission statements.

The purpose of this bill is to gather a representative working group that will develop a process by which the standards are vetted. Once the vetting process is developed, it will be available for all future cycles of standards creation and modification.

With well-vetted standards, we can be confident that the billions of dollars spent over the next six-year cycle will bring the best result possible. We can also be confident that we are creating a clear pathway for intelligent, productive and engaged young people to become successful at whatever endeavor they choose. To do less would be irresponsible.

[8:40:57 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK stated that it would be prudent to review a report on American education, and consider the need to debunk a long held myth regarding educational standards. To review three findings, he directed attention to the committee packet document titled "The 2012 Brown Center Report on American Education: How Well Are American Students Learning?", distributed by the Brown Center on Education Policy at Brookings, page 4 and paraphrased sections from the synopsis, which read [original punctuation provided]:

Data on the effects of those standards are analyzed to produce three findings. 1) The quality of state standards, as indicated by the well-known ratings from the Fordham Foundation, is not related to state achievement. 2) The rigor of state standards, as measured by how high states place the cut point for students to be deemed proficient, is also unrelated to achievement. 3) The ability of standards to reduce variation in achievement, in other words to reduce differences in achievement, is also weak.

[8:44:31 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK stressed that standards do not act as an educational vacuum cleaner, thus, raising the standards does not change assessment results; however, teacher expectations will result in scholastic improvement. He said:

Before the state standard and educational performance standards are adopted, and the grade level expectations (GLEs), the following should occur: The legislature will assemble a task force that will create a process by which Alaskan state educational standards have been properly vetted by representatives of major career paths of a high school graduate. The legislature will appoint a task force. On that task force would be a member from the house, member from the senate, representative from the Department of Labor [and Workforce Development] (DOLWD), representative from the Department of Education [and Early Development] (EED), representative from small business enterprise, representative from subsistence lifestyle, representative from parenting and homemaking, and three representatives chosen by DOLWD to represent major career destinations of a high school graduate.

CHAIR DICK noted that a university representative and school superintendents should be included on the list of task force members, and welcomed an amendment to correct the omission. He continued:

The assignment of the task force would be [to] develop a process by which state education standards are vetted to make sure that they're preparing students for higher education, as well as career paths and real life experiences. I would like to mention that higher education itself is changing rapidly. Knowledge and skills taught to prepare students for college and universities will consider the current higher educational trends and prepare students for what will be, not what is or was. It's my opinion [that] we're preparing students for what was.

[8:46:31 AM](#)

STEWART MCDONALD, Superintendent, Kodiak Island School District, said that the district has invested hundreds of thousands of dollars on adoption and maintenance of the current Alaska content standards; an expensive and time consuming focal point.

The costs include: required modifications and alignments, teacher training and retraining, assessment test changes utilizing outside coordinators, necessary curricular upgrades attended to by specialists, and software upgrades to change grading practices. He stressed that the district makes every attempt to ensure that standards and measurements are being maintained; however, capacity for response has been limited in the past year due to budget shortfalls, and any change at this point may not be able to be addressed; leaving the district out of synchronization with best practices of education. He said that federal demands need to be met, and although recourse for compliance is allowed, applying for appropriate waivers has become difficult. In Kodiak, the bar has been raised and the district has been able to stay ahead of the curve regarding best practices, but the push from Washington, D.C., is creating a hardship. Stressing how changes in the standards are a budgetary burden, he said:

I'm asking for Alaska to take a stand, move slow, fund the changes, get it right before investing in another test, because, I can tell you right now, most schools in the state will simply not have the time, money, or resources, ... to realign their curriculum again, train their staff again, and develop those local formative assessments again, and create the confidence in their teachers again, that this stuff matters and connects to kids learning. Every change has an impact. It's imperative that these changes are made with long term planning, long term funding, and a solid realistic understanding of the economics of education. Give us a fighting chance to make sustainable adjustments for sustainable results.

[8:53:11 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON queried:

Are you asking to not implement the standards that were developed through the process that's taken place over the last couple years; and are you asking to implement a new regime that would be a new adoption of standards that would be more geared to career pathways, that this bill calls for; or are you asking not to go through a new re-evaluation from a different aspect of standards that this bill calls for.

MR. MCDONALD responded that the ideal would be for school districts to be given time to work with a set of standards that create predictability within the measurement assessments and that result in a recognized success mark applicable to whatever path a student may choose. The department is working to comply with a federal requirement which, he opined, will probably not result in the described ideal. He suggested a compromise that would allow the state to comply with national requirements, in order to preserve federal funding, while engaging in an appropriate vetting process to develop meaningful standards, and remaining mindful of the financial impacts to each district.

8:56:04 AM

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON asked for the superintendent's perspective on the effectiveness of the current state standards, whether they should be retained, and if they are relevant for educating today's students.

MR. MCDONALD explained that measured learning requires a stationary target, and continual changes in the teaching/assessment system creates a loss of predictability indicators, as well as a loss of the existing knowledge based on past practices and behaviors. Regarding the viability of the existing standards, he said, "Do they have holes, of course, the answer is yes." He said standards are designed to teach measurable learned knowledge, not necessarily to assess whether a student will, or how they might, apply the knowledge; holes exist in the system. However, in Kodiak, the district works diligently to fill in the holes, based on a constant measurement. Predictability is lost in a changing landscape, which means the holes cannot be located and filled. He opined that the federal common core standards may not meet the ideal, and there may never be a perfect system, but a constant measurement would be helpful.

9:01:53 AM

GRANT FUNK, Teacher, testified in support of HB 330, paraphrasing from a prepared statement, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

I have lived in Western Alaska for nearly 20 years and in the village of Hooper Bay for the past 13 years. I have raised 5 of our 6 children in this region. Several of our children are currently raising their families in Western Alaska. My kids have had the best

of both the public school system as well as a homeschool education. I am an Emergency Medical Instructor as well as an Aviation Instructor. I have volunteered in the local school teaching these skills for 10 years as well as teaching aviation to the middle school and high school students full time for two years. I currently teach an after school aviation class as well as direct a local teen center. Overall, I have been involved in education on various levels for 26 years. I am an Advisory School Board member. I am also the 2012 Alaska Air Carriers Association Community Service Award winner for my work in aviation education in our community.

I am requesting today that the State take the necessary time to provide educational standards that lay the foundation for the future success of all students. We have entered a technological age that has presented new opportunities and challenges for this generation. Their foundational years in elementary, middle school and high school need to be the trailhead for a successful future.

We have much cultural and geographical diversity. That diversity should be reflected in the state educational standards. This diversity is reflected in my own children. Three of our six kids completed a course of study in college. Two completed technical training. One is still in high school but planning on college. As an educator and as a parent, I want to provide the best avenues of success for my students as individuals. They need a set of standards to act as a guiding boundary into the future they desire to pursue.

With that in mind I would like to request that the new standards take a step in a direction that would eliminate the "one size fits all" approach. We have students that are hoping to go to college following graduation and a greater majority of students that will go into the skilled labor force. There needs to be at least two sets of standards to better prepare these students for productive careers in their areas of interest.

A career technical education track (CTE) would give students the opportunity to learn applicable skills

for jobs that are more readily available in rural Alaska. Aviation, health care, commercial fishing and construction have opportunities that do not require a college degree. There is also a need in this category for small business training as well as classes in small government. College students often leave the rural areas and enter the job markets appropriate to their degree. That leaves others to start the small businesses and sit on the various local councils and boards. The middle and high school education system could go a long way toward preparing students as lifelong learners and leaders in their local communities through a CTE track standard.

One Western Alaska CTE teacher I met with gave me the example of six of his former students. They were hired in various capacities right after high school and are averaging \$40,000 each annual income. These students will not be a part of the welfare system. They will have the opportunity to fund further training or have their employer provide advancement training. They are becoming productive local citizens without a college education.

If there are CTE standards, the system is freed up for a college track set of standards that will challenge and prepare the college bound high school students with advanced math and science classes. The upper level students are often the neglected group in the education process in rural schools. They need guidelines that will provide realistic challenges better preparing them for college studies.

Bringing in a vocational track as well as a college track would not only benefit the student, but the state in the years to come. When a person has a job, they are less likely to wind up on the welfare system or in the court system. At a recent seminar on international business the speaker said, "Worldwide, one of the best things you can do for a person is to give them meaningful work."

That brings me to my final thoughts on plotting the course for the future direction of education in the state. One of our embarrassing statistics as a state is the high suicide rate. Students graduating ill prepared for the job force or even for a subsistence

lifestyle are left to wander the streets of our cities or the rural communities looking for something to do. Hopelessness takes over and lives, that could have made a difference in this world, are lost.

One school teacher, who has also been in Hooper Bay 13 years, told me that she has lost 40 students or former students to suicide or tragic death. Even as I write, our community is again dealing with a suicide of a young man. It takes its toll on families and friends, as well as teachers and staff. The education system suffers as students and teachers are emotionally functioning at less than optimum performance.

The education system is not responsible for the high suicide rate. I do feel, however, that it can go a long way toward prevention by providing standards that allow a student to learn the relevance of an education. Vocational math, applied "hands on" science, and technical reading all connect them to a future with hope of becoming productive. These type of classes give the non-college bound student a reason to succeed in math and science because they understand how it relates to the world they live in.

As an aviation instructor I have had the joy of watching kids connect math to life skills as they calculate take off performance of an aircraft on a flight simulator. Students disinterested in science became consumed by science fair projects that utilized aviation issues. Their eyes were opened to applications of vocational math that encouraged them to learn because it had immediate applications in their world.

In conclusion, I ask the legislature to pass HB 330 allowing time to gain insights from the education industry. In doing so we will prepare a generation with a measure of hope for future jobs that will provide income for their families as well as boost self-confidence and self-reliance. Anything done to improve the family has the potential of decreasing the suicide rates.

[9:09:29 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON asked whether two scholastic tracks, and standards are necessary, or if Mr. Funk is advocating for theme based teaching as the best model for student engagement and education/skill acquisition.

MR. FUNK opined that the standard system eliminates the high achieving students and loses the under achievers. The students that score just below the standard requirement become the focus for improvement in order for a school to obtain safe harbor status. A set of standards that would serve to push college bound students to a higher level of academia are beyond what is necessary for a student interested in developing skills to enter the labor force or technical training. He said development of two sets of standards to address a college track as well as a vocational track would be helpful.

[9:14:19 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON noted that some countries do have two track systems. Further, she suggested that relevant education can be applied to a subsistence lifestyle that would incorporate math and science skills, such as the movement of a targeted animal in relationship to the trajectory of the bullet.

MR. FUNK agreed, and said it would be helpful to have a set of standards to address technical training.

[9:16:43 AM](#)

PEGGY COWAN, Superintendent, North Slope Borough School District, testified in support of HB 330, paraphrasing from a prepared statement, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

I reviewed HB 330: State Standards, Representative Dick's sponsor statement and the material distributed to school districts by the Department of Education and Early Development inviting comment on the current draft of the standards. I agree with Representative Dick's emphasis on the importance of the investment in state standards and their effects on and use by the districts. Our district is in a five year process of comprehensive curriculum development, alignment, integration and mapping and the state standards and grade level expectations are at the heart of rigorous academic content for this curriculum. We are relying on a locally developed Inupiaq Learning Framework for

the relevance and integration of local language, history and culture into our curriculum. We turn to the state standards and grade level expectations for guidance on academics. I also agree with Representative Dick's sponsor statement's emphasis on a thorough vetting process for state standards. The Department of Education and Early Development was right in extending the time between introduction to the State Board of Education and adoption rather than the typical cycle of the next meeting. This is a step in the right direction to allow thorough vetting. As Representative Dick explained industry representatives and employers are important in the review of the standards. Industry and employers are not likely to review the state standards without the state being intentional. As a point of reference, let me summarize the process in the North Slope Borough School District. The district's Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment is reviewing them herself and getting teams within the district to review them and provide recommendations for our district's feedback to the Department of Education and Early Development. These teams are made up primarily of members of our district's own curriculum committees who are guiding the work on our curriculum and are for the most part teachers. We do include what we call 'steering committees' which are made up of parents, businesses and community members in the review of our own curriculum, but we are not including these people in the district's review of the state's standards. I do not know, but expect that the review by others districts is similar, so the district's review of the standards will not elicit industry review. To get that review, the state will need to invite and solicit it intentionally.

[9:20:17 AM](#)

JOE BANGHART, Superintendent, Denali Borough School District, testified in support of HB 330, paraphrasing from a prepared statement, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Over the past fourteen years I have had the opportunity of serving on various standards committees. These committees have always been composed of educators that have volunteered to help

design standards. Our state is fortunate to have these professionals give of valuable time for the process. Our state standards are vital for the continued educational progress of children in Alaska. HB330 would offer the involvement of the Department of Labor and Workforce, Department of Education and Early Development, small business owners, subsistence lifestyle, parents, and three representatives of major career destinations. This type of partnership could be the very foundation that would provide a consistent state network of business, education, parents, and other partners for career technical training, continued high academic standards, and the Department of Labor and Workforce guidance. Our state stands in vital need of this type of Task Force for the vetting of all future educational standards. This Task Force could provide information for resources available across our state. This link will build a firm foundation for future grant potential, partnerships, and the combination of state educational standards in English/language art, mathematics, science, geography, government, history, healthy lifestyles, arts, world languages, technology, and employability. All the consistent and professional work that has been given towards the development of state standards would benefit from this Task Force.

How can we not afford to stop and evaluate our current educational standards and properly align them with clear pathways to successful careers in Alaska. Accountability is best found in the involvement of multiple partners that design not only assessments for each Performance Standard but consider the application of these skills into actual practice. Accountability measures in this process would include academic growth and employment skills and successful job placement. True accountability is being tested by all our legislatures in consideration of this Task Force. This approach would help lower unemployment, provide future employees across the state, and encourage accountability at every level. If we ignore this vetting of our standards we are turning our backs on the future of Alaska and our children.

[9:25:50 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON indicated that he is, or has been, a member of several other educational task force committees. He referred to HB 330, page 2, line 28, and paraphrased the language, which read [original punctuation provided]:

(f) The task force shall create a process for vetting proposed education standards before the standards are adopted by the state Board of Education and Early Development.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON reviewed the development of the proposed state standards, which stand in lieu of adoption of the federal common core standards. He said the process has been underway for about two years, and vetting, as well as solicitation for public comment, has been occurring for the last six months. He asked how, under HB 330, the vetting of the standards in every content area by the broad spectrum of named entities is envisioned, and how it will be accomplished; will there be veto power.

MR. BANGHART agreed with prior testimony that if the state leads the way in bringing industry to the table, there would be involvement that could help the educators draw career pathways in a way that would be helpful to students to understand the job market. He said HB 330 provides a forum to bring big business to the table in order to understand the process, and provide input regarding industry related careers. Regarding veto power, he deferred.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON asked whether the employment community would be charged with creating or vetting the educational standards.

MR. BANGHART responded that everyone mentioned in HB 330 should be seated on the task force to be involved in the process and industry would then be allowed input.

CHAIR DICK interjected that the intent of HB 330 is to have the task force define the vetting process.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON asked for clarification of the vision for the vetting process: creation of new standards or review of the proposed standards. Further, he indicated that a definition of vetting would be helpful.

CHAIR DICK asked for the question to be held, in order to continue taking testimony.

[9:32:08 AM](#)

DR. CHIP MCMILLAN, PhD, Assistant Professor, University of Alaska Southeast, testified during the hearing on HB 330, stating that the STEM approach is missing from the existing standards, and could provide a means to fill the hole that exists. He continued, paraphrasing from a prepared statement, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

I prepare K-8 teachers to teach math and science in Alaska.

What I am about to say will appear critical of our State Standards. It is important that you know that I participated in the writing of the science content standards, the performance standards and the science SBA items. I am as responsible as anyone for any deficiencies in these documents.

I also believe any deficiencies in these documents are not the result of negligence or malfeasance on anyone's part. As we say, hindsight is 20/20.

US [United States] students [are] not keeping up with other nations in math and science.

AK [Alaska] cannot afford to lag behind the rest of the country or the rest of the world in math/science.

We are currently falling behind in an even more important area: Science Technology Engineering Math (STEM) Education.

"We're doing students, parents and America's competitiveness a disservice by not demanding higher standards for STEM learning," Craig Barrett, former CEO [Chief Executive Officer] of Intel and current chair of Change the Equation, a group of 110 business executives from Exxon, Lockheed Martin, Google, Dow Chemical, etc.

"It turns out the most common educational background for the Fortune 500 CEOs in the US is not business or law but engineering."

42 out of the 50 highest paying jobs in Alaska are in STEM fields.

The problem is  $\frac{1}{3}$  of all engineering jobs in Alaska are done by people who live down south.

Every state I have looked at has some kind of statewide STEM initiative.

We have no engineering standards today. The word "engineering" does not appear anywhere in any of our content standards.

The Science and Technology GLEs have an implied focus on engineering but never call for actually touching or manipulating anything.

I have been unable to find any science SBA items referencing engineering.

The irony is we used to have engineering and technology standards for K-12 in AK. We used to have an engineering and technology curriculum for K-12 in AK.

It was mandatory for all children in Alaska!

The technologies include  
Alutiiq kayak  
Athabascan snowshoe  
Tlingit fish trap  
Aleut basketry

Even today these are marvels of technology and they resulted from true engineering.

Problem solving, innovation, designing, then testing, refining, optimizing those designs; demonstrating grit, and working cooperatively. These are engineering attributes.

These are what our resource and communication industries are looking for in the workforce.

We should infuse these engineering skills and dispositions into the current math, science, technology standards.

We should seek input from business and industry, e.g., ARCO, Greens Creek Mine, GCI, and NOAA.

Teachers in AK will not teach to STEM without leadership.

We need STEM in our standards, our curriculum, our SBAs, our teacher evaluations.

It seems to me that passage of this bill will assist in the appearance of STEM in our state standards, GLEs, SBAs, district math and science curricula, and thus our K-12 classrooms.

DR. MCMILLAN added that engineering is not mentioned in Alaska's educational standards. As a participant in writing the content standards for the current science curriculum, he said the focus on STEM is relatively new. He said the engineering behind the Native kayaks, snowshoes, and other culture related items, is an inherent knowledge. Today, he opined, students lack grit and attention span. The proposed standards should have STEM inserted prior to adoption, in order to fill an existing hole and help the Alaskan educational system to be aligned with the rest of the nation.

[9:40:54 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON agreed, and said it would be inappropriate to have teachers create standards for areas that they themselves have not studied. She surmised that the current standards are workable but require review and possibly an infusion of material in some areas.

[9:41:46 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON restated his question regarding the vision for the vetting process, with the entities named in subsection (b) of the bill.

DR. MCMILLAN answered that the proposed standards are 100 pages long, and oil production representatives may not be available to review the full document, but could perhaps provide written details on what is considered to be essential knowledge for work in the industry, such as what is expected of an oil field worker.

[9:44:55 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK added that the purpose of the task force would be to create of the process by which the vetting would occur.

[9:45:11 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON stressed the need for the committee to provide one or more vetting model structures for the task force to consider and stressed the importance for a clear understanding of the vision.

[9:47:37 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON asked whether there is anything lacking in the proposed legislation.

DR. MCMILLAN responded that a key aspect is the ability to translate the standards, curriculum, and SBA's (standard based assessments) to an interactive classroom level. He acknowledged the difficulty for creating explicit teaching standards necessary for honing a student's disposition of stick-to-itiveness and creative problem solving, which are important industry traits. As a science teacher, he considers the standards to be too vague, but other teachers may prefer general standards with the details specified at the curriculum level. He stressed the need to cultivate creative thinking and problem solving beginning in the early grades.

[9:50:23 AM](#)

MIKE HANLEY, Commissioner, Department of Education and Early Development (EED), said the sponsor statement is accurate, and agreed that a moral and legal obligation exists to provide the students with educational opportunities. Regarding the vetting process, the standards have been reviewed for the last two years. Alaska chose not to be a common core state, but did choose to maintain a level of rigor to remain competitive. He pointed out that 250 people from across the state have been reviewing the standards for the last two years. The goal is to incorporate the input from a lengthy list of stakeholders. The importance is to do it right, not fast, which has been echoed in the testimony heard today. The vetting period for the workforce stakeholders is being extended, he said, and specific web based meetings are also being held. The importance of a good set of appropriately vetted standards is a point of agreement. The process is open and exhaustive. Additional input from the

workforce arena could be helpful, as it is currently voluntary. Further, the proposal is to have the current open process supplanted by a task force of eight individuals, adding an extra layer, which may not be necessary. Finally, he said that the state follows federal regulations, and protocol, for the development of standards, and any implications regarding NCLB is a topic that requires further discussion.

[9:57:29 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRUITT noted that EED and DOLWD are working together to meet labor force needs, and asked if there are "too many cooks in the kitchen," and how the interests of both departments are being handled.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY reported that the two departments enjoy a good working relationship; however, the bill language does not clearly indicate which department will take the lead.

[10:00:02 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON asked for the specific standards that are under review.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY responded that attention is on the areas of reading, writing, and math, in grades k-12.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON queried whether the comments are by invite only.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY answered that a simple change is handled informally, but otherwise teleconferences are set up and contacts are made to solicit further input. He read from a list of agencies that make up the invitation list and said it is an aggressive endeavor.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON suggested that the mining, oil and gas, and fishing industry organizations be solicited for comment.

[HB 330 was held over.]

[10:03:10 AM](#)

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 10:03 a.m.