

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

February 29, 2012

8:02 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Sharon Cissna

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION: VALDEZ SCHOOL DISTRICT

- HEARD

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S):

Professional Teaching Practices Commission

Louis Pondolfino - Anchorage
Jill Exe - Kaktovik

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

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

HOUSE BILL NO. 272

"An Act providing for a reduction in interest on postsecondary education loans for residents."

- SCHEDULED BUT NOT HEARD

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
02/24/12	(H)	Heard & Held
02/24/12	(H)	MINUTE(EDC)
02/29/12	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106

WITNESS REGISTER

JACOB JENSEN, Superintendent

Valdez School District

Valdez, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided a presentation of the Valdez School District.

LOUIS PONDOLFINO, Appointee

Professional Teaching Practices Commission

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as re-appointee to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission.

JILL EXE, Appointee

Professional Teaching Practices Commission

Kaktovik, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified as re-appointee to the Professional Teaching Practices Commission.

MIKE HANLEY, Commissioner

Department of Education and Early Development (EED)

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the hearing on HB 330.

CHAIR ALAN DICK

Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented HB 330, as Prime Sponsor.

JACK WALSH, Superintendent

Bristol Bay School District
Naknek, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to HB 330.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:02:03 AM](#)

CHAIR ALAN DICK called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:02 a.m. Present at the call to order were Representatives Dick, P. Wilson, Seaton, and Feige. Representatives Kawasaki and Pruitt arrived while the meeting was in progress.

Presentation: Valdez School District

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

[8:03:07 AM](#)

JACOB JENSEN, Superintendent, Valdez School District, said this is the first year that Valdez was forced to cancel school due to snow, but a record snow level of 322 inches was reached by January 13, 2012, and necessitated this unprecedented measure. The four snow days will not require an extended school year, as one day was declared a State emergency, and the other three will be made-up on Saturdays, as teacher in-service days. He moved on to the demographics of the area, to point out that the population is primarily Caucasian, 17 percent are identified as special needs, and 28 percent of the students count as economically disadvantaged and receive a free or reduced lunch.

[8:06:15 AM](#)

MR. JENSEN directed attention to the committee handout, titled "Valdez City School District, Where the Mountains meet the Sea," dated 2/28/12, page 2, to review the graph titled "Sophomore class SBA [standard based assessment] results since 3rd grade," and explained that students are tracked as a cohort from grades 3-10, providing data for analyses. The junior class results are graphed similarly, with data beginning in the 4th grade. He then proceeded through a series of graphs to indicate the district report card on reading, writing, and mathematic assessments. He pointed out the precipitous drop in math scores, for 2011, and explained that it was due to the

retirement of a senior mathematics teacher. A new curriculum math course has been implemented to assist in raising the scores, which proves to be the most challenging subject. He reviewed a number of "District Report Card" graphs to illustrate the progress being made in the core subjects, and identify subject/grade areas that are a focus for improvement. The test scores tend to drop with age, and he conjectured that the older students may not apply themselves as well. The attendance rate is 93 percent, and graduation fluctuates from 88-96 percent; however, every student with a disability IEP [individual education program] graduated in 2011. Several students have continued as fifth and sixth year seniors to complete their certificate.

[8:10:02 AM](#)

MR. JENSEN reviewed the fiscal year (FY) 10 - FY 13 city and state financial contributions to the district, and pointed out that the city funding has been a significant factor for maintaining the school budget. The FY 13 budget is projected to be approximately \$575,000 less, and cuts are being considered. He pointed out that the utility costs increase about \$200,000 each year, and represents a major portion of the deficit.

[8:11:29 AM](#)

MR. JENSEN reported that the teaching staff is very stable. Over half have of the 44 certificated employees have been in place for 16 years and the majority have a master's degree in education. He said the teachers are continually seeking possible means for enhancing the education of the students. Consideration is currently being given to a four day school week, an idea that first emerged about 15 years ago. Changing to a four day week would not be done for monetary purposes, as there would be little advantage, but travel is a large part of a student's life in Valdez. He said that on any given Friday 30 percent of the student body may be away from class for sport related activities, medical, or other personal reasons. A committee has been formed to research this innovation and bring a recommendation to the board.

[8:13:12 AM](#)

MR. JENSEN said high school enrollment has been steady, about 225, for at least four years. Interest has grown in the area of career and technical education (CTE), and in 2010 a culinary arts program was added. Also, Valdez High School is continuing

a dual credit partnership with Prince William Sound Community College; a program begun in 1995. He highlighted points regarding Gilson Junior High, beginning with the school motto, which is "Success is the only Option." The current enrollment is 99, slightly down from the last four years. He pointed out that the Gilson building is the oldest school facility in Valdez. It was built in 1964, and a current bonding measure is being entered into with the city to replace the Good Friday earthquake vintage structure. A unique classroom option exists at Gilson which allows students to attend their core curriculum courses in either a same sex, or traditional coeducational setting. He reported that the same sex classes are very popular and students appreciate the minimization of the social distractions common in a coed room. Another popular feature is the After the Bell Program, which provides middle school students with afterschool tutoring. Reporting on Hermon Hutchens Elementary School, he said the current enrollment has remained steady at about 350, and provides programs from pre-K through grade six. The pre-K program has a majority of special needs students, as it was initially established as an early intervention program to serve developmentally delayed children ages three through five, with some typical peers in attendance; now an area requiring expansion. The grade school has extra enrichment classes, with full time staffing for programs in the areas of technology, physical education, positive action counseling, library, and music, as well as a full time Extended Learning Opportunities Teacher (gifted/talented).

[8:16:41 AM](#)

MR. JENSEN reported that the district hired a curriculum and instruction director last year and work has ensued to review the top three schools in the nation, and Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence, in order to identify any applicable models for adoption. The district is scheduled to begin another six year curriculum cycle, which ensures that the schools are utilizing current research and that best practices are employed. Staff retention is high, and Valdez does not lack good applicants when openings are announced, thus ensuring top notch teachers. He finished with an instruction timeline to indicate the number of hours/days above the state requirement that the students of Valdez attend class; between 2 and 7 hours and 13 and 62 days, depending on the grade level.

[8:18:05 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK noted that a four day school week is being considered and what sort of reception the idea is receiving from the community.

MR. JENSEN provided that the response has not indicated much middle ground. Parents are either very excited for the opportunity, or oppose the idea altogether, with the percentages indicating 80 positive and 20 negative, thus far. Community meetings will be held to address the concerns that are being gathered, prior to a formal recommendation being made to the school board.

[8:19:49 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON referred to the junior high school and noted that each student has a personal education plan in which they establish goals and develop means for attainment. She said this appears to be a program unique to Gilson, and asked how it is accomplished, as well as whether it is worth recommending to other districts.

MR. JENSEN said, "It's a wonderful program." Each student entering grade seven meets with their teachers and principal to discuss interests and goals. Test scores are reviewed, and the teachers work continuously with individual students to deliver the support needed to attain the goals that they have established. He said it requires additional effort, and not having a counselor in position has made it more challenging; however, he highly recommends it to any school that can manage the staff. To a follow-up question he said that the teachers are primarily managing to continue the program and the principals are involved. The smaller size of the school is helpful, he said, and agreed to keep the committee apprised of the situation and provide a performance comparison of the recent two years of the program; one year with a counselor and one without.

[Chair Dick passed the gavel to Representative Seaton.]

[8:22:40 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON noted that Gilson has a mentoring, advisory, reading, study skills (MARS) program, and asked whether it is coordinated, or overlaps, with the personal education planning time; does each student meet one on one with an advisor/teacher throughout their career at the school.

MR. JENSEN responded that MARS is a pseudo homeroom structure, where students have an opportunity to sit in smaller groups and discuss study skill issues, career plans, and directional needs on an intimate level with the teacher. To follow-up questions, he said that the student groups do not remain static from grade seven to grade eight, and have a change of teachers as well. Regarding the integration of WorkKeys, he said the testing has been advantageous and that students are aware that a notation will be made on their graduation certificate in conjunction with the program.

**Confirmation Hearings: Professional Teaching Practices
Commission**

[8:25:26 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON announced that the next order of business would be confirmation hearings for the Professional Teaching Practices Commission.

[8:26:18 AM](#)

LOUIS PONDOLFINO, Appointee, provided a brief biography of his experience as a teacher, principal, and a blue collar worker. He expressed interest in continuing to serve on the commission for a second term, stating that the work is important and interesting, as well as part of what he considers to be his professional responsibility.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON asked for a description of the commission's duties.

MR. PONDOLFINO responded that the primary task is to hear, and determine the merit of, ethic complaints lodged against certificated professionals, as well as impose the appropriate level of sanctions, if warranted. The cases are presented three times annually; hearings are held and decisions are made.

[8:28:48 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON asked for an estimate of the number of cases per year.

MR. PONDOLFINO responded that few cases require a full hearing, as sanctions are not generally contested. Sanctions are recommended, or brokered, by the executive director with the named professional and an agreement is usually reached and the

decisions are only reviewed by the commission. Perhaps three cases per year are heard in their entirety for a ruling by the commission. He said, on an annual basis, anywhere from one to three dozen cases may be lodged. Ethics violations run the gamut from a breach of contract, which is the primary issue, to inappropriate behavior by a teacher.

[8:31:52 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON asked whether the commission considers issues of underperformance by a teacher.

MR. PONDOLFINO answered that the commission hears ethical lapses, but teacher performance is a contract issue and handled by the appropriate district.

[8:32:59 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:32 a.m. to 8:43 a.m.

[Representative Seaton passed the gavel back to Chair Dick.]

[8:43:28 AM](#)

JILL EXE, Appointee, Professional Teaching Practices Commission, provided a brief history of her 19 year teaching experience in Alaska and said she has always been an advocate for due process, which is the focus of the commission.

[8:44:54 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON inquired about her current teaching position.

MS. EXE said she is team teaching in a middle school.

[8:45:20 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FEIGE noted that she left a teaching position in Houston, Texas, and asked about her interest in relocating to Barrow.

MS. EXE said that she left her home state of Montana and traveled during her final year at university, which expanded her view of the world. She said her interest in teaching in a large city was satisfied by her experience in the metropolitan area of Houston. When family circumstances called her home to Montana,

she began cultivating an interest to teach in a totally different setting. She said she has since moved from Barrow to the smaller village of Kaktovik, and noted: "My students and I watch Polar bear out of our classroom window, and we're happy as pigs in mud."

[8:47:43 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRUITT moved to advance the confirmations for appointees referred to the House Education Standing Committee for consideration to the joint session of the House and Senate for consideration. He noted that each member's signature on the committee's report in no way reflects the member's vote during the joint floor session. There being no objection, the confirmations were advanced.

HB 330-STATE EDUCATION STANDARDS

[8:48:09 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."

[8:48:46 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON requested that the committee have an opportunity to hear from a representative of the Department of Labor & Workforce Development (DOLWD), for an official opinion on HB 330.

[8:49:20 AM](#)

MIKE HANLEY, Commissioner, Department of Education and Early Development (EED), pointed out that previous testifiers, Superintendents Stewart McDonald and Peggy Cowan [heard 2/24/12], from Kodiak and the North Slope districts respectively, have each had five staff members contribute to the two year process of developing the proposed standards. Another point of clarity, he said is that following the deliberate, exhaustive development process, once the standards are adopted, a window of four years is necessary prior to student assessment,

which will occur in 2016. Moral and legal standards require an appropriate period of time to elapse in order for students to assimilate the new curriculum prior to being administered a standards based assessment (SBA). From the previous hearing, he noted that there was some confusion regarding the difference between curriculum and standards, and that discussion also ensued regarding CTE (career and technical education), as well as interest in the STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) program. He said models for CTE exist in several districts, and STEM, as well as other engineering programs, are offered in many high schools. Additionally, the ANSEP (Alaska Native Science Education Program) has been experiencing remarkable success, and educating beyond the established standards.

[8:52:34 AM](#)

COMMISSIONER HANLEY said that the vetting process, currently in use, was established in statute by the legislature, and placed in regulation by the department. The process requires submission to the State Board of Education and allows for a three month public comment period, which in the case of the proposed standards has been extended to six months. During the six month period, the department has requested that the members of the state system of support, which includes rural content coaches, to share the standards contents in the communities they serve, and provide feedback. The department has scheduled public meetings in five of the largest communities, to address the specific focus on business and working careers. He stressed that the current standards development process is open to all stakeholders. Specific to HB 330, he observed that the department would like to see university and educators listed as members for the task force. Additionally, representatives appear to be missing in fields which include: biologists, engineers, architects, and other higher level positions.

CHAIR DICK recalled having indicated, at a previous hearing, the need for an amendment to insert the mentioned stakeholders.

[8:56:22 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON asked:

If we want to accomplish what Representative Dick wants to accomplish, ... we don't have to change the standards, we need to change the curriculum.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY indicated that in committee conversations a melding of the two terms has occurred, and confusion appears to exist regarding CTE, curriculum, and standards. High standards can be maintained through a CTE model, he explained, and said that the standards are the target, and curriculum represents the means for attaining the target. To a follow-up question, he clarified that CTE was formerly referred to as vocational education, and includes a number of academies in the state. Further, he offered that the standards represent the target for the skills that a student is to master prior to graduation, and curriculum is the vehicle used to attain those skills. The curriculum may take many forms, including the vocational education model, or the STEM program.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON asked whether these considerations speak for or against HB 330.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY responded that the department's concern is that the current, open, exhaustive process may be supplanted by a different method determined by the limited list of members seated on the task force proposed in HB 330.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON asked about the number of responses received since the opening of the public comment period.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY estimated less than 100 responses have been received through the on-line system available on department's web site. He pointed out that two webinars have been held, and declined to estimate the number of participants.

[9:01:02 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK requested that the department identify the responses as educators versus non-educators.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON asked about the timeline for assessments of the standards.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY said it is a four year process, to enable students to be taught the re-written curriculum as aligned with the new standards prior to the administration of an SBA based on the retailored information.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON assumed that the exit exam would also require updating to the new standards, along with the SBA, at a substantial cost to the state.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY concurred that the exit exam will need to be aligned as well with the new goal.

9:02:43 AM

REPRESENTATIVE FEIGE opined that the bill represents a challenge to the existing philosophy of the entire standards system. Comparing education to a manufacturing system, he suggested that if the schools were creating a product for customers, then the standards represent the specifications for the product.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY said yes, if students are to be considered a product.

REPRESENTATIVE FEIGE continued to say that the manufacturing process leads to an end product and in the industrial world the specifications would be established by the customer; widgets are designed for the consumer. The current means by which the educational standards are set is akin to the manufacturing company setting the specifications for the product rather than the consumer. Using this analogy, he said he would support the bill based on this logical concept.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY stated that if the design process is for a product being manufactured for a specific purpose the logic would hold, but opening doors for the variety of students that are moving through the educational system is the department's responsibility; providing as many opportunities as possible to students. If the customers/employers provided specifications, he said it would be important not to settle on the least common denominator, but to seek a foundational level that would keep all doors open and available for student's choice. He opined that there is a danger in making a high level decision based on assumptions for what career interests a student might choose, which could result in closing doors to other possibilities.

REPRESENTATIVE FEIGE queried whether a solution might be to write specifications for creating a flexible product, as achieved through broad standards, such as: needs to be able to read and understand, and needs to be able to compute math. He said, "You'd want to teach these widgets to think on their own."

COMMISSIONER HANLEY indicated that potentially that may be plausible, but examining specific situations would be necessary to see if the approach could be used successfully. He said the current standards are considered to be broad. Further, he pointed out that the foundational skills that are taught, which

will allow a student to compete in the world today, require close scrutiny.

[9:08:17 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK indicated a four page handout, available in the packet, listing the contributors who have participated in the writing and vetting of the [proposed] standards. He pointed out that, save for one entry, the participants named are all educational institutions or educators, and he requested the department to supply a supplemental list that would indicate other contributors. Educators are the best source for delivery of information, but the knowledge of what information needs to be imparted requires sourcing from outside of the educational field. An educator, like a flight attendant, may know how to deliver a service, but would not know how to build the airplane, he opined. Individuals from the working sector may have specific information to contribute to help in creating a clear and inspirational pathway for students. He said he has participated in writing standards, and it is a painstaking, perfecting process; however, he maintained that students should be able to understand how a lesson in the classroom relates to, and will be applied in, the workforce. The disconnect that occurs, may be the cause of one third of the state's high school students dropping out. He then made a series of inquiries regarding NCLB: To what extent is the state under pressure to adopt the proposed standards in order to get a waiver to NCLB; is EED seeking a waiver; and if the state doesn't comply with NCLB what will be the cost.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY answered that the development of the standards has not been pressured by NCLB. He explained that the federal government has increased the bar for NCLB compliance every year, which will culminate in 2014, when districts are expected to be in 100 percent compliance. The U.S. Department of Education has offered waivers to NCLB compliance; however, there is a separate set of accountability criteria involved in the waiver process. The passage of HB 330 would preclude the department being eligible for the waiver, as one of the criteria is to have adequate standards in place, and the current standards do not meet the college and career ready requirements. The government has set up rolling deadlines to submit waiver applications; one just passed, and the next one will be in September, 2012.

[9:14:53 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK pointed out that the waiver requires a teacher's evaluation to be linked to student performance, and he voiced objection to that approach.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY agreed that it is not an appropriate measure, especially in Alaska where teacher retention is a major concern. Trading one NCLB model for another is not the answer he said, which is why the department has moved deliberately and thoughtfully, rather than rushing, to secure a waiver.

[9:16:33 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON suggested that the committee dwell on the fact that Washington [D.C.] does not consider Alaska's standards to be good enough, and conjectured that a federal take-over could occur. She asked how the proposed standards differ from the current standards; were benchmarks just raised or are there specific changes.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY answered that 64 percent of high school graduates require remediation classes to enter college, and employers report that graduates entering the workforce don't have adequate basic skills to meet job requirements. The department had these facts as a foundation of understanding, when the revision of the standards was undertaken. The NAEP (National Assessment Educational Progress) scores of the state's grade four students placed Alaska in the bottom 10 percent of the nation, with some improvement indicated in the grade eight exams; however it indicates that students are not measuring up with what is taking place outside of Alaska. The Common Core Standards were referenced in developing the proposed standards in order to align to some degree with the nation. Alaska chose not to adopt the Common Core Standards as a whole, but modifications have been made to incorporate important aspects and the required rigor, he said.

[9:20:20 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON stressed the need to have the standards raised to a level that will alleviate the remediation issue. Further, she said it is important to understand that setting the standards, does not preclude writing curriculum that is relevant and meets the needs of Alaskan students. She said it is important for lessons to relate directly to students and provide an aspect of hope, which is critical to a child.

[9:22:51 AM](#)

[Chair Dick passed the gavel to Representative Pruitt.]

[9:22:58 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 9:22 a.m. to 9:23 a.m.

[9:23:23 AM](#)

CHAIR ALAN DICK, Alaska State Legislature directed attention to the committee packet, and the 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, and said the report offers an analysis of the widely adopted Common Core State Standards, endorsed by the U.S. Department of Education, and whether the rigor of the standards actually has an effect on student performance. Referring in turn to numbered, highlighted, sections on pages 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 7, 11, 12, 13, and 14, he paraphrased excerpts from the report, which read [original punctuation provided]:

Page 3: Despite all the money and effort devoted to developing the Common Core State Standards - not to mention the simmering controversy over their adoption in several states - the study foresees little to no impact on student learning.

Page 4: 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.

Page 7: The push for common education standards argues that all American students should study a common curriculum, take comparable tests to measure their learning, and have the results interpreted on a common scale. The common curriculum, comparable tests, and standardized performance levels - is necessary. No one or two of them can stand alone for the project to succeed.

Page 8: Three Theorized Effects. Let's call this the "quality theory." The second idea is that the Common Core sets higher expectations than current state standards, the assumption being that cut points on the new assessments will be set at a higher level than states currently set on their own tests. The third hypothesis is that standardization yields its own efficiencies.

Andrew Porter compared the Common Core to existing state standards and international standards from other countries and concluded that the Common Core does not represent much improvement.

Page 9: [In October 2009, a colleague at Brookings, Grover "Russ" Whitehurst, investigated] whether quality ratings for state standards, as judged by the two most cited ratings (from the American Federation of Teachers and Fordham Foundation), are correlated with state NAEP [National Assessment Educational Progress] scores. Whitehurst found they are not. States with weak content standards score about the same on NAEP as those with strong standards.

Page 10: According to Fordham, some states improved their standards in 2006 while others adopted weaker standards in 2006 than they had back in 2000. Are changes in the quality of standards related to changes in achievement? Again, the answer is that they are not (correlation coefficient of 0.08). States with higher more rigorous cut points did not have stronger NAEP scores than states with less rigorous cut points.

Page 11: Did states that raised the bar also perform better? And did states that lowered the bar perform worse? Correlation coefficients for 8th grade are near zero.

The third theory concerns standardization. For the Common Core movement, attaining greater standardization of educational outcomes is an important goal. The two previous analyses indicate that it is unlikely that common standards will boost performance; however, it is possible for the national average on NAEP to remain stable while variation is reduced.

In terms of state NAEP scores, variation comes in two forms: variation between states and variation within states. Within-state variation, on the other hand, remains unaffected by common standards. And despite that, every state has tremendous within-state variation in achievement. Schools that score at the top of the world on international assessments are within a short car trip, sometimes within a short subway ride, from schools that score at the level of the world's lowest achieving nations.

Page 12: The findings are clear. Most variation on NAEP occurs within states not between them. The variation within states is four to five times larger than the variation between states.

What effect will the Common Core have on national achievement? The analysis presented here suggests very little impact.

Page 13: Two lessons can be drawn from the analysis above. First, do not expect much from the Common Core. Standards in education are best understood as aspirational, and like a strict diet or prudent plan to save money for the future, they represent good intentions that are not often realized.

Distinctions were drawn among the intended, implemented, and achieved curriculums. The intended curriculum is embodied by standards; it is what governments want students to learn.

What is crucial is the distance between the intended curriculum and the two curriculums below. The implemented curriculum is what teachers teach.

The attained curriculum is what students learn.

The Common Core will [sit on top of the implemented and attained curriculums, and notwithstanding future efforts to beef up the standards' power to penetrate to the core of schooling,] they probably fail to dramatically affect what goes on in the thousands of districts and tens of thousands of schools that they seek to influence.

Page 14: Just as the glow of consensus surrounding NCLB [No Child Left Behind Act] faded after a few years, cracks are now appearing in the wall of support for the Common Core.

Don't let the ferocity of the oncoming debate fool you. The empirical evidence suggests that the Common Core will have little effect in American students' achievement. The nation will have to look elsewhere for ways to improve its schools.

[9:32:00 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK recalled that questions have arisen regarding the differences between content and performance standards, as well as grade level expectations (GLEs). He referred to the committee packet handout titled "Alaska Content Standards - MATHEMATICS," not dated, numbered as page 9, and paraphrased the segment labeled "A," to establish the overarching concept of the section, which read [original punctuation provided]:

A student should understand mathematical facts, concepts, principles, and theories.

CHAIR DICK continued in the same section, with the enumerated performance standards, which indicate achievements that are to be attained by a student who meets the content standards. He directed attention to the sixth point, and paraphrased the language which read [original punctuation provided]:

6) collect, organize analyze, interpret, represent, and formulate questions about data and make reasonable and useful predications about the certainty, uncertainty, or impossibility of an event.

CHAIR DICK turned to the page numbered as 97, to draw attention to the section titled "MATH GRADES 7-10, Content Standard A," with a subset titled "Statistics and Probability," and pointed out the sets of requirements specific to grades 7-8, and 9-10. He then directed attention to the final page, numbered as 98, and the section titled "Analysis and Central Tendency" and "Probability," for grade 10, to paraphrase the requirement, which read [original punctuation provided]:

The student demonstrates an ability to analyze data (comparing, explaining, interpreting, evaluating,

making predictions, describing trends; drawing, formulating, or justifying conclusions) by ...

CHAIR DICK said the GLEs are specific for each grade, representing an area that requires intense development. Moving to the "Probability," section for grade 10, he paraphrased the requirement, which read [original punctuation provided]:

The student demonstrates a conceptual understanding of probability and counting techniques by

[10] S&P 5 explaining in words or identifying the difference between experimental and theoretical probability of independent or dependent events (M6.4.5)

[10] S&P-6 analyzing data to make predictions about the probability of independent or dependent events as a basis for solving real-work problems (M6.4.5)

[9:34:58 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK said this illustrates the overarching concept, relating to the performance standards, as well as the GLEs, which establish at what grade level the student will perform increments of the standards. In response to a committee question, he explained that the bracketed and parenthetical codes are a cross reference to the content and performance standards. Basically, he said, it is important to understand the hierarchy that beginning with the overarching concept, followed by the performance standards for the concept, and finally the established GLEs for each grade level.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON established that the teacher reviews the standards and translates the GLEs into lessons for application in the classroom.

CHAIR DICK said yes, and emphasized that it can be difficult to formulate meaningful, interesting lesson plans. He reported that in Barrow the administrators developed a model by defining a whole Inupiat person, and then reverse engineered the result to arrive at an applicable curriculum. He opined that from his experience of observing the process he could only describe it as difficult as an English speaker attempting to translate a document written in the German language into Chinese; basically painful.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON noted that the concepts and standards appear to be vague and asked whether the curriculum is as well.

CHAIR DICK said that the curriculum is adopted by each district, and the department is adamant that the curriculum will be aligned to the standards. He suggested that the best teacher in Alaska, located in a rural setting, could vary in the translation of the previously noted GLE, creating a disparity in the expected outcome of the SBA scores. The curriculum needs to be aligned with the standards; however, steps should also be taken to ensure that the SBA is aligned with the formative and summative evaluations the teachers employ; formative being a quiz or test to determine progress of understanding, and the summative being a unit test or mid-term exam. It would be helpful if the state were to compare some of the existing formative and summative assessments with the SBA to ensure alignment. He opined that asking someone to describe or draw a dog would elicit a variety of responses, and questioned whether the national developers of the SBA would accept these variances as correct, or would the scores be skewed based on the expected norm.

[9:39:35 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON questioned whether the concept of allowing teachers to apply a variety of curriculum would dispel the ability to conduct meaningful SBAs. If the assessment is measuring the principles being taught, is that constrained by allowing variability in the methods used by teachers to deliver the required principles in relevant lesson plans. He stated his understanding of the difference in the two concepts being espoused: 1) State assessment of what is taught, while allowing flexibility in the curriculum used to deliver the required principles established in the standards and GLEs; versus 2) the necessity for curriculum to be uniform, in order to be measurable on a statewide assessment.

[9:41:13 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK conjectured that 7,000 teachers in the state struggle with that question every day; however, he said a standardized, scripted curriculum is not what he is advocating. He added that it might also be helpful if parents were able to read and comprehend the standards.

[9:42:46 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRUITT established that the Alaskan standards were last revised in 2006, and he asked whether ADD (attention deficit disorder) was prevalent or other distractions existed, such as cell phones in the classroom. He suggested that continually changing the standards creates a challenge for teachers and students, and may cause complications.

[9:43:55 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK recalled the request, made by Superintendent McDonald, for a stationary target.

REPRESENTATIVE PRUITT commented on the importance of allowing adequate time for measurable changes to emerge, once standards are adopted.

[9:44:26 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON questioned why the standards were changed in 2006, and whether it was connected with a requirement for NCLB compliance.

CHAIR DICK deferred.

[9:45:08 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK referred to the committee handout titled "Alaska High School Mathematics Standards," hand labeled P.1, to paraphrase from the opening, instructional paragraph, which read [original punctuation provided]:

The high school standards specify the mathematics that all students should study in order to be career ready. Additional mathematics that students should learn in order to take advanced courses such as calculus, advanced statistics, or discrete mathematics is indicated by the symbol +.

CHAIR DICK noted that every student is required to learn the mathematical principles set forth in the handout, for SBA scoring purposes, as well as to pass the HSGQE. Beginning under the heading "Similarity, Right Triangles, and Trigonometry," with the subheading "Understand similarity in terms of similarity transformations," he paraphrased the principle to be addressed, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

1. Verify experimentally the properties of dilations given by a center and scale factor: a. A dilation takes a line not passing through the center of the dilation to a parallel line, and leaves a line passing through the center unchanged.

CHAIR DICK directed attention further down the same page to the subheading "Write expressions in equivalent forms to solve problems," and paraphrased the directive, which read [original punctuation provided]:

3. b. Complete the square in a quadratic expression to reveal the maximum or minimum value of the function it defines. For example, ...

[9:46:49 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK said that he worked out the example provided, in order to gain a clear understanding of what was being required, and suggested that what is represented is actually curriculum, not standards, and said this point was also brought to his attention by a number of teachers. The difference in standards and curriculum is the degree of specificity. He referred to examples in the handout on succeeding pages to paraphrase additional math principles that every high school student in Alaska is required to attain, calling attention to the page labeled P.3, under the heading "Trigonometric Functions," and the subheading "Extend the domain of trigonometric functions using the unit circle," to paraphrase the instructions, which read [original punctuation provided]:

2. Explain how the unit circle in the coordinate plane enables the extension of trigonometric functions to all real numbers, interpreted as radian measures of angles traversed counterclockwise around the unit circle.

CHAIR DICK emphasized that every student is required to pass an assessment indicating the comprehension of this principle; including special needs students. He turned to the page labeled P.4, noting that the examples being highlighted do not include the "+" sign; hence these requirements are not directed to advanced placement or pre-calculus students. He directed attention to the heading "Congruence," with a subheading "Prove geometric theorems," to paraphrase the instructions, which read [original punctuation provided]:

9. Using methods of proof including direct, indirect, and counter examples to prove theorems about lines and angles. Theorems include: vertical angles are congruent; when a transversal crosses parallel lines, alternate interior angles are congruent and corresponding angles are congruent; points on a perpendicular bisector of a line segment are exactly those equidistant from the segment's endpoints.

CHAIR DICK drew attention to the page labeled P.5, and the heading titled "Grade 8," to paraphrase the requirement, which read [original punctuation provided]:

Analyze and solve linear equations and pairs of simultaneous linear equations.

CHAIR DICK recalled that in the 1960's this was a lesson taught in the third year of high school as part of the Algebra II curriculum.

[9:49:23 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK recalled that the Brookings Institute article pointed out how higher standards do not act like a vacuum cleaner, sucking students up to a higher point of knowledge. Student performance is linked to a myriad of important aspects independent of higher standards, he opined.

[9:50:04 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON established that the hand numbered pages were extracted from a draft of the proposed high school mathematics standards, as well as the grade 8 GLEs.

[9:51:00 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK indicated a two page committee handout with a top line reading ">\$1.2B/Year Educational Budget built upon the foundation of the Standards.", and directed attention to the bottom line labeled "The Foundation," to state that the department has estimated a cost of \$270,000 to develop the proposed standards, during 2010-2011; the highlights of today's meeting. Additionally, EED anticipates \$5-7 million will be required to develop assessment tools, the SBAs and HSGQEs, to determine achievement by the students. Further, an annual cost of \$7 million will be expended on the assessments, which over the six year cycle for standards will accrue to approximately

\$40 million. The cost for textbooks and curriculum, as well as professional development for implementation of the proposed standards is in question and not estimated on the handout. Finally, addressing the top line, he said the education budget is \$1.2 billion per year, or \$7.2 billion over a 6 year cycle, representing a massive superstructure being upheld by the original foundation; the \$270,000 development of the standards. He opined that the foundation is not stable or adequate to support the budget. To illustrate where students may be going, he turned to the second page of the handout, and said the bottom line represents 100 percent of the grade nine students in Alaska. Continuing up the page, he reminded the committee that reports indicate the following: one third of high school students will dropout and two thirds will graduate, 40 percent of the high school graduates will continue on to attend a postsecondary program; and 60 percent do not continue in an educational setting. Arriving at the top of the page, he explained that the short top line of the chart represents the 7 percent of the ninth grade students who are reported to graduate high school, attend a postsecondary program, and graduate with a four year degree, in a six year time frame. He said that the standards are helpful to the seven percent who will aspire to a four year degree, but, he opined, the remaining [93 percent] are collateral damage to the system. The decision makers are highly educated individuals who may not relate to success that is not similarly equated, he suggested, stating that success is not reliant on a college degree. He underscored the importance for developing the best possible standards, particularly in light of the massive budget that will be structured using the standards as a foundation. Considering the ramifications, he suggested proceeding with the utmost care and caution to achieve optimal effectiveness. Finally, he revisited the intent behind HB 330, which is to have the standards vetted through a process that would include meaningful involvement with people from industry. Lastly, he stressed that the criteria for every standard should be that it contains a demonstrable, real life application, and opined that the root cause, of the dropout rate and lack of engagement, is that students cannot perceive a connection between school lessons and "real life."

[9:58:15 AM](#)

JACK WALSH, Superintendent, Bristol Bay School District, testified in opposition to HB 330, and suggested that assumptions are being made which may not be accurate. He said the Bristol Bay School represents a typical rural facility, where the 150 students are doing fairly well, with a high

turnover among the 15 members of the teaching staff; thus facing many of the same challenges as other Bush schools. He said his concern is that HB 330 was developed on two primary assumptions: 1) EED is failing in their duties to the children of the state, and school districts; and 2) schools are failing. The opening lines of the bill that call for responsibilities being shifted from EED to DOLWD may create a situation that is not in the best interest of either department, as well as the Alaska Public, he opined. It is important to have the standards developed by those with the greatest ability to identify requirement needs for graduates; expertise which likely resides within EED. The department's process involves perhaps 50 or more people, increasing the capacity of the review committee to arrive at standards that will have positive effects on the greatest number of students. He referred to the sponsor's statement that the standards are set to serve the seven percent of the students who will complete high school and continue on to complete a four year college degree, to suggest that the statistic may be erroneous. In Bristol Bay, he reported, the majority of high school graduates are able to successfully pursue interests in industry, family business, or higher education. The standards are adequate to provide these students with an array of options. Standards reviews are important, and the federal government requirements must be considered, but, he pointed out, a great many schools are performing above the standards in many areas through the use of the system that is in place due to the efforts of the educators involved, as well as EED. He asked the committee to proceed with caution.

[Representative Pruitt passed the gavel back to Chair Dick.]

CHAIR DICK announced that public testimony would remain open.

[HB 330 was held over.]

[10:04:28 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 10:04 a.m.