

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 23, 2012

8:08 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Alan Dick, Chair
Representative Eric Feige
Representative Paul Seaton
Representative Peggy Wilson
Representative Sharon Cissna

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Lance Pruitt, Vice Chair
Representative Scott Kawasaki

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION: ALEUTIAN REGION 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."

- MOVED CSHB 330(EDC) OUT OF COMMITTEE

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

02/29/12	(H)	Heard & Held
02/29/12	(H)	MINUTE(EDC)
03/05/12	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106
03/05/12	(H)	<Bill Hearing Canceled>
03/21/12	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106
03/21/12	(H)	Heard & Held
03/21/12	(H)	MINUTE(EDC)
03/23/12	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106

WITNESS REGISTER

JOSEPH BECKFORD, Superintendent
Aleutian Region School District (ARSD)
Unalaska, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided a presentation regarding the Aleutian Region School District.

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

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided comments and responded to questions during discussion of HB 330.

ANNETTE KREITZER, Staff
Representative Alan Dick
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: During discussion of HB 330, provided comments on behalf of the sponsor, Representative Dick.

JEAN MISCHEL, Attorney
Legislative Legal Counsel
Legislative Legal and Research Services
Legislative Affairs Agency (LAA)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As the drafter, responded to questions during discussion of HB 330.

ACTION NARRATIVE

8:08:05 AM

CHAIR ALAN DICK called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:08 a.m. Representatives Dick, P. Wilson, Seaton, and Cissna were present at the call to order. Representative Feige arrived as the meeting was in progress.

PRESENTATION: Aleutian Region School District

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8:08:34 AM

CHAIR DICK announced that the first order of business would be a presentation regarding the Aleutian Region School District.

8:09:02 AM

JOSEPH BECKFORD, Superintendent, Aleutian Region School District (ARSD), referred to a PowerPoint presentation provided in members' packets, and, remarking on the size of the area served by the ARSD, explained that its two remaining schools are Yakov E. Netsvetov School on Atka Island and Adak Public School on Adak Island; that it closed Nikolski School [on Umnak Island] in 2010 due to insufficient enrollment over two consecutive years; and that ARSD communities serve a critical role with regard to both telecommunications and transportation. He also relayed that through an ongoing professional development program, the ARSD has aligned its curriculum with state and national standards; that as a result, all of its students who've passed the three sections of the qualifying exam are testing at or above anticipated levels on standardized tests; that truancy is not an issue - ARSD students are actively-engaged learners; and that declines in community populations have resulted in enrollment declines, thereby raising concerns about how to maintain programs and provide opportunities.

MR. BECKFORD said that the current lack of broadband Internet access - which the ARSD could use to supplement its programs - has been a challenge for the ARSD, and that teacher recruitment, training, and retention continues to be an issue, particularly when attempting to deliver multi-age, multi-grade services in such remote locations, though regular assessments and professional-development efforts ensure that state standards are being met. Furthermore, expansions in the local seafood industry - once community populations and resulting school enrollments begin to trend upward - could address some of the problems the ARSD has been facing. Students in the ARSD are well-served by its curriculum and instructional programs, and graduates of the ARSD are living productive lives.

MR. BECKFORD, in response to comments and questions, relayed that the ARSD has an active cultural program and high participation rates; that Yakov E. Netsvetov School currently has 10 students, and Adak Public School currently has 22

students, with both schools teaching K-12 curricula; that there has been only one "dropout" in the last twelve years, with all other students having graduated; that ARSD students are doing well with regard to reaching educational benchmarks; and that the current lack of broadband Internet access is problematic, but acquiring it for the schools would be cost-prohibitive.

[Members then briefly discussed tangential topics.]

HB 330 - STATE EDUCATION STANDARDS

[8:39:44 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." [Before the committee was the proposed committee substitute (CS) for HB 330, Version 27-LS1100\E, Mischel, 3/20/12, which had been adopted as the work draft on 3/21/12.]

[8:40:08 AM](#)

MIKE HANLEY, Commissioner, Department of Education and Early Development (EED), after assuring the committee that the forthcoming proposed education standards the state has been working on for the past two years are not connected to the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, expressed disfavor with HB 330's proposed legislative finding - paragraph (2), Section 1, Version E - that states education standards are developed only for those who earn a four-year college degree, offering his belief that that statement isn't true. He opined that the state's forthcoming proposed education standards would instead improve the situation for all students.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY, in response to questions, offered his belief that the state's existing education standards already address the skills necessary to be an entrepreneur; that any specific curriculum for teaching students how to start their own business would best be developed at the local level; and that establishing separate education "tracks" - [one for only those students pursuing college, and one for all other students] - as has been done successfully elsewhere, might not be the best

approach in Alaska because the state's low student-enrollment numbers - and the resulting limitation on resources - could force some schools to focus only on one track, ultimately limiting opportunities for students.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON pointed out that education standards should be consistent for all students regardless of the number of education tracks being offered.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY agreed.

CHAIR DICK, speaking as the sponsor of HB 330, expressed interest in having the state's education standards be developed with input from people other than educators.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY - referring to the provisions of HB 330 which stipulate that the proposed Joint Legislative Task Force on Sustainable Education ("Task Force") shall submit a report and proposed legislation to the legislature by September 30, 2013, and that the state Board of Education and Early Development ("Board") shall adopt education standards only after they have been vetted in a process to be created by the proposed Task Force - expressed concern that those provisions could potentially delay [the adoption of] "higher-level" education standards for several years, offering his belief that to teach only to existing standards in the meantime won't serve the students.

CHAIR DICK pointed out, though, that having or not having new education standards in place won't limit what can be taught in Alaska's schools - standards only speak to what students shall be tested on.

[8:54:28 AM](#)

ANNETTE KREITZER, Staff, Representative Alan Dick, Alaska State Legislature, mentioned that she'd discussed Commissioner Hanley's concern with the bill drafter, who agrees with her that under HB 330, the legislature would not be involved with the creation of the vetting process for proposed education standards, and thus could not [inadvertently, either through action or inaction,] delay adoption of such standards. Furthermore, HB 330 contains a sunset date of July 1, 2014, so, ultimately, the bill's requirements are not going to limit the [Board] with regard to which particular education standards it adopts.

CHAIR DICK, in response to comments and questions, reiterated that having education standards in place won't limit what can be taught in Alaska's schools, merely what students shall ultimately be tested on.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY, in response to further comments and questions, pointed out that education standards merely provide a focus for teachers - the standards themselves teach nothing. Ultimately it is up to everyone in the community, taking all issues into consideration, to point students in the right direction with regard to specific curriculum.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON - expressing favor with the concept of having a task force such as the one HB 330 provides for - asked that information regarding the fiscal impact of adopting education standards be provided to the committee.

9:07:55 AM

JEAN MISCHEL, Attorney, Legislative Legal Counsel, Legislative Legal and Research Services, Legislative Affairs Agency (LAA), in response to comments and questions, and noting that HB 330 is temporary and would only change uncodified law, concurred that its proposed changes would be repealed on July 1, 2014; that prior to that sunset date, the Board must rely upon the Task Force's forthcoming vetting process; that nothing in the bill changes statute or the Board's existing statutory authority to adopt performance standards; and that in terms of adopting standards once the provisions of HB 330 sunset, the Board could simply resume where it left off prior to the establishment of the Task Force. She noted, though, that a potential separation of powers issue does arise with HB 330's proposed limitation on the Board's executive functions, but surmised that it might not be a problem, since the proposed Task Force is advisory in nature and nothing in the bill requires the Board to adopt standards developed by a legislative body such as the Task Force.

CHAIR DICK opined that the issues discussed demonstrate the need for a task force that involves stakeholders other than educators.

CHAIR DICK then closed public testimony on HB 330.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON ventured that HB 330's proposed legislative finding - paragraph (1), Section 1, Version E - stating that education funding support is increasing, might be

better changed so as to describe what has occurred in the past, rather than predicting what will occur in the future; proffered that the aforementioned legislative finding that's of concern to Commissioner Hanley warrants further investigation with regard to its accuracy; and mentioned that he is concerned about any delay in adopting state education standards pertaining to language - particularly those related to speaking and listening skills - characterizing such as critical for Alaska's students. He also expressed interest in having the proposed Task Force include a representative from the university.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON concurred, opining that it should be someone in the field of training future educators.

[9:18:50 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON made a motion to adopt Conceptual Amendment 1, to add to Section 2's subsection (c)(3), after subparagraph (D), "a person from the university that was head of the department that ... teaches the ... [prospective] teachers of the state at the university."

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON objected for the purpose of discussion, and asked whether Conceptual Amendment 1 would also change subsection (c)(3) with regard to the total number of jointly-appointed members, changing that total - on page 4, line 6 - from "eight" to "nine".

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON said yes.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON removed his objection.

CHAIR DICK, noting that there were no further objections, announced that Conceptual Amendment 1 was adopted.

[9:20:06 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON moved to report the proposed committee substitute (CS) for HB 330, Version 27-LS1100\E, Mischel, 3/20/12, as amended, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, CSHB 330(EDC) was reported from the House Education Standing Committee.

The committee took an at-ease from 9:20 a.m. to 9:22 a.m.

[Upon coming back to order and prior to adjourning, members discussed other topics.]

[9:38:05 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:38 a.m.