

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 26, 2012

8:03 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Eric Feige

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION: TEACHER OF THE YEAR

- HEARD

SENATE BILL NO. 199

"An Act relating to the vocational and technical instruction funding factor for public school funding."

- MOVED OUT OF COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL NO. 170

"An Act requiring vocational education counseling in public schools."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 199

SHORT TITLE: VOCATIONAL EDUCATION FUNDING FACTOR

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) MEYER

02/17/12	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/17/12	(S)	EDC, L&C
02/22/12	(S)	EDC RPT 4DP 1NR
02/22/12	(S)	DP: MEYER, THOMAS, FRENCH, DAVIS
02/22/12	(S)	NR: STEVENS

02/22/12 (S) EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
 02/22/12 (S) Moved SB 199 Out of Committee
 02/22/12 (S) MINUTE(EDC)
 03/01/12 (S) L&C AT 1:30 PM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
 03/01/12 (S) Moved SB 199 Out of Committee
 03/01/12 (S) MINUTE(L&C)
 03/02/12 (S) L&C RPT 5DP
 03/02/12 (S) DP: EGAN, GIESSEL, DAVIS, PASKVAN,
 MENARD
 03/05/12 (S) TRANSMITTED TO (H)
 03/05/12 (S) VERSION: SB 199
 03/05/12 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
 03/05/12 (H) EDC, FIN
 03/26/12 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106

BILL: SB 170

SHORT TITLE: VOCATIONAL ED. COUNSELING IN SCHOOLS

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) THOMAS

01/20/12 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
 01/20/12 (S) EDC, FIN
 02/10/12 (S) EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
 02/10/12 (S) Scheduled But Not Heard
 02/13/12 (S) EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
 02/13/12 (S) Scheduled But Not Heard
 02/22/12 (S) EDC RPT 4DP 1NR
 02/22/12 (S) DP: MEYER, THOMAS, FRENCH, DAVIS
 02/22/12 (S) NR: STEVENS
 02/22/12 (S) EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
 02/22/12 (S) Moved SB 170 Out of Committee
 02/22/12 (S) MINUTE(EDC)
 02/27/12 (S) FIN AT 9:00 AM SENATE FINANCE 532
 02/27/12 (S) Heard & Held
 02/27/12 (S) MINUTE(FIN)
 02/28/12 (S) FIN AT 9:00 AM SENATE FINANCE 532
 02/28/12 (S) Moved SB 170 Out of Committee
 02/28/12 (S) MINUTE(FIN)
 02/29/12 (S) FIN RPT 6DP 1NR
 02/29/12 (S) DP: HOFFMAN, STEDMAN, THOMAS, EGAN,
 MCGUIRE, ELLIS
 02/29/12 (S) NR: OLSON
 03/05/12 (S) TRANSMITTED TO (H)
 03/05/12 (S) VERSION: SB 170
 03/05/12 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
 03/05/12 (H) EDC, FIN
 03/26/12 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106

WITNESS REGISTER

CARA HEITZ, Teacher
Cordova Jr/Sr High School
Cordova, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided a presentation of educational approaches, as the 2012 Alaska Teacher of the Year.

SENATOR JOE THOMAS
Alaska State legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented SB 199 on behalf of Senator Kevin Meyer, sponsor.

CAROL COMEAU, Superintendent
Anchorage School District
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 199.

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

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the hearing on SB 199.

BRUCE JOHNSON, Executive Director
Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA)

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 199.

SUZANNE ARMSTRONG, President
Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc. - Alaska Chapter (ABC
- Alaska Chapter)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 199.

RICK RIOS, Acting Director
Career & Technical Education (CTE)
Anchorage School District (ASD)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 199 and SB 170.

MIKE ANDREWS
Alaska Works Partnership
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 199 and SB 170.

JOHN MACKINNON, Executive Director
Associated General Contractors (AGC)

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 199 and SB 170.

DIANE MAPLES

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on behalf of herself in support of SB 199.

SENATOR JOE THOMAS

Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented SB 170, as sponsor.

MURRAY RICHMAN, Staff

Senator Joe Thomas

Alaska State Legislature

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Offered information during the hearing on SB 170 on behalf of Senator Thomas, sponsor.

PEGGY COWAN, Superintendent

North Slope Borough School District

Barrow, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 170.

BRUCE JOHNSON, Executive Director

Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA)

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the hearing on SB 170.

BARBARA HUFFTUCKNESS, Director

Governmental and Legislative Affairs

Teamsters Local 959

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 170.

SUZANNE ARMSTRONG, President

Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc. - Alaska Chapter (ABC
- Alaska Chapter)

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 170.

CYNTHIA CURRAN, Director

Teaching and Learning Support

Department of Education & Early Development

City & State

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the hearing on SB 170.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:03:19 AM](#)

CHAIR ALAN DICK called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:03 a.m. Representatives Dick, P. Wilson, Seaton, Kawasaki were present at the call to order. Representatives Cissna and Pruitt arrived as the meeting was in progress.

Presentation: Teacher of the Year

[8:03:42 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK announced that the first order of business would be a presentation from the 2012 Alaska Teacher of the Year, Cara Heitz.

[8:04:38 AM](#)

CARA HEITZ, Teacher, Cordova Jr/Sr High School, gave a PowerPoint presentation entitled, "The Transformation From Static To Dynamic Education." She provided synonyms and images to compare and contrast the word "static" with the word "dynamic," as it relates to education. She said over the past 11 years, at the core of her philosophy has been "a constructivist style of teaching, in which learning occurs as students are actively involved in the process of meaning and knowledge instruction, building on prior experiences rather than passively receiving information." She said this fosters critical thinking and creates motivated and independent learners. Ms. Heitz relayed that she tries to provide hands-on learning environments that encourage students' natural curiosity about the world.

[8:07:57 AM](#)

MS. HEITZ said she also fosters learning from the natural environment. She opined that the best learning occurs when students can relate to the subject matter and grasp the importance of what they are learning. She imparted that she hopes to instill the value of the natural environment in her students, and she said it will take community effort to ensure that resources are sustained for the future.

MS. HEITZ mentioned the "one-to-one" initiative in 2006, which provided students with their own digital tools. She said she transformed her classroom to use on-line tools, and her job shifted from that of full-time lecturer to coach and facilitator. Students have access to a wealth of visual resources individually or in teams, and they create "smartbuild" videos demonstrating what they have learned, which they then post on their teams' "wiki" pages. Ms. Heitz relayed that students find "current, interesting, and relevant science news articles" and create on-line posts to share what they have learned. She said her marine biology students worked on a year-long project to monitor the growth of organisms in the harbor and the water and weather changes that may impact this growth. The students utilize their laptop computers to publish their data on-line each month. Ms. Heitz noted that her students are working with two other science classrooms - one from Valdez and one from Maine - through the use of "Google Docs" and "Skype."

MS. HEITZ stated that she has a strong relationship with the Copper River Watershed Project. She said three years ago her seventh-grade class adopted a local pond to monitor throughout the year, and the pond was nominated and accepted into the [Anadromous Waters Catalog], which helps identify and offers protection to spawning salmon habitats. Since then, each of her seventh-grade classes has further developed the monitoring and illustrated the importance of the habitat in final projects done by various means, including art projects, radio broadcasts, newspaper articles, and videos.

[8:11:53 AM](#)

MS. HEITZ said digital transformation has allowed her to utilize technology that supports her ability to teach and empowers her students to develop skills that will qualify them for jobs in the future that may not yet exist. She talked about imminent educational reform across the U.S. and students' need for up-to-date learning resources, creativity in knowledge acquisition and demonstration, a higher level of thinking skills, and development of global perspective. She opined that the way to achieve this is through one-to-one access to technology, which entails functional and true broadband connectivity, current hardware and software, the time for teachers to learn to use technology and incorporate it into their own curricular goals, and access to continued technical support. She said educators, policy makers, and parents cannot guide students in their learning without being learners themselves. She stated, "Reform

begins with transformation." She suggested transformation begin at the state and district levels with a vision of "using technology as a positive means to develop globally competitive graduates from our schools and continuing support for educational technology."

[8:15:47 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON said the legislature has been working to transform the educational system, and said it appears from the presentation that the change is a cultural change for teachers and the administration related to how instruction will take place. He asked how receptive the teachers and administrators are to change from a static to a dynamic mode, and what the legislature can do to facilitate that change.

[8:17:29 AM](#)

MS. HEITZ answered that a change to culture is difficult for anyone; however, the need for change and the positive effect of change "is a start." She said [academic] standards and technology must be melded together in order for students to succeed. She recommended the legislature look at the complete picture; support must reach to the administrators so that teachers can work on the positive cultural change in their schools. In response to a follow-up question, Ms. Heitz stated that once the vision is adopted and the support is in place from the legislature, reform can take place. She clarified that she is talking about support for the system, not just financial support.

[8:20:58 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK pointed out that the legislature does not enter the realm of pedagogy; therefore, it is important to repeatedly ask how the legislature can help without meddling in what teachers are doing.

[8:21:30 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON commended the speaker for her achievements and asked that given financial constraints, what the two most important areas are that need to be focused on and funded.

MS. HEITZ indicated that teacher training in technology and having that technology in hand is key. She pointed out that

iPads and iTouch devices are affordable when money is saved on the purchase of textbooks.

[8:24:04 AM](#)

MS. HEITZ, in response to Representative Cissna, said access to the remote areas of the state requires creativity. She opined that bringing parents and elders into remote schools to see how the students benefit from technology is important, because cultural change will not happen if students do not have "the whole picture," which includes their families. She said distance delivery options via video conferencing and other possibilities provide a window to the world. She said it is still possible to have hands-on and cultural learning while using technology to enhance it.

[8:28:39 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON said he anticipates that classroom management will remain key, but may be perceived differently. He asked about the techniques and expectations that may be altered in this type of change.

MS. HEITZ indicated that any teaching style requires groundwork to be laid. She said teacher training could present a variety of ways to create and manage teaching environments that allow for dynamic interactions.

CHAIR DICK suggested that combining the expertise of the last five recipients of "Teacher of the Year" may result in the best model possible.

SB 199-VOCATIONAL EDUCATION FUNDING FACTOR

[Contains discussion of SB 170 and SB 84]

[8:31:15 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK announced that the next order of business would be SENATE BILL NO. 199 "An Act relating to the vocational and technical instruction funding factor for public school funding."

[8:31:48 AM](#)

SENATOR JOE THOMAS, Alaska State Legislature, presented SB 199 on behalf of Senator Kevin Meyer, sponsor. He explained that Senator Meyer could not be present, and he indicated that he had

been chosen to present SB 199, because the proposed legislation is based on [SB 84], a bill Senator Thomas introduced last year.

SENATOR THOMAS paraphrased some of the information from the sponsor's statement [included in the committee packet]. He said research shows that vocational-technical programs have consistently increased graduation rates nationwide and in Alaska's schools. He said the ideal high school curriculum needs to incorporate both academic rigor and cutting-edge career preparation. Senator Thomas reviewed that SB 84, which passed unanimously out of the House and the Senate, established a separate funding system for vocational education. He relayed that when SB 84 was introduced, "the committee" thought it best to limit the money to high schools in order to get the best return on the investment. However, since then school districts have requested the legislature change that provision to allow the allotted money to be used for students in jr. high school. as well. Senator Meyer has introduced SB 199 to that end. Senator Thomas reported that the implementation of SB 84 has been a resounding success in schools across the state, and he urged the committee to support SB 199. He noted that he and Senator Meyer's aide were available to answer questions.

[8:33:42 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON inquired why the committee packet does not contain feedback from the school districts, and asked if anyone from the school districts was available to testify.

[8:34:04 AM](#)

SENATOR THOMAS said he did not know who was available to testify, but reiterated that it was in response to the request of the school districts that SB 199 was introduced.

[8:34:44 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KAWASAKI observed that the fiscal note has no further funding requested. He asked Senator Thomas if he thinks the ability to use money for jr. high schools will result in a lack of money in high schools.

[8:35:18 AM](#)

SENATOR THOMAS related that the school districts have said they think there will be sufficient money to spread between jr. high schools and high schools.

[8:36:32 AM](#)

CAROL COMEAU, Superintendent, Anchorage School District, testified in support of SB 199, and said the district stands strongly behind the effort to be able to move the funding.

[8:37:41 AM](#)

PEGGY COWAN, Superintendent, North Slope Borough School District, stated that the [North Slope Borough] School Board has not taken an official stance on SB 199. However, she said early childhood education and an early start to career and technical education is important; therefore, it makes sense to allow funding for vocational education in middle school.

[8:38:48 AM](#)

BRUCE JOHNSON, Executive Director, Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA), stated that the council has seven position statements, one of which pertains to career and technical education. He said he can endorse the concept of SB 199 to "move this money down to the middle school level." He said the proposed change is important for many districts, and he expressed hope that the legislature will support it.

[8:40:19 AM](#)

SUZANNE ARMSTRONG, President, Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc. - Alaska Chapter (ABC - Alaska Chapter), stated support for SB 199 and SB 170. She said the association has identified key issues in the construction industry, two of which are the high demand for skilled workers and attrition. She said ABC - Alaska Chapter members see SB 199 and SB 170 as possible means by which to start engaging Alaska youth about the opportunities that exist in the construction industry, as well as in other technical and vocational career paths. She said ABC - Alaska Chapter's registered apprentice program was started in 2001, and since then over 200 apprentices have completed the program. The association participates in job fairs in an effort to educate young Alaskans about the opportunities in the industry. She said ABC - Alaska Chapter sees SB 170 and SB 199 as complements to the efforts already undertaken by the industry to recruit and train a qualified workforce.

[8:43:00 AM](#)

RICK RIOS, Acting Director, Career & Technical Education (CTE), Anchorage School District (ASD), stated support of SB 199 and SB 170. He said he has 44 years of experience as a vocational teacher and administrator, a business owner, and a community leader, and he supports all legislative actions that help prepare people for "life-long career contributions to their respective communities." Mr. Rios opined that without a career choice, people wander from job to job - low paying jobs that require limited skills and [offer] no security, whereas those who concentrate on a single career area are greater contributors to employer and community, have increased desire for more education and training, and earn higher wages. He said young people need this information, and proffered that the proposed legislation would provide it. He said education without relevant career information and without career and technical training is driving students to drop out of school even before they reach high school.

[8:44:19 AM](#)

MR. RIOS said the 2010 Alaska Career & Technical Education Plan begins with a call for every student to have a "personal learning and career plan" (PLCP), as does the new 2012 Anchorage School District CTE plan soon available for public comment. He put forth that some people think children in middle school are too young to know what they want to be. He said that may be true for many, but it is because of ignorance, not because they don't care. He explained that students have been denied career information and, thus, do not know about work and careers. He said the Anchorage School District has found that students thrive in their education when given career information. He relayed that enrollment in the district's Construction Trades Academy and Health Career Academy has increased by five times, due largely to the partnerships with industry leaders who get involved. He said, "It started with you, the Alaska Legislature." He urged the committee to pass both [SB 199 and SB 170] and, whenever possible, to provide funding to "ensure that every citizen of Alaska gets career information and guidance - starting in middle school."

[8:46:02 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON asked Mr. Rios for his response to the idea that career planning is beneficial even if the student changes his/her career path.

MR. RIOS answered that the paradigm has changed significantly since the mid-'70s, when people were trained in a skill for a particular job. Now, he emphasized, career pathways are broad, which allows for flexibility and a multitude of changes within a specific job.

[8:48:27 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KAWASAKI asked if the Anchorage School District provides any [career-related] direction in the K-6 classrooms.

MR. RIOS answered that most of his attention has been in the secondary schools. He said younger children have yet to see the broad scope of jobs within each field. He stated, "That's why we need to start - at the middle school for sure, and even more so at the elementary level - ... showing that careers in these specific areas are big and broad and available to all students."

[8:50:36 AM](#)

MIKE ANDREWS, Alaska Works Partnership, stated support for SB 199 and SB 170, and said that emphasis for career path guidance is important and connects eventually with postsecondary coaching. Helping to get more of this attention into the middle school will prove important, he concluded.

[8:52:51 AM](#)

JOHN MACKINNON, Executive Director, Associated General Contractors (AGC), stated support for SB 199 and SB 170. He relayed that AGC is a construction trade association representing 650 business members throughout the state, and is one of the founding partners and current overseers of the Alaska Construction Academy. He indicated that employment in the trades is now considered a profession with stature on par with most other professions. He opined that vocational counseling should be part of education and counseling in all public schools, and he reiterated his support for SB 199 and SB 170.

[8:54:13 AM](#)

DIANE MAPLES testified on behalf of herself in support of SB 199. She commended the legislature for its support of SB 84 last year. She opined that early guidance and support help students to make solid decisions and discover opportunities that will help them as they enter the workforce.

[8:56:10 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK, after ascertaining that there was no one else who wished to testify, closed public testimony.

[8:56:19 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRUITT moved to report SB 199 out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying zero fiscal note. There being no objection, SB 199 was reported out of the House Education Standing Committee.

[8:56:41 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:57 a.m. to 8:59 a.m.

SB 170-VOCATIONAL ED. COUNSELING IN SCHOOLS

[Contains discussion of SB 199 and SB 84]

[8:59:21 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK announced that the final order of business would be SENATE BILL NO. 170, "An Act requiring vocational education counseling in public schools."

[8:59:51 AM](#)

SENATOR JOE THOMAS, Alaska State Legislature, presented SB 170 as sponsor. He noted that many people had given testimony on both SB 170 and SB 199 simultaneously during the hearing on SB 199, since the two bills are closely aligned. He paraphrased the sponsor statement [included in the committee packet] and offered further details pertaining to it.

SENATOR THOMAS stated that one of the major functions of public education is to prepare the workforce of the future. He said most schools are doing a good job of that by offering a wide variety of programs to help children investigate what kinds of jobs they want to do when they graduate. He opined that it is crucial to make important use of the money re-established for vocational education in SB 84, [which passed both bodies last year], and ensure that students receive the benefit of maximum vocational funding.

SENATOR THOMAS said SB 170 would ensure that young people have the knowledge necessary to make career choices, by offering career counseling in the seventh, ninth, and eleventh grades. It would provide guidance and resources to districts that are not already offering a comprehensive vocational counseling program. He said often students do not have accurate knowledge or information about careers; they may have a career in mind, but are often unaware of what it takes to be affective in that career. He said the sooner students know what a career entails, the better off their vocational success will be. Senator Thomas explained that seventh grade is when students begin to make critical choices; ninth grade is when they start high school and may need help in choosing what courses are necessary toward achieving a career; and eleventh grade is when students are thinking about graduation and completing course work for the occupation they have decided to pursue. He said "we" don't want students to miss out on taking the courses necessary for their success in life.

SENATOR THOMAS said the Department of Education & Early Development has indicated in its fiscal note that it already has the resources needed to "carry this out." He opined that it is vital that [the state] give its children the tools necessary to prepare for the future and become productive members of the workforce. He urged the committee to support SB 170.

[9:03:06 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KAWASAKI noted that under SB 170, districts unable to afford vocational education and counseling shall request that the department provide the necessary resources. He asked the bill sponsor how that correlates with the zero fiscal note.

SENATOR THOMAS answered that the schools have programs in place which can easily be expanded at no additional cost. He deferred to his staff for further comment.

MURRAY RICHMAN, Staff, Senator Joe Thomas, Alaska State Legislature, echoed the statements of Senator Thomas, sponsor, and said the legislation will allow for the expansion.

REPRESENTATIVE KAWASAKI ventured that an on-line system may not replace a one-on-one guidance counselor.

[9:05:10 AM](#)

SENATOR THOMAS indicated that the concept would be to have someone available at the school who would use the on-line program as a tool in discussing programs with students; the student would not necessarily have to understand a program without instruction.

MR. RICHMAN said the program is a comprehensive one.

[9:06:02 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON referred to the last paragraph of the fiscal note, which read as follows:

In order to ensure this free resource meets the intent of this bill, a review of this available resource by counselors/teachers/advisors would be recommended. This review could include recommendations for specific staff training and identify how students are given sufficient time and guidance to learn its content. This review falls under the scope of allowable expenses under the current federal Career and Technical Education funding.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON asked if there would be funding from the federal government that could be garnered and passed on to the department to ensure that the teachers would be adequately trained.

[9:07:12 AM](#)

SENATOR THOMAS deferred to his staff and to the department.

[9:07:20 AM](#)

MR. RICHMAN said the department has indicated that all resources are in place to support the passage of this legislation.

[9:07:52 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON asked to hear from the department.

[9:08:00 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRUITT offered his understanding that SB 199 addressed secondary education, which encompasses grades six through twelve. He noted that SB 170 specifies that counseling would be started in seventh grade. He asked about "readiness"

in sixth grade and waiting to begin counseling until seventh grade.

[9:08:43 AM](#)

SENATOR THOMAS responded that both bills intend to affect seventh through twelfth grade. In response to a follow-up question, he offered his understanding that the bill would not preclude the funds being used for sixth graders who are in middle school.

[9:10:07 AM](#)

MR. RICHMAN said there is a provision in the bill that if a school is already offering a comprehensive vocational education program, "this does not supersede that." He added, "If a school would be offering that in sixth grade, in a middle school, I think that would be in the spirit of the bill, in compliance with the statute."

REPRESENTATIVE PRUITT commented that if [sixth graders] are "part of the group," then the opportunities should be available to them, as well.

MR. RICHMAN explained that current statute defines secondary school as being seventh through twelfth grade.

REPRESENTATIVE PRUITT suggested that might be something to consider.

[9:11:07 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON indicated concern for the years being addressed in the bill, and asked to have specification, and testimony, to address the years being stipulated. He asked if districts might be restricted depending on the years that are being set in statute.

[9:12:33 AM](#)

MR. RICHMAN said the bill establishes minimum standards for vocational education, without creating any undue burden on the department or districts. He explained the dynamics of the grades and how these years were identified as the crucial years. He said additional attention could be brought to bear, but there may be a cost involved.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON recalled KeyTrain and WorkKeys being introduced at different grades, and asked to have testifiers specifically address the years being proposed in the bill and how they coordinate with what exists.

9:15:45 AM

PEGGY COWAN, Superintendent, North Slope Borough School District, stated support for SB 170, which she characterized as "a reminder to include regular career counseling in a comprehensive counseling program." She said the district has individual learning plans for all students, and career goals are a part of those at the secondary level. She reported that seven of the district's schools have full-time counselors, primarily funded through National Petroleum Reserve-backed grants. Two of the district's schools have part-time counselors, and two have none. She expressed appreciation for the provision in the proposed bill that would provide technical assistance from the Department of Education & Early Development to those schools without school counselors.

MS. COWAN, regarding the previous questions related to secondary school, said in her district the middle school students are sometimes grouped with high school students, sometimes grouped with elementary students, and are sometimes on their own, depending on how many students are in each grade.

9:18:03 AM

MS. COWAN, in response to Representative Pruitt, said individual learning plans begin early, and counseling is offered depending on the cohort that a student is in. For example, she ventured that if an eighth-grade student is at a school with grades nine through twelve, then he/she would "get the ninth-grade counseling at that time."

MS. COWAN, in response to Representative Kawasaki, reiterated that there are individual learning plans with career goals, which are administered by teachers in schools without counselors. She said students in schools without counselors do not get the same benefit as those in schools with counselors. She spoke of budget cuts, and said the district is fortunate that it will be able to pay for three school counselors next year with National Petroleum Reserve - Alaska (NPR-A) funds, since the budget cannot support them. At this juncture, she said, counselors will not be added to schools that do not already have them.

[9:23:21 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON asked if WorkKeys could be interpreted to provide the eleventh-grade students with the requirement for career and vocational counseling.

MS. COWAN answered no. She said she does not think career counseling is comprised of only giving a test and providing the test scores, but views it as a broader program, including individual learning plans and the interactions that the district currently has with vocational partnerships.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON asked Ms. Cowan what she interprets the bill would require her district to do.

MS. COWAN said the specifics will need to be developed, but the bill requirements will provide a responsibility to be incorporated into district policy.

[9:28:46 AM](#)

BRUCE JOHNSON, Executive Director, Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA), said SB 170 is an attempt at providing the important counseling component in vocational education. He agreed that not having a staff counselor can be difficult, but the system will not afford much beyond an itinerant counselor supported by someone on site. He expressed appreciation to the department for being willing to step up to assist districts that may not have any program currently. He said career education has existed in the state for 40 years in some form. The proposed legislation acknowledges that some districts have programs that can be expanded upon, but does not mandate others to comply with a program that would be burdensome. He said that the legislation is a step in the direction that districts are already going. He stated, "I don't think there is a significant burden here, and if you are going to have a comprehensive CTE program, which we advocate for in our joint position statements, this has to be part of it. We're willing to roll up our sleeves and work with the department to make this happen."

[9:32:54 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON said it appears that an individual career plan is the intent, and vocational education counseling beginning in seventh grade may be appropriate. He questioned

how the districts might interpret the requirements and whether specificity is necessary.

MR. JOHNSON stated his belief that the proposed bill, as currently written, would provide for a variety of interpretations. He said superintendents meet with the Department of Education & Early Development in July to get the department's interpretation on any legislation that may affect the school districts and to determine the minimum steps to be taken. He indicated that under SB 170, the minimum pertains to the requirement for counseling for grades seven, nine, and eleven. He said every student needs to have an individual learning plan, as well, but a high school teacher dealing with 180 children a day faces challenges in getting that job done with everything else that must be done. He opined that to "keep it broad and focus our energy on career development" is "appropriate for today."

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON said he supports the bill, but wants to ensure flexibility toward the goal of having individual career plans. He expressed his hope that Mr. Johnson would come back next year and tell the legislature what he has "decided is the interpretation of vocational education and training counseling."

[9:38:00 AM](#)

BARBARA HUFFTUCKNESS, Director, Governmental and Legislative Affairs, Teamsters Local 959, stated support for SB 170 and SB 199, and said Teamsters Local 959 supports this type of legislation, as it is a benefit when students arrive with skills already learned.

[9:40:57 AM](#)

SUZANNE ARMSTRONG, President, Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc. - Alaska Chapter (ABC - Alaska Chapter), stated support for SB 170, and referred to her earlier testimony on SB 199, which pertained also to SB 170.

[9:41:44 AM](#)

CYNDY CURRAN, Director, Teaching and Learning Support, Department of Education & Early Development, referred to the committee question regarding federal funding. She said federal funding does not supplant state funding, but can be used to support the effort.

[9:45:49 AM](#)

MS. CURRAN in response to Representative Wilson, said the department has moved to using technical assistance, including using webinars and doing archiving. She said webinars can be sent out via digital video disc (DVD).

[9:47:17 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KAWASAKI reviewed the requirements under Sections 1 and 2 of the bill, and brought attention to the zero fiscal note. He said he would like to see [SB 170 and SB 199] pass together as a package, but said it would be appropriate to attach funding to the bill.

[9:48:21 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON expressed concern for the process and how an effective implementation might be brought forth to every district. He observed that a variety of methods appears to exist, but integration of a set plan is not a requirement. He said it would be important to receive a report from the department, in the next year, to describe how many and which districts are implementing individual career plans to accomplish this goal. He stated his presumption that "there will be a meeting with the department to go over what those expectations are for satisfying this vocational education and training counseling."

[9:50:10 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK noted that questions remain to be answered.

CHAIR DICK closed public testimony.

CHAIR DICK announced that SB 170 was held over.

[9:51:11 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:51 a.m.