

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 30, 2012

8:04 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Scott Kawasaki

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION: SOUTHEAST ISLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT

- HEARD

PRESENTATION: ALASKA TECH-PREP CONSORTIUM

- HEARD

HOUSE BILL NO. 352

"An Act relating to public school curriculum and textbook restrictions based on science, resource development, and sustained yield principles."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 352

SHORT TITLE: RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT CURRICULUM

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) DICK

02/22/12	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/22/12	(H)	EDC
03/30/12	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106

WITNESS REGISTER

LAUREN BURCH, Superintendent
Southeast Island School District
Thorne Bay, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented a PowerPoint titled "Southeast Island School District."

CATHY LECOMPTE, Member
Board of Directors
Alaska Tech Prep Consortium
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented a PowerPoint titled "Growing Our Own: A Systemic Framework for Education and Workforce Development in Alaska."

DIANE MAPLES, Statewide Tech Prep Coordinator
Alaska Tech Prep Consortium
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented a PowerPoint titled "Growing Our Own: A Systemic Framework for Education and Workforce Development in Alaska."

ALAN DICK
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Introduced HB 352, as the prime sponsor of the bill.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:04:15 AM](#)

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

Presentation: Southeast Island School District

[8:04:51 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK announced that the first order of business would be a presentation by the Southeast Island School District.

[8:05:11 AM](#)

LAUREN BURCH, Superintendent, Southeast Island School District, directing attention to slide 2, "Greenhouses," and slide 3, "Renewable Energy," reported that the district priorities had been greenhouses and wood fired boilers, as both were a means to lower costs and both offered jobs to the community. He noted that the students cut the wood for the boilers, and did custodial and maintenance work to earn money for their outside programs. He shared that this engendered pride in their schools. He explained that there were 8 schools with about 10 students each, and a bigger school with about 75 students. He reported that although the district sustained a \$100,000 loss on its food program, the attendance had risen remarkably once there was a food program. He explained that the greenhouse program would help supplement the foods and cut the costs, while allowing the excess to be sold to the local stores. He commented that this also allowed students to try new foods, stating "if they can grow it, they'll try it."

[8:10:26 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK asked for a geographic description of the district.

MR. BURCH, describing that the school district was largely on Prince of Wales Island and included Port Alexander and Hyder, stated that access was primarily by airplane, though there was a road system to about half the schools.

[8:11:31 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON, commenting on the cost for travel around the school district, said that she had paid \$1,000 to fly to the Port Alexander school for the graduation ceremony.

MR. BURCH directed attention to slide 6, "Enrollment and Poverty Rates Fiscal Years 2004 to 2012," and stated that enrollment had remained constant for the past two years with about 160 students, arresting a downward trend from 2004. He pointed to the second chart on the slide, "Poverty Rates," and said that the poverty rate had remained constant at 70 percent. He moved on to slide 7, "Graduation Rate Comparison," which reflected the dramatic success. He stated that parents and students were treated "like a consumer, as a business," and were involved in hiring, discussions on curriculum, and activities that did not require travel costs. He listed ways the district had cut costs, which included the contracting and combining of services. He said that the successes of the school district made it difficult to access grants, as grants were targeted toward

failing schools and districts. He declared that tenure had been an issue, especially as many of the schools in the district only had one teacher. He stated that even an average teacher who was not working hard could close a school because parents would remove their kids from the school. He noted that he moved the poor performing teachers between sites to keep the test scores from permanently dropping. He offered his belief that a change in the tenure laws might result in either better performance by the poor teachers, or termination. He shared that even a buyout had been offered to the ineffective tenured teachers. He expressed his confusion with the structure for school funding and the inefficiency of the "safety net." As most of the schools in the district had 10 students, if one student left, the school would close, and the remaining students would be enrolled at another school. This, however, would not result in any financial benefit, as the next funding increase would be for 20 students at a school. He suggested a more equitable system would be a percentage of funding that he could count on; offering funding based on the number of students, instead of closing a school falling below a minimum number of students. He said that although there was a lot of student movement within the district, students stayed in the same school with a good teacher. He said that a 3 percent excess in operating margin was a "major miracle." He noted the difficulty in planning for a school when the enrollment was always uncertain. He said that correspondence programs, boarding schools, and even other school districts were a continual threat to lure students away from his district schools. He reported that a large PFD distribution in October also threatened the attendance in schools.

[8:24:01 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FEIGE asked if a change in the student count system, using the current year count for the following year funding, would help the small schools.

[8:24:27 AM](#)

MR. BURCH stated his support for that proposal as it allowed predictability; he pointed out, however, the difficulty of opening a school which had been closed, as the funding would not be available for a year.

[8:25:28 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON offered her belief that similar problems occurred across Alaska. She encouraged the superintendent to speak with other legislative committees.

[8:26:50 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK commented that this presentation had brought forward a level of candor and reality.

[8:27:11 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CISSNA noted that other schools with similar issues had long existed across Alaska.

[8:28:09 AM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease.

Presentation: Alaska Tech-Prep Consortium

[8:29:01 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK announced that the next order of business would be a presentation by the Alaska Tech-Prep Consortium.

[8:29:42 AM](#)

CATHY LECOMPTE, Member, Board of Directors, Alaska Tech Prep Consortium, directed attention to slide 2, "Collaborative Action within Network to Align, Link and Leverage Individual Efforts," which depicted the coordination to align efforts. She noted that pockets of greatness in the state were being brought together to create momentum for systemic change for students. She gave a brief "History of Tech Prep in Alaska," slide 3, and said that it had been created by the Department of Education and Early Development, the Department of Labor & Workforce Development, and the University of Alaska in 2004 as a consortium model. She reported that the consortium included 44 school districts, the University of Alaska, regional training centers, businesses, and state agencies. She moved on to slide 4, "Alaska Tech Consortium Results," declaring that 35,000 students had earned college credits in high school since 2007. She explained that the Tech Prep mission was to bring a high school teacher and a university professor together to form an agreement for a student curriculum for college credits. She stated that the cost of \$25 per credit to earn college credit in

high school had saved students and parents more than \$3.5 million toward comparable credits during college attendance.

[8:32:45 AM](#)

DIANE MAPLES, Statewide Tech Prep Coordinator, Alaska Tech Prep Consortium, pointed out that this did not include the savings for lab fees, books, and additional university costs.

MS. LECOMPTE explained that a student could earn credit in high school Tech Prep programs, transfer these toward a technical certification, and thereby save time and money. She offered anecdotal data that many students had remained in high school when they realized that these opportunities existed.

[8:35:25 AM](#)

MS. LECOMPTE directed attention to slide 5, "Evolution of Tech Prep," and explained that the curriculum alignment, built on the relationship between the secondary and post-secondary teachers, was jeopardized by a transfer by either teacher. She reported that the Consortium, upon evaluation of its programs, had determined that the curriculum alignment was too dependent on the teacher relationships, and needed a system of maintenance beyond any changes. She said that the Consortium was now working to bring organizations together to build this system. She provided slide 6, "What About the Student Experience?" The system initially focused from the elementary grades to middle school on the student experience, as a pathway of exploration for career options. In high school, an articulation agreement focused more closely on career preparation and development.

[8:38:18 AM](#)

MS. LECOMPTE presented slide 7, "Program of Study in Alaska," noting that the student was the focal point and curriculum, employer engagement, accountability and evaluation, professional development, technical skills assessment, postsecondary and career readiness, guidance counseling and advising, teaching and learning strategies, cross-agency partnerships, legislation policies and funding all revolved around that point. She elaborated on some of these aspects and emphasized that access to distance courses was important to meet student needs.

[8:41:21 AM](#)

MS. LECOMPTE indicating slide 8, "Many Conversations," reviewed the progress of the prior eight months. She shared that a task force had been formed to replace the Tech Prep policy board. At the same time, the Alaska Association for Career and Technical Education (AACTE) and the Institute of the North also held similar conversations, so together they launched a collaborative effort, the Alaska Career and Technical Education Plan (AK CTE). She described the framework used to devise the program, slide 9, "CTE Alaska Style," and clarified that CTE was a Career and Technical Education program created by the Department of Labor & Workforce Development, Department of Education and Early Development, and the University of Alaska. She spoke about the Alaska Career Information System (AKCIS), slide 10, and encouraged its use for the personal learning and career plan from kindergarten to twelfth grade. She described some of the modules which allowed students to determine a future pathway and the necessary education and income. She shared that the system was available on line, so that students could access it no matter where they were going to school.

[8:46:26 AM](#)

MS. LECOMPTE indicated slide 11, "CTE Alaska Style How the POS framework realizes the CTE Plan," and spoke about the curriculum alignment for success. She moved on to slide 12, "CTE Strategy 3," and discussed e-learning and access for students to programs and coursework. She described a progressive math class that was delivered on-line, while a teacher simultaneously supported the program, through the Collaborative Teaching Model.

[8:49:52 AM](#)

MS. MAPLES reported that the state had been awarded a Broadband Technologies Opportunity Program grant, which allowed better internet access for courses, programs, and resources. When the student was the center focus, she said, possibilities opened up and access to course delivery could be cultivated through creative means. She declared that the consortium provided access to the best practices already existing in Alaska.

[8:51:52 AM](#)

MS. LECOMPTE reviewed slide 13, "CTE Strategy 4," and explained that teacher professional development was integral for connecting teacher and employer externships that allowed teachers to understand the real time use of the curriculum. She explained slide 14, "CTE Strategy 5," and said that students

could access learning through technology beyond the physical plant of schools.

8:53:01 AM

MS. LECOMPTE indicated slide 15, "CTE Strategy 6," and explained that braided funding was created when cross agency partnerships supported a position, such as the consortium. She declared that the framework was ready to implement the model, and that they were now looking for partners, slide 16 "Implementing the Model." She declared that the initial focus was to the health industry, and its need for an allied workforce. She explained how this partnership with the Alaska Health Workforce Coalition was progressing, slide 17, "Action Plan Objectives." Currently, an integrated Program of Study framework had been developed, and was now ready to be implemented in three local high school districts. She shared that district partnerships were still being sought to facilitate and implement the strategy. She presented slide 18, "AHCW Program of Study Task Force," and stated that a funding partner was necessary for a position to oversee the continued development of current technical education in Alaska and its implementation. She noted a need for a longitudinal database to measure success and validate the program.

8:57:16 AM

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON asked how many districts were involved with the five classes currently offered.

MS. LECOMPTE replied that 44 districts had articulation agreements. She explained that the five aligned health courses were part of the framework to the system that would be provided to the districts.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON, describing how the courses were working in Wrangell, said that some high school students would graduate with 30 college credits.

MS. LECOMPTE, in response to Representative P. Wilson, said that Alaska's Learning Network (AKLN) was an agency partner, and she described how a holistic grid was used to determine a program of study that could align with an Alaska Performance Scholarship.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON asked about the funding for the consortium.

MS. LECOMPTE explained that, although the original federal funding source was no longer available, six states were now using this framework to broaden the focus from Tech Prep to a more systemic view for academic and career and technical courses. She opined that support may be forthcoming, but emphasized that the current momentum needed to be maintained.

[9:02:38 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK asked how much funding was needed.

MS. LECOMPTE replied that the need was for \$302,000.

[9:02:48 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON asked if she had made a presentation to the House Finance Committee, as that committee was currently talking with other groups about education funding.

[9:04:08 AM](#)

MS. MAPLES said that, although the university had included a request to the governor for funding to this program for three years, it had been vetoed.

MS. LECOMPTE stated that the University of Alaska had been very supportive to Tech Prep. She expressed her excitement for enlarging the program into the systemic holistic framework. She declared the necessity for agreement to the model framework.

[9:05:26 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON noted that standards and individual student tracking could now be implemented with this program. As it appeared to engage the students, he declared the need for its implementation, instead of waiting for more studies.

[9:07:11 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK said that, as 93 percent of ninth graders would not finish a four year college degree program, this systemic framework appeared to fulfill the need.

[9:08:13 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON offered her agreement and stressed the need to fund and continue this work.

HB 352-RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT CURRICULUM

[9:09:04 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 352, "An Act relating to public school curriculum and textbook restrictions based on science, resource development, and sustained yield principles."

[Chair Dick passed the gavel to Vice Chair Pruitt]

The committee took a brief at-ease.

[9:10:54 AM](#)

ALAN DICK, Alaska State Legislature, said that, although HB 352 was a simple and forthright bill, it was important and he had substantial constituent concern for this issue. He presented HB 352, paraphrasing from the sponsor statement, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

"An Act relating to public school curriculum and textbook restrictions based on science, resource development, and sustained yield principles."

Alaska State Constitution
Section 2. General Authority

"The legislature shall provide for the utilization, development, and conservation of all natural resources belonging to the State, including land and waters, for the maximum benefit of its people".

Like many other states, Alaska has educators who come from various backgrounds who may be unfamiliar with Alaska's constitutional directives regarding State resources. The purpose of this bill is to clearly state that the curriculum in local schools supports the intent of the Constitution.

Educational materials must give parity to the viewpoint of use and development as well as conservation of all natural resources. Educational materials should recognize that the economic well-being of the State is totally dependent upon careful, sustainable resource development.

[9:12:31 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK said that many of the teachers in the state were not familiar with the constitutional directives regarding State resources. He offered his belief that sustainable, responsible resource development was necessary for adequate financial management; therefore, it was important for an awareness to be brought to the educational field of an adequate balance and parity in the curriculum for responsible resource development.

[9:15:24 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON asked if the proposed bill would also include the university. She encouraged the sponsor to consider that inclusion.

VICE CHAIR PRUITT, referring to the fiscal note, opined that it did not include the university.

CHAIR DICK, in response to Representative P. Wilson, declared that he would be open to "any friendly amendment you would like to make in that regard."

[9:16:39 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON, reading from the proposed bill, page 1, line 6, "shall base curriculum development and textbook selection" on these principles, asked how a biology course would be taught using a textbook that did not meet the stipulated criteria for utilization of wild game.

CHAIR DICK responded that a portion of a textbook could be used, and then other materials could be used to balance the curriculum.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON offered his belief that the proposed bill stated that textbook selection shall be based on those principles listed in AS 14.30.380(A).

VICE CHAIR PRUITT suggested that the perspective of the Department of Education and Early Development would be useful.

[9:18:34 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON acknowledged that every school district was required to select textbooks, but as this was a proposed

state law, it could restrict the selection. Declaring his concern for unintended consequences to individual school districts, he suggested hearing testimony from the districts.

[9:19:39 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK expressed that there was not any intent to "limit anybody to anything." He suggested a friendly amendment to base curriculum development and implementation on the constitutional principles, and remove "textbook selection." This would allow freedom for the selection of textbooks, as long as the curriculum recognized "the balance that's reflected in the constitution."

[9:20:24 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON offered her belief that the proposed bill was "a policy call that we need to be thinking about on what we think should be taught" and that it was necessary to teach that responsible resource development could keep "everything as pristine as we can."

[9:22:33 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK suggested listening to public testimony.

[9:22:53 AM](#)

VICE CHAIR PRUITT directed attention to a similar program in Utah to help the citizens better understand that state income was derived from resource development.

[9:24:22 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK reiterated that the proposed legislation was not intended to create a limiting factor.

[9:24:59 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON suggested including all the teaching institutions of the state in the proposed legislation.

[9:25:27 AM](#)

VICE CHAIR PRUITT offered his belief that private institutions could not have the state dictate curriculum.

[9:26:16 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON reminded the committee that the proposed legislation would not apply to the private and religious schools, with or without funding. He referred to page 1, lines 11-13 of the proposed bill, and read: "utilization and development of all nonrenewable resources in addition to encouragement of balancing resource development and conservation" He suggested discussion with the state representatives involved in the dispute regarding the proposed Pebble Mine.

[9:27:34 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK, in response to Representative Seaton, explained that the intent of the proposed legislation was to ensure that any teaching reflected the Alaska State Constitution, not to mandate what was being taught.

[9:28:31 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON read the constitutional passage from the sponsor statement: "The legislature shall provide for the utilization, development, and conservation of natural resources...." He determined that it had a different focus than page 1, lines 11-13, of the proposed legislation: "utilization and development of all nonrenewable resources in addition to encouragement of balancing resource development and conservation...." He questioned whether this was a parallel construction to the constitution.

[9:29:14 AM](#)

VICE CHAIR PRUITT offered his belief that everyone should have an understanding of what drives the state economy, and he allowed that the Fiscal Policy Committee was wrestling with this same question. He declared a necessity to state that both views for resource development were presented.

[9:30:36 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON reiterated that the construction of the proposed bill needed to ensure that the intent was upheld.

[9:31:04 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK declared his desire for meaningful legislation with no long term consequences.

VICE CHAIR PRUITT reported that other states had done this, as well.

[HB 352 was held over]

[9:31:53 AM](#)

[Vice Chair Pruitt returned the gavel to Chair Dick]

[9:32:06 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:32 a.m.