

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 16, 2011  
8:00 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator Kevin Meyer, Co-Chair  
Senator Joe Thomas, Co-Chair  
Senator Bettye Davis, Vice Chair  
Senator Hollis French

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Senator Gary Stevens

**OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT**

Senator Cathy Giessel

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

**SENATE BILL NO. 43**

"An Act renaming the Alaska performance scholarship and relating to the scholarship and tax credits applicable to contributions to the scholarship; establishing the Alaska performance scholarship investment fund and the Alaska performance scholarship award fund and relating to the funds; making conforming amendments; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED CSSB 43(EDC) OUT OF COMMITTEE

**SENATE BILL NO. 83**

"An Act providing for payment and loan incentives to public school teachers for national board certification."

- HEARD AND HELD

**SENATE BILL NO. 8**

"An Act relating to questionnaires and surveys administered in the public schools."

- SCHEDULED BUT NOT HEARD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: SB 43

SHORT TITLE: ALASKA PERFORMANCE SCHOLARSHIPS

SPONSOR(s): RULES BY REQUEST OF THE GOVERNOR

01/19/11	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/19/11	(S)	EDC, FIN
02/02/11	(S)	EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
02/02/11	(S)	Heard & Held
02/02/11	(S)	MINUTE(EDC)
02/04/11	(S)	EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
02/04/11	(S)	Heard & Held
02/04/11	(S)	MINUTE(EDC)
02/07/11	(S)	EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
02/07/11	(S)	Heard & Held
02/07/11	(S)	MINUTE(EDC)
02/09/11	(S)	EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
02/09/11	(S)	Heard & Held
02/09/11	(S)	MINUTE(EDC)
02/11/11	(S)	EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
02/11/11	(S)	Heard & Held
02/11/11	(S)	MINUTE(EDC)
02/14/11	(S)	EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
02/14/11	(S)	Scheduled But Not Heard
02/16/11	(S)	EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

BILL: SB 83

SHORT TITLE: TEACHER BOARD CERTIFICATION INCENTIVES

SPONSOR(s): EDUCATION

02/04/11	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/04/11	(S)	EDC, FIN
02/14/11	(S)	EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
02/14/11	(S)	Scheduled But Not Heard
02/16/11	(S)	EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

**WITNESS REGISTER**

MURRAY RICHMOND, Staff  
Senator Joe Thomas  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Explained the changes to CSSB 43( ), version D, on behalf of the Senate Education Standing Committee. Gave an overview of SB 83 on behalf of the Senate Education Standing Committee, sponsor of the bill.

LES MORSE, Deputy Commissioner

Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions on distance education in Alaska as related to SB 43.

JOHN ALCANTRA, Lobbyist  
National Education Association-Alaska (NEA)  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of SB 83 and provided suggestions for amendments to the bill.

MARTHA FLEMMING, representing herself  
Seward, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified in support of SB 83.

CYNTHIA CURRAN, Director  
Division of Teaching & Learning Support  
Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions and provided information on the process a teacher must take in order to be nationally certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards as related to SB 83.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[8:00:46 AM](#)

**CO-CHAIR KEVIN MEYER** called the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Davis, French, Co-Chair Thomas and Co-Chair Meyer.

#### **SB 43-ALASKA PERFORMANCE SCHOLARSHIPS**

[8:01:27 AM](#)

**CO-CHAIR MEYER** announced the consideration of SB 43. [CSSB 43, version M, was before the committee.]

[8:01:56 AM](#)

**CO-CHAIR THOMAS** moved to adopt the committee substitute (CS) for SB 43, labeled 27-GS1893\D as the working document.

**CO-CHAIR MEYER** objected for the purposes of discussion.

**CO-CHAIR THOMAS** said version D is a culmination of the work done by the administration, the legislature from both this session and last, and two legislative task forces. He explained that

most of the changes have already been discussed by the committee.

8:03:41 AM

MURRAY RICHMOND, Staff to Senator Joe Thomas, explained the changes to version D begin on page 3, line 30. The change would make both colleges and universities and certified career and technical programs subject to an advisory program and would require them to make credits and courses available in order to issue a degree or certificate in a customary time period.

Page 4, line 12 deleted the word "customary" and replaced it with "a period of time customary".

He noted that because all institutions will be required to have some kind of counseling, the part on "personal challenges" was removed. This means that while academic and career advising is mandatory at any participating institution psychological counseling does not need to be provided. He explained that this was done because some career and technical institutions may not have the resources to provide this.

He explained that most of the other changes in version D refined the language of how the funds work. He referred to the funding diagram [included in the document packet] which shows the basic breakdown of where the funds for the program come from and where they go.

Page 5, lines 15-21, included language that sharpens-up where the funds go. Subsection (1) [lines 15-17] included the two types of awards that are subject to this funding and subsections (2), (3) and (4) [lines 18-21] discussed where these funds go.

Page 5, line 28 deleted "awarded by" and replaced it with "available"; and deleted "available" and replaced it with "awarded" on line 29.

He explained that the previous CS, version M, had repealed the Alaska Capital Income Fund. However, it was brought to light that there may be issues with the single subject title in repealing a fund that is supposed to establish a scholarship. Page 7, lines 16-20 changed the language so that, rather than repealing the income fund, the money would go directly to the Alaska Performance Scholarship Investment Fund.

Page 8, lines 25-27 sharpened the language on where the Amerada Hess Fund money can be distributed. It also made the money an

appropriation, rather than a deposit, which would go to the investment fund.

Page 14, lines 24-25, changed the date of the money transfer from the Alaska Capital Income Fund to the Alaska Performance Scholarship Investment Fund to occur before the end of the fiscal year, rather the beginning of a new one.

Subsection (b) [of Section 24 on pages 14-15] included transition language that gives the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE) the ability to makes awards to students during the first two years of the program, based on an annual average and monthly average.

Page 15, line 28 changed the effective date for subsection (2) and (3) on page 4 [lines 9-13] to July 1, 2012.

CO-CHAIR MEYER asked for confirmation that he worked with Jerry Burnett [Deputy Commissioner for the Treasury Division, Department of Revenue] in creating the funding diagram included in the committee members' packet.

MR. RICHMOND replied yes.

8:11:55 AM

LES MORSE, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), introduced himself.

CO-CHAIR THOMAS asked him to make some brief comments on the ability for rural schools to have access to the curriculum required for qualifying for this scholarship.

MR. MORSE replied that the department is doing two things. First, for more than a year, it has been looking at what the districts currently offer (which is what's in state regulation) in comparison to the curriculum requirements necessary for the Alaska Performance Scholarship eligibility. Second, the department has been looking at the capacity of correspondence schools in individual districts and on a statewide level. They are also looking into a statewide virtual school that will offer correspondence courses. He said the department is moving forward to make sure that these offerings exist and are available to all students.

CO-CHAIR THOMAS commented that this is not a simple task.

SENATOR FRENCH asked for more information on the correspondence course offerings: what content is included, who designs the curriculum, and what the success rate is in regards to students finishing a course on time.

MR. MORSE answered that he could not speak to the success rate of students finishing correspondence courses on time. In regards to the content and curriculum of these courses, he explained that there are about 14 school districts that offer correspondence education to anyone in the state, which includes both remedial and advanced courses. Last year DEED brought on an additional correspondence school that runs a statewide program. There are also numerous programs within individual districts. The courses are developed independently, using commercial text books to supplement the course or there are particular curriculums that parents can purchase for students. The district is responsible for making sure these courses align with state standards. He assured the committee that within all of those programs there are advanced level courses available.

CO-CHAIR MEYER asked if the bill, as it has been re-crafted by the committee, is workable for the administration.

MR. MORSE answered that he thinks DEED can make this piece of legislation work.

CO-CHAIR MEYER explained that the committee is finished with its work on the scholarship program and are putting the final touches on it.

SENATOR FRENCH asked for confirmation that the amendment proposed by Senator Stevens was included in version D.

CO-CHAIR MEYER replied yes. He added that there are also three fiscal notes included with version D, which have not changed.

[8:20:14 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR THOMAS moved to report CSSB 43( ), version D, from the committee with individual recommendations and attached fiscal note(s). There being no objections, CSSB 43(EDC) moved from the Senate Education Standing Committee. [The assumption was that Co-Chair Meyer removed his objection.]

[8:20:38 AM](#)

At ease at 8:20 a.m. to 8:23 a.m.

**SB 83-TEACHER BOARD CERTIFICATION INCENTIVES**

[8:23:24 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR MEYER announced the consideration of SB 83.

[8:23:57 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR THOMAS moved to adopt the work draft for CSSB 83( ), labeled 27-LS0425\I, as the working document.

CO-CHAIR MEYER objected for the purposes of discussion.

MURRAY RICHMOND, Staff to Senator Joe Thomas, Co-Chair of the Senate Education Standing Committee, sponsor of SB 83, said teachers have a difficult job. SB 83 provides incentives for teachers to improve their teaching skills by becoming nationally certified through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). If a teacher gets certified they would receive an extra \$1,000 per year as an incentive. For teachers working in a high poverty, low performing area they would receive an additional \$500 per year. Finally, for teachers working in a rural area they would receive an additional \$1,000 in order to become certified. He explained that the certification process is rigorous and is equivalent to a master's degree in education.

Section 2 of version I would allocate interest free loans, run by the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE), to the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) for teachers who are employed by either the department or public school districts. This section would also ask the commission to develop an application process to define who is eligible for the loan.

He noted that NBPTS is the only recognized board for national certification. A list of the 25 different areas for certification is included in the document packet [labeled NBPTS: Field of Certification].

[8:28:54 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR THOMAS concurred; the national certification process is very comprehensive. He added that the attached information in the document packet is very informational and complimentary to the bill.

CO-CHAIR MEYER opened public testimony.

[8:30:38 AM](#)

JOHN ALCANTRA, Lobbyist, National Education Association-Alaska (NEA-Alaska), stated support for SB 83. He said that the members of NEA had some suggested changes to the CS that he would review with the committee.

He turned to page 3, line 4, of version I where the current language used could possibly deny funding to professionals working in preschool or special education. Members of NEA-Alaska suggested that the CS be amended to include preschool, at a minimum.

He explained that some of the larger school districts that already pay a supplemental incentive are concerned that this will supplant any additional incentives. He said that the members of NEA-Alaska hope that an additional income incentive will supplement what these teachers are already receiving.

Page 2, lines 2-5, discusses the loan amount that a teacher can receive to become certified. He explained that while the process to achieve certification is a \$2,565 process, teachers often retake individual sections at an additional cost of \$350 per section. The members of NEA-Alaska asked that this section be more specific, by reading: "\$1,000 paid toward the cost of initial certification and no more than \$1,000 annually for teachers retaking one or more components".

Finally, he explained that the quarterly payment system used by the commission to pay NBPTS on behalf of teachers could prove difficult for applicants.

He mentioned that NEA-Alaska has a jumpstart program held at the University of Anchorage (UAA) in the summer. This lays out the national board certification program and encourages individuals to become certified. He said that similar funding and loan programs have worked well in other states to encourage individuals to become certified.

[8:36:13 AM](#)

SENATOR FRENCH asked how many members of NEA-Alaska are currently certified.

MR. ALCANTRA answered that about 110-120 individuals are certified out of the 8,000 teachers who are members of NEA-Alaska. He said that the fiscal note for SB 83 speaks to about 20 individuals going through this certification per year. He said that NEA-Alaska is trying to assert that, as a minimum, this number remain at 20.

SENATOR FRENCH asked for clarification that certification is equivalent to a master's degree.

MR. ALCANTRA replied yes.

SENATOR FRENCH asked if the Anchorage School District pays extra for a master's degree and by how much.

MR. ALCANTRA answered that they get paid about \$1,500 extra per year.

SENATOR FRENCH asked if the Anchorage School District pays the same amount extra for national certification.

MR. ALCANTRA replied that the annual addendum in Anchorage is \$2,000.

SENATOR FRENCH asked if this varies by school district.

MR. ALCANTRA replied yes.

CO-CHAIR THOMAS asked whether a teacher who has both a master's degree and is nationally certified would receive both amounts.

MR. ALCANTRA replied that he believes this is correct but would need to confirm.

8:39:31 AM

MARTHA FLEMMING, representing herself, stated support for SB 83. She said she is a counselor in the Seward School District and while she is speaking for herself today, she believes that the Seward PTSA [Parent Teacher Student Association] would support this bill as well. She explained that there is a huge difference between having a master's degree and being nationally certified. There are many watered down versions of a master's degree. The practice of going through this certification is so in depth that it would help to have some incentive to get through the process. Those who go through this certification improve their teaching style and their communication with parents and the public.

8:43:18 AM

CYNTHIA CURRAN, Director, Division of Teaching & Learning Support, Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), said she is a former NBPTS certified teacher.

SENATOR FRENCH asked what the process is like for teachers to become certified.

MS. CURRAN answered that the process is very rigorous and gives teachers the opportunity to look at their practice. She explained that there are five core propositions in national board certification; on top of this each of the 25 areas of focus has additional set standards. She explained that she looked at how children's language develops, math, social studies as building a community, and science. Within each focus she had to create a portfolio showing how particular lessons fit into the district's curriculum and standards. After turning in her portfolio she took an assessment exercise to show what she knew about each of her chosen topics and how she incorporated these into her teaching practice using the standards and core propositions. The certification occurred while she was teaching and it gave her an opportunity to look at what she was doing in the classroom. It changed the way that she looked at the classroom and the patterns she had as a teacher.

SENATOR FRENCH asked if every teacher who embarks on this certification can finish it.

MS. CURRAN answered no, at the time that she was nationally certified the pass rate was 67 percent.

SENATOR DAVIS asked when she completed her certification.

MS. CURRAN answered that she was nationally board certified in 1998. She explained that she chose not to be recertified when she moved to DEED and was no longer a classroom teacher.

SENATOR DAVIS asked if a teacher must recertify every year.

MS. CURRAN replied every 10 years.

CO-CHAIR MEYER said the bill addresses additional incentive payments for teachers employed in a high poverty area that has received a low performance rating. He asked if it is fairly easy to tell which schools are in high poverty areas.

MS. CURRAN answered the AYP [Adequate Yearly Progress] calculations go to the school level. She said that she believed low performance is what the bill is addressing.

CO-CHAIR MEYER asked if this only pertains to public schools.

MS. CURRAN replied that a teacher can teach in a private or charter school and become nationally certified.

8:52:03 AM

CO-CHAIR MEYER asked if teachers in private or religious schools would be eligible for the proposed incentive program. He said he believed the answer was no.

MS. CURRAN replied in order to become certified a teacher must "hold a bachelor's degree, have completed three full years of teaching/counseling, possess a valid state teaching/counseling license for that period of time, or if teaching where a license is not required (which is not in the state of Alaska) have taught in schools recognized and approved to operate by the state."

CO-CHAIR MEYER asked if schools in high poverty areas can easily be identified or if it is solely based on academic performance.

MS. CURRAN answered yes, Title I schools are considered high poverty through NBPTS.

SENATOR FRENCH said it seems the committee is getting conflicting answers from the aides and the department in regards to teacher eligibility.

SENATOR DAVIS asked what her connection is, through the department, to nationally certified teachers in the state.

MS. CURRAN replied that she is currently the director for the Division of Teaching & Learning Support for DEED, which oversees the office for Teacher Certification.

SENATOR DAVIS asked what she does to oversee this office.

MS. CURRAN answered that the office for Teacher Certification receives approximately \$20,000 per year from the federal government to allow teachers to defray some of the costs involved with national certification. This funding is allotted to teachers according to the criteria set by the NBPTS. Only \$1,000 of the certification process is covered by this funding, which leaves \$1500 for the teacher to pay.

SENATOR DAVIS asked for confirmation that they receive \$20,000 per year from federal funding.

Ms. CURRAN replied yes.

SENATOR DAVIS asked whether a teacher, in a school district that gives a monetary incentive for certification already, would also be eligible to receive money from the department.

MS. CURRAN answered that the \$2,000 paid by certain districts is the incentive a teacher would receive after they are nationally certified.

SENATOR DAVIS said she would like to get clarification from the school districts that offer this incentive. She explained that, to her knowledge, these districts also give teachers money towards certification.

[8:57:30 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR MEYER closed public testimony.

MR. RICHMOND explained that SB 83 provides incentives only to public school teachers employed by state districts or the department. He explained that NBPTS has different standards for certification.

He noted that the CS reflects Mr. Alcantra's concern about the quarterly payment system [page 3, lines 11-12].

CO-CHAIR MEYER added that public schools also include charter and alternative schools.

[8:58:59 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR MEYER announced he would hold SB 83 in committee.

[8:59:30 AM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Co-Chair Meyer adjourned the meeting at 8:59 a.m.