

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
JOINT MEETING  
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE  
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 23, 2011

8:00 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

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

HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

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

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

All members present

HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Representative Sharon Cissna

**OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT**

Senator Cathy Giessel  
Senator Linda Menard

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

COMMISSIONER HANLEY - DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY  
DEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW

- HEARD

BOARD OF REGENTS ANNUAL REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

- HEARD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

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

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave an overview of his role and DEED.

PAT JACOBSEN, Vice-Chair  
Board of Regents  
University of Alaska  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided a summary and answered questions related to the Board of Regents Annual Report to the Legislature.

RICHARD CAULFIELD, Provost  
University of Alaska Southeast  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided a summary and answered questions related to the Teacher Education Plan for 2011.

MELISSA HILL, Director  
Office of Academic Affairs  
University of Alaska  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided a summary and answered questions related to the Center for Alaska Education Policy Research Report and the Board of Regents Annual Report.

MICHAEL DRISCOLL, Provost  
University of Alaska Anchorage  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Stated support for mandatory academic advising on behalf of the University of Alaska Anchorage and the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[8:00:56 AM](#)

**CO-CHAIR JOE THOMAS** called the joint meeting of the Senate and House Education Standing Committees to order at 8:00 a.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Davis, French, Stevens, Co-Chair Meyer and Co-Chair Thomas and Representatives Kawasaki, Seaton, and Chair Dick. Representative Feige, Pruitt, and Wilson joined the committee shortly thereafter. [Due to technical difficulties no audio was recorded from 8:00:56 a.m. to 8:04:10 a.m.]

**Commissioner Hanley - Department of Education and Early  
Development Overview**

[8:02:14 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR THOMAS announced that the first order of business would be to hear an overview of the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) by the new commissioner, Mike Hanley.

[8:04:10 AM](#)

MIKE HANLEY, Commissioner, Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), stressed that the state needs to work hard to make sure teachers are doing everything they can for Alaska's students. He said "it is not okay to be a bad teacher when our kids' lives are at stake. My goal is not to come in and clean house. My goal is to make sure that we are holding ourselves accountable for what we are offering to our children."

He discussed some of the programs that DEED is currently looking at:

- The pilot program for prekindergarten, which will focus on incorporating parental involvement in student education and in schools.
- A family engagement action plan.
- Early literacy before kindergarten, which needs to engage other programs available such as: Bright Beginnings, Head Start and Imagination Library.
- Rigor. He noted that this conversation has been brought forward because of the Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS).

- A commitment to Alaska to create standards that are equal to or better than the newly created national set of standards, labeled the "Common Core."

He said Alaska's education performance, in regards to the rest of the nation, is located "in the middle of the road." However, internationally, Alaska's education performance "is barely in the middle of the road." He said he is not satisfied with this performance and it needs to be addressed.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY stressed the importance of training Alaska's students so that they can be successful no matter where they go. He noted that the APS, whose goal is to incentivize students and families, has brought this conversation to the forefront. He explained that there are some schools and districts that are struggling to provide the curriculum students will need. The department has an enormous challenge in front of them in order to get all districts the access needed in order to be prepared.

He noted that another aspect DEED is looking into is the career and technical programs. This involves coordinating and aligning curriculums with industry standards.

The department has many different focuses and he is evaluating each one with division heads, he explained. By doing this he hopes to figure out which focuses should be moved forward and which ones should be cut back.

CO-CHAIR THOMAS said the committees look forward to working with him and the department on these issues.

[8:10:20 AM](#)

SENATOR FRENCH turned to the pre-kindergarten handout [included in the document packet]. He read the following quote:

*"If properly funded and managed, investment in [early childhood development] yields an extraordinary return, far exceeding the return on most investments, private or public."*

The handout continued by explaining that children who attend preschool:

- Are more likely to graduate from high school.
- Are more likely to earn a higher degree later in life.
- Show 31 percent greater gains in vocabulary learning.

He said that it is interesting to look at education from an investment point of view. He explained that if an investment of about \$25 million was made over the next ten years for pre-kindergarten, the state of Alaska could see enormous economic benefits. He encouraged the commissioner to institute a state wide pre-kindergarten program.

SENATOR STEVENS said one issue that continues to come up is how to prepare rural children for college or career and technical programs. The answer to this is typically distance education. However, it is difficult to assume that this will actually happen. He asked who in the department is going to help children become successful in all areas of Alaska.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY answered there will be many people involved in this issue, including him and this is a big issue for DEED. Currently, the department is moving forward with the Virtual Learning Network in order to develop 16 virtual online courses. This is a coordinated effort between the department, the Southeast Regional Resource Center (SERRC), and 11 school districts, superintendents, and principals.

[8:14:38 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON said all of the states across the nation, including Alaska, are trying to collect "longitudinal data information." He asked if the department has looked into incorporating the data steps as the state develops this set of data.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY replied that data should drive a lot of the decisions that are made. He asked if there was a specific set of data that he is referring to.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON answered that the state is developing a longitudinal data set to track students from the time they enter school through college or career and technical training. He said his concern is that the effective use of this data is not being incorporated as the state moves forward.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY concurred, it is important to be able to easily track students' progress after secondary school. He noted that it is on his radar to work with postsecondary institutions in doing this.

[8:17:14 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON said requiring children to come to school at age 5 would not take a lot of money. She asked what

would happen if they required students to come to school at that age.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY replied that it is a bit erroneous that kindergarten is technically optional because of the age requirement. He said that this is a mixed message when the importance of early education is discussed, since the state law's mandatory age requirement does not match up with this. He said that he does not know what it would look like if the mandatory age was 5, but he suspected that the effects would be positive.

CO-CHAIR THOMAS added that Senator Davis' bill [SB 8] addresses this issue by reducing the mandatory age to 6 years old and increasing the upper age to 18.

SENATOR DAVIS asked, now that he is oriented with his job, if he has the proper tools to fulfill his duty as commissioner. She requested that, when he gives an overview, he assess and share with the legislature how the department is organized and what it needs.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY replied that he is open to input. He added that the Division of Teaching and Learning Support is an overloaded area at DEED. He explained that the department needs to make sure that it is maximizing its focuses with the staff that it have.

[8:21:18 AM](#)

CHAIR DICK said the issues that have been brought up today were discussed 35 years ago. He said he finds reluctance amongst the legislature to fund a model that is met with mediocre success. He asked what creative solutions he has to address these ongoing issues in a different way.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY replied that his responsibilities are to the children of the state. Schools are a reflection of both communities and society and both need to be addressed when discussing education. He said "I don't know the formula for that. Our communities change all the time." He explained that he is committed to addressing these issues and he wished he knew exactly what that would look like at this time.

CO-CHAIR THOMAS said the committees look forward to working with him in the future.

**Board of Regents Annual Report to the Legislature**

8:25:22 AM

CO-CHAIR THOMAS announced the next item of business would be the annual report from the Board of Regents.

8:25:44 AM

PAT JACOBSEN, Vice-Chair, Board of Regents, University of Alaska (UA), said the Board of Regents report to the legislature covers information on teacher preparation, retention, and recruitment efforts by UA. She explained that in addition to this report, the board has made progress on creating the Teacher Education Plan for 2011 and the Center for Alaska Education Policy Research was established this year. This center will enhance decision making by policy makers, education professionals, and the public. The center will conduct non-partisan research on policy issues specific to Alaska, ranging from early childhood development to higher education.

She turned the committees' attention to the Board of Regents 2011 Annual Report [report included in the document packet].

The first topic was education graduation rates. She explained that, overall, UA's graduation rates are relatively consistent, outside of an increase from 2009 to 2010 in graduates with a special education endorsement. The University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) has contributed greatly to this by making a commitment to graduate more students who have this endorsement. She noted that this is a primary example of UA responding to the workforce demands in K-12 schools.

Page 7 included a gap analysis that determines how many teachers are needed annually in Alaska to fill existing vacancies. She explained that with a more expansive study the board could look at the number of applications, hiring trends, and data on attrition in order to explore factors that contribute to teacher turn over.

Page 10 addressed the teacher placement of UA graduates. It reads:

Teachers who received their initial preparation from the University of Alaska work in 52 of Alaska's 54 school districts. Statewide, UA-prepared teachers make up 28 percent of the teaching force. The percent of all certified staff that received any education degree or endorsement from UA is slightly higher -- about 32 percent.

Page 11 included the efforts to attract, train, and retain qualified school teachers. She explained that in order to increase the number of teachers prepared in Alaska, more students will need to go to college. UA recently collected data on the 266 programs designed to reach out to potential students. Efforts are being made to better track, review, and measure the effectiveness of these outreach and college bridge programs which promote secondary education.

8:32:50 AM

RICHARD CAULFIELD, Provost, University of Alaska Southeast (UAS), expressed his appreciation for Ms. Jacobsen's work in making teacher education important. All three UA campuses are committed to training individuals to become teachers. He explained that his focus would be on the four goals of the 2011 Teacher Education Plan [report included in the document packet].

The first goal was to recruit, retain, and graduate more students in education, particularly Alaska residents [page 6].

He said there is much to do to graduate more Alaskan teachers and to see them hired and successful in Alaska's schools. He explained that UA hopes to do this by expanding recruitment and focusing on successful program completion. The focus of this recruitment will be, in particular, on underrepresented minority students, especially those of Alaska Native Heritage.

Finally, the board supports Alaska educator loan repayment and incentive programs, in order to make sure that these programs are affordable.

The second goal was to increase program access to more Alaskans, no matter where they live [page 7-8]. He noted that the greatest need for Alaskan teachers is in rural Alaska. The university expects to offer more teacher education courses to nontraditional students through online delivery, e-learning, hybrid or blended delivery, and site-based models. He said that in the upcoming year it is expected that at least 50 percent of teacher education courses will be accessible to nontraditional students.

He said UA will continue to focus and invest in instructional technology and professional development.

Finally, UA will work with DEED in order to expand alternative routes to teacher licensure.

The third goal was to focus on high demand areas in education, particularly in special education and math and science [page 8]. He explained that Alaska's requirements for teachers in high demand job areas can be different from those in the lower 48. For this reason it is important to more closely track Alaska's specialized credential demands and recruit in these areas. Finally UA hopes to increase the number of pre-college students participating in future education experiences by 10 percent each year.

He said that UA is trying to strengthen special education program opportunities. He added that it is also important to find innovative ways to make science and math more relevant to Alaska's students.

The fourth goal was to conduct research in order to find solutions to Alaska's educational challenges [page 10]. He explained that the new Center for Alaska Education Policy Research at the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) has been created to figure out how to improve teacher education programs, reduce drop-out rates, finance schools, and improve access to education and training in rural communities. He noted that the funding of \$250,000 per year that is needed for this center to continue is uncertain at this time. UA believes that good data is essential to effective results in teacher education.

[8:40:52 AM](#)

MELISSA HILL, Director, Office of Academic Affairs, University of Alaska, said this year the University of Alaska Foundation made a commitment of \$250,000 to start the Center for Alaska Education Policy Research. She explained that it is their hope that UA will be able to continue funding this center through the next fiscal year. She referred the committee members to the document on the center [included in the document packet]. She stressed that there is a need for quality research on education that is specifically related to the state of Alaska.

MS. JACOBSEN said that the university has made progress in increasing teacher education and retention in the state. She said she is excited about the creation of the Center for Alaska Education Policy Research, which will provide insights and numbers in the future to allow for data driven decisions and policies.

CO-CHAIR THOMAS thanked them for their presentation. He explained that a lot of this information is not new to the

committee members and it is good to have documents that lay out UA's goals.

8:44:01 AM

SENATOR STEVENS thanked the Board of Regents for supporting SB 241 [passed into law during the 25th Legislative Session].

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON asked what steps the university has taken in incorporating new educational and behavioral research into the classrooms.

MS. JACOBSEN replied that this may be a question for the Deans of Education. She noted that having the regents give the report on the university to the legislature can be "a mixed bag." In order to get more information on the programs it is important to also have the individuals who implement these programs speak. The Board of Regents deals more with the overall policy.

PROVOST CAULFIELD answered that incorporating new research speaks to the need for Alaskan trained teachers who understand the various issues specific to Alaska. He said all of the teacher education programs at UA make active use of experienced mentor teachers. The faculty members are not oblivious to the current issues in the classroom and are in tune with the changing needs of society.

8:49:52 AM

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON said many of these issues are happening throughout the nation. She stressed the importance of passing new research on to current teachers.

CO-CHAIR THOMAS asked what the percentage is of in-state versus out-of-state recruiting.

MS. HILL replied that page 10 of the Board of Regents Annual Report shows the placement of UA graduates in Alaska's school districts. She explained that the largest challenge is encouraging teachers to go to areas where they are needed the most. The way to get more Alaska trained teachers is by making sure more students go to college. She explained that it is important to celebrate and recognize teachers so that students will be inspired to take that career path. The Future Educators of Alaska program is aiding in this process.

CO-CHAIR THOMAS asked what the overall percentage is of in-state recruits.

MS. HILL answered that about 80 percent of recruits are from outside the state. She explained that the number of life time educators in rural Alaska has shrunk; there is a lot of urban migration.

CO-CHAIR THOMAS said if the state has such unique educational needs this could be a horrible impact on the education system as a whole, not to mention in the rural areas. He asked what can be done to immediately retain teachers in rural areas.

MS. HILL replied that DEED and UA's partnership with the Statewide Mentor Project have made strides in that area. She said that this initiative has been able to promote teacher retention in rural areas for up to five years, though beyond this is challenging. She explained that this has to do with a number of complexities including housing, the work environment, and the support of a community. She said she believes this project has been very successful under this joint leadership. She stressed the need to hold these programs accountable for doing what it says it will do.

[8:55:22 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR THOMAS questioned whether individuals within this program can critically look at the system without bias in order to aid in the success of the program. He pointed out that in the past there were issues with the Teacher Education Program for these reasons.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON noted that the legislature is taking huge strides in addressing education. He explained that the two task forces on education, which met over the interim in regards to the Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS), both recommended that in order for postsecondary institutions to receive scholarship recipients they should provide an academic advisory system and provide courses and degrees in a timely manner. He asked if UA and the board will look at this recommendation favorably.

MS. JACOBSEN replied yes, these are reasonable requests.

She returned to Co-Chair Thomas' comments on the reports. She reassured him that the Board of Regents feel the same way and expect to see reports on the outcome of these programs after a deadline has passed. She concurred that sometimes things seem to move very slowly, but she has seen some progress here. She explained that the Teacher Education Plan, with the deadlines and commitments that have been included, will be a good

measurement for the board. She noted that the Center for Alaska Education Policy Research will also be helpful.

[9:01:19 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON asked if each of the three main campuses will have an advisory program available to new students.

PROVOST CAULFIELD replied that UAS is committed to mandatory advising and are moving in that direction. He noted that in the Teacher Education Program the faculty is very involved in the advising of each student that comes through their program. Both the mandatory advising and courses being made available in a timely manner in on the university's radar and is committed to it.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON asked about the Anchorage and Fairbanks campuses.

[9:03:19 AM](#)

MICHAEL DRISCOLL, Provost, University of Alaska Anchorage, said there is strong support from all three provosts for mandatory advising, which is a key to student success. He explained that it is a matter of putting the right resources in at the right time and UA is moving in this direction.

[9:04:39 AM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committees, Co-Chair Thomas adjourned the meeting at 9:04 a.m.