

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

February 3, 2012
8:00 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION: ALASKA COMMISSION ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

- HEARD

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION REPORT ON Alaska PERFORMANCE
SCHOLARSHIP OUTCOMES

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

DIANE BARRANS, Executive Director
Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented the APS Report Summary.

BRIAN RAE, Assistant Director
Research and Analysis
Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented the APS Report Summary.

ESTHER J. COX, Chair
Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented the Annual Report and Summary.

MIKE HANLEY, Commissioner
Department of Education & Early Development
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions regarding the Annual Report.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:00:35 AM](#)

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

Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education Alaska Performance Scholarship Outcomes Report

CO-CHAIR THOMAS announced that the first order of business would be to hear an overview of the Alaska Performance Scholarship Outcomes Report by the Alaska Commission of Postsecondary Education, Alaska Department of Education & Early Development, Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development and the University of Alaska.

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DIANE BARRANS, Executive Director, Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education, said the 2012 Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS) Report examines higher education and career readiness. She said the APS Report task force has provided information that will allow for ongoing strategic resource deployment and performance review.

[8:04:20 AM](#)

BRIAN RAE, Assistant Director, Research and Analysis, Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE), said the APS Report reflects one semester of recipients' postsecondary performance and additional measurement data will become available in future years. He said the report presents eligible students' acceptance percentages, demographics, award levels and the APS' effect on academic performance.

MR. RAE said 906 Academic Year 2011 (AY11) students received the APS and the Anchorage district had the highest acceptance level at 40 percent. He said district APS eligibility rates ranged from 29 to 40 percent.

[8:07:41 AM](#)

MR. RAE said the Southcentral region had the highest percentage of APS eligible graduates at 31.7 percent and the Far North region had the lowest percentage at 11.4 percent. He said the Interior and Far North regions had the highest percentage of eligible graduates that accepted the APS at nearly 50 percent.

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SENATOR STEVENS asked if Kodiak was in the Southwest Region.

MR. RAE answered yes.

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SENATOR FRENCH asked about student privacy concerns for the study.

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MR. RAE said some data is regulated under the Family Education Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA), e.g., graduation announcements are considered public and on the receipt of funds is considered private. He said the Chief Privacy Officer from the U.S. Department of Education was contacted to clarify reporting parameters. He said the department is taking a conservative approach to listing personal data.

SENATOR FRENCH asked if the Pelican District had graduates in AY11.

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MR. RAE answered no.

[8:12:01 AM](#)

MR. RAE revealed eligibility data by gender and race: 50.25 percent female, 37.9 percent Caucasian, 8.3 percent American Indian/Alaska Native (Native). He said there was no difference in gender or ethnic groups when eligible candidates accepted the APS.

MR. RAE said in AY11: 8064 students graduated from public high schools, 30 percent attended in-state postsecondary schools and 17 percent attended out-of-state institutions. He said 83 percent of APS eligible students versus 33 percent APS ineligible students attended postsecondary schools. He said APS "Level-1" eligible students were more likely to attend out-of-state schools, "Level-2" and "Level-3" students were more likely

to attend in-state schools. He said Washington and Oregon attracted the most out-of-state students.

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MR. RAE said the University of Alaska (UA) System attracted the most APS students; 505 attended UA-Anchorage (UAA), 339 attended UA-Fairbanks (UAF) and 46 attended UA-Southeast (UAS). He said the majority of students enrolled in fulltime, bachelor degree programs and received an average of \$3402 out of the nearly \$3 million APS award pool. He noted that the higher percentage of Level-1 eligible students leaving the state had an effect on award expenditures.

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CO-CHAIR MEYER asked why a higher number of Level-1 eligible students attended out-of-state schools.

MR. RAE answered that he does not have that data but speculated that some eligible students may have preferred an out of state school or decided prior to the APS announcement.

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SENATOR FRENCH asked if the APS intent is to try and keep the brightest Alaska students in the state.

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MS. BARRANS responded that data from the Free Application Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) filings showed more Level-1 students were from affluent families which allowed for greater school choice. She said there also may have been an impact on school choice when initial funding for the APS was not known.

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SENATOR STEVENS asked if the ACPE would report student perceptions of the UA versus out-of-state institutions.

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MR. RAE answered no. He said general student comments would be provided. He suggested that the UA may be better suited to provide a report on students' perceptions on out-of-state schools.

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MR. RAE referenced preparatory courses taken by AY11 High School Graduates attending the UA: 880 APS-Eligible, 27.4 percent had attempted preparatory courses at an average of 1.0 credit hour out of 12.6 total credit hours; 2751 APS-Ineligible, 64.8

percent had attempted preparatory courses at an average of 2.9 credit hours out of 8.4 total credit hours.

SENATOR DAVIS asked how many APS students had taken prep courses.

MS. BARRANS answered 241 APS students.

[8:27:37 AM](#)

SENATOR FRENCH said he was distressed that 27 percent of APS students had taken preparatory courses.

CO-CHAIR THOMAS asked if preparatory and remedial have the same meaning.

MS. BARRANS answered yes and that the number of APS students taking remedial courses will decline as academic rigor is phased in for APS eligibility.

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SENATOR FRENCH said he agreed that APS students taking remedial courses should decrease in the future.

MS. BARRANS noted that math was the primary preparatory course taken by APS eligible students.

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MR. RAE said the UA provided AY11 data on "entering classes" starting from AY05-AY07; approximately 30 percent did not return for their second year and 40 percent did not return for their third year. He said a student not returning does not mean a student has dropped out; many may have attended UA to earn credits and transferred to another school. He said returning student percentages could go up due to the APS incentive for students to stay in Alaska. He said 32 percent received a degree from AY05 entrance and 14 percent from AY07 entrance. He noted that six years is the typical time to attain a four year degree. He said APS students should increase the percentage that graduate in four years.

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MR. RAE said 357 APS-Eligible students responded to a survey: 90 percent were pursuing a degree, 25 percent were attending out-of-state schools; 66 percent said the APS affected their decision to attend school in Alaska, 20 percent attending out-of-state schools considered the APS and 25 percent said the APS influenced their decision to pursue a postsecondary education.

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CO-CHAIR THOMAS commented that a high percentage of eligible graduates did not accept the APS and he hoped more students take advantage of the APS in future years. He said people tend to stay within a few hundred miles of where they go to postsecondary school.

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CO-CHAIR MEYER asked to verify that students who attended UA their first two years, only 50 percent return for their third year.

MR. RAE answered that 57 to 60 percent return for their third year. He said it is the hope through the APS incentive that more students return.

[8:35:54 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR MEYER commented that losing the brightest kids to out-of-state colleges and only half of the students return to the UA after two years bothers him. He said typical retention rates at other colleges are 70 to 80 percent.

SENATOR STEVENS asked to clarify Native student eligibility and program acceptance percentage rates for the APS.

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MR. RAE answered that once a student acquired APS eligibility, gender or race had little to do with acceptance rates.

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SENATOR FRENCH commented that UAA is very alert to the returning student numbers and is trying to improve rates by increased social media use to connect and engage first and second year students.

State Board of Education Annual Report to the Legislature

CO-CHAIR THOMAS announced the next item of business would be the annual report from the Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development.

[8:39:51 AM](#)

ESTHER J. COX, Chair, Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development, reviewed the annual report and said the board adopted APS amendments and established minimum eligibility criteria for grade point average, test scores and qualifying

courses. She said a grace period was enacted to allow AY11 and AY12 graduates an opportunity to attain the APS after the new regulations were adopted. She said supplementing school curriculum with online courses will especially assist rural community students to qualify for the APS.

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MS. COX said graduates taking the SAT or ACT exams increased in 2011 to 85 percent from 77 percent in 2010. She said districts are reporting more students have enrolled in science and math courses.

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MS. COX said the board approved amendments and accommodations on the Alaska Supplement for WorkKeys Assessment; a career ready test given to all eleventh graders, test results may be used for APS eligibility. She said the Individualized Education Program (IEP) assesses eleventh grade students with significant cognitive disabilities and determines WorkKeys testing competency. She said the board clarified appropriate use of accommodations for students with disabilities and limited English proficiency. She said the board adopted the English Proficiency Standards from the World-Class Instructional Design & Assessment (WIDA) consortium for English language learners. She said of AY11 WorkKeys students, 85 percent earned a National Career Readiness Certificate.

MS. COX said the board extended the amount of time districts may take to distribute test results from the Standards-Based Assessment (SBA) and the High School Graduation Qualifying Examination (HSGQE); the previous deadline was 20 days. She said the board amended two regulations regarding state assessments and adopted revised participation guidelines for students with disabilities. She said the board clarified that the SBA would be used for calculating the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Report under the federal education law known as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

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MS. COX said the board voted to recommend keeping the HSGQE; a test that provides students with a basic-skills baseline and information to adjust curriculum. She said AY11 HSGQE results for tenth grade students: 83 percent passed reading and 71 percent passed writing and 76 percent passed math.

[8:47:44 AM](#)

MS. COX said the board amended AYP reporting regulations to allow districts to include and take credit for students who successfully exited the Limited English Proficiency Program. She said three changes to the AYP calculation improved 2011 Proficiency Results. She noted that the federal government requires 100 percent proficiency by 2014 for NCLB.

[8:48:43 AM](#)

MS. COX said the board adopted an amendment which requires teachers who are moving from a Three Year Certificate to a Professional Five Year Renewable Certificate to have been employed as a teacher for at least two years. She said the board adopted an amendment that will no longer require educators seeking Provisional Two Year Administrative, Special Education Administrative and Special Services certificates to complete six semester hours of credit.

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MS. COX said the board agreed to change the name of "Vocational Education" to "Career and Technical Education," to require districts to make the blank forms used in teacher administrative evaluations available to the public and to require district employment applicants to disclose prior teaching experience in Alaska.

She said the board approved adding teacher preparation programs for K-5 math at UAS, an elementary endorsement at Alaska Pacific University and added an endorsement in Career and Technical Education Certificate program at UAA.

MS. COX said Alaska's Type-M Teaching Certificate must be initiated by a district that wants to hire an industry professional who has not completed a teacher preparation program. She said the Department of Law is reviewing a regulation that will require Career and Technical Education (CTE) endorsed, Type-M teachers to pass the Praxis I Competency Test to demonstrate reading, writing and math proficiency within one year of obtaining their certificate. She said in order to renew a Type-M, Limited CTE Five Year Certificate; the local school board must submit an application which contains evidence of the following: three semesters of credit hours related to the applicant's employment, 135 hours of work experience in a specialty field outside of work with students and a statement of satisfactory teaching performance. She said specialty teachers in Alaska Native Language or Culture and ROTC are exempt.

[8:51:48 AM](#)

MS. COX said the board now requires teachers recertifying Type-A Certificates to take credits in subjects related to their employment, enrollment endorsement area, or program leading to an endorsement.

She said the board has worked with educators and industry representatives to replace the current Alaska Content and Performance Standards (ACPS) in reading, writing and math with more rigorous grade level standards. The focus has been to ensure that the new standards outline a path for all students to graduate career and college ready. The new ACPS will be grades K-12 inclusive and be equal to or more rigorous than the National Common Core Standards (NCCS). She said the board will take final action in June, 2012 with possible AY16 enactment.

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MS. COX said graduation rate methodology changed to reflect the Federal Uniformity Guidelines mandate. She said graduation rates are calculated across a four year span and dropout rates are calculated independently over a one year period. She said the graduation rate had improved from 61 percent in AY05 to 68 percent in AY11.

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Teacher retention is an issue in rural Alaska; the majority of new teachers come from out-of-state and have to deal with a new culture and many leave after their first year. She said the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project was initiated in 2004 to help new teachers become more effective within their first two years. She noted that budget cuts were made to the program last year. She said AY11 Rural Retention Rates were 84 percent for mentored teachers and 68 percent for non-mentored teachers. She said a U.S. Department of Education grant will allow the UA to evaluate how mentoring affects teacher retention and student achievement.

[8:59:20 AM](#)

MS. COX said the 2009 Legislature provided \$2 million for eight districts to create pre-school programs that incorporate Alaska's Early Learning Guidelines in ways tailored to their local communities. She said a recent report indicated that many children showed exceptional growth, but there are still children performing below expectations.

She said Third Grade Assessment improvement will require early childhood involvement that is sustained through the primary grades. She said in addition to the Early Literacy Plan, the board proposed the Family Engagement Plan that includes action

steps for parents, teachers and community members. She said school readiness, parent involvement and quality teacher engagement are the only things that impact student achievement.

[9:00:41 AM](#)

The board heard reports on the Alaska System of Support Activities for Intervention Districts as follows, three districts received department intervention due to chronically low student performance levels and two districts exited intervention status after student performance levels were sufficiently raised.

[9:02:06 AM](#)

MS. COX said the Alaska Learning Network improves student achievement by providing online courses taught by highly qualified teachers, structure for collaboration and support, digital resource access and professional development opportunities for teachers.

[9:02:53 AM](#)

MS. COX said Mt. Edgecumbe High School is a state operated boarding school located in Sitka, Alaska; approximately 400 students, 78 percent are Native. She said the board recently changed credit requirements to align student curriculum for APS eligibility.

MS. COX said board members attended the Anchorage Education Summit in November to address greater expectations for student success with school and community members.

[9:04:03 AM](#)

MS. COX said the board's Teacher Quality Committee addresses teacher evaluations tied to student performance for federal funding. She said the board continues to: monitor department work with intervention districts, engage in strategic planning, career and technical education plan implementation, continue work on the new standards and assessments, monitor and or amend regulations as needed for the APS.

MS. COX asked the Senate Education Committee to consider additional travel expense funding to allow board members to meet at Mt. Edgecumbe and a rural district venue on an annual basis.

[9:07:55 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR MEYER said Senators Davis and French have a bill that deals with Early Learning Guidelines.

[9:08:32 AM](#)

SENATOR DAVIS commented on the Mentor Program funding cuts and asked if money was put back into the budget.

MIKE HANLEY, Commissioner, Department of Education & Early Development, replied no. He said last year the Mentor Program's budget was reduced from \$3 million to \$2.25 million.

[9:09:46 AM](#)

SENATOR DAVIS commented on the board's intent for higher ACPS versus the NCCS. She asked how students who move to Alaska would adapt to the higher ACPS.

[9:10:34 AM](#)

MS. COX answered that she believes in higher standards for the ACPS. She said Massachusetts is a state which adopted standards above the NCCS.

SENATOR DAVIS said Massachusetts adopted the NCCS.

MS. COX answered that she did not know if Massachusetts changed their standards to meet the NCCS.

[9:11:42 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS asked about the board's approach to teacher evaluations.

MS. COX answered that the board's Teacher Quality Committee and the National Education Association-Alaska are addressing teacher evaluations tied to student performance. She said the board is considering a statewide evaluation document for the 27 percent of teachers who are teaching courses that are assessed via student performance.

[9:14:31 AM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Co-Chair Meyer adjourned the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting at 9:14 a.m.