

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

February 29, 2012
8:03 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

SENATE BILL NO. 6

"An Act relating to providing a prekindergarten program within a school district; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED CSSB 6(EDC) OUT OF COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL NO. 120

"An Act establishing in the Department of Education and Early Development a voluntary parent and early childhood education program for pre-elementary aged children."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 6

SHORT TITLE: PREKINDERGARTEN SCHOOL PROGRAMS/PLANS

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) DAVIS, FRENCH

01/19/11	(S)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/7/11
01/19/11	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/19/11	(S)	EDC, FIN
02/28/11	(S)	EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
02/28/11	(S)	Scheduled But Not Heard
03/14/11	(S)	EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
03/14/11	(S)	Scheduled But Not Heard
03/25/11	(S)	EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
03/25/11	(S)	Heard & Held

03/25/11	(S)	MINUTE(EDC)
03/30/11	(S)	EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
03/30/11	(S)	Scheduled But Not Heard
04/01/11	(S)	EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
04/01/11	(S)	Heard & Held
04/01/11	(S)	MINUTE(EDC)
04/08/11	(S)	EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
04/08/11	(S)	Heard & Held
04/08/11	(S)	MINUTE(EDC)
02/27/12	(S)	EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
02/27/12	(S)	Heard & Held
02/27/12	(S)	MINUTE(EDC)
02/29/12	(S)	EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

BILL: SB 120

SHORT TITLE: EARLY CHILDHOOD ED: PARENTS AS TEACHERS

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) FRENCH

04/06/11	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/06/11	(S)	EDC, FIN
02/29/12	(S)	EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

WITNESS REGISTER

LES MORSE, Deputy Commissioner
 Department of Education and Early Development
 Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Was available to answer questions on SB 6.

CYNTHIA CURRAN, Director
 Teaching and Learning Support
 Department of Education and Early Development
 Juneau, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Did not state a position on SB 6 and presented information on Amendment 1.

DEBI BALDWIN, Director
 Childhood Development Division
 Rural Alaska Community Action Program
 Anchorage, AK

POSITION STATEMENT: Supported SB 120.

KRISTIN RAMSTAD, Program Director
 Parents as Teachers
 Rural Alaska Community Action Program
 Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Supported SB 120.

PENU LUCIER, Director
System for Early Education and Development
thread

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Supported SB 120.

LYNNE OSHEIM, Executive Director

Parents as Teachers (PAT)

Hoonah, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Supported SB 120.

ACTION NARRATIVE

8:03:35 AM

CO-CHAIR JOE THOMAS called the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:03 a.m. Present at the call to order were Senators French, Davis, Co-Chair Meyer and Co-Chair Thomas.

SB 6-PREKINDERGARTEN SCHOOL PROGRAMS/PLANS

8:04:08 AM

CO-CHAIR THOMAS announced the consideration of SB 6 and noted that CSSB 6(), version I, was introduced in the previous meeting. He had objected for the purpose of discussing an updated fiscal note and now they must adopt the CS in order to get the updated fiscal note. He then removed his objection and finding no further objections announced that CSSB 6 (), labeled 27-LS0058\I was adopted.

8:05:21 AM

CO-CHAIR MEYER moved to adopt Amendment 1.

27-LS0058\I.1
Kirsch/Mischel

AMENDMENT 1

OFFERED IN THE SENATE BY SENATOR THOMAS
TO: CSSB 6(), Draft Version "I"

Page 6, line 9, following "receives":
Insert "state"

8:05:35 AM

CO-CHAIR THOMAS objected for the purpose of discussion.

8:05:46 AM

LES MORSE, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Education and Early Development, Juneau, said Cynthia Curran would answer questions regarding Amendment 1.

8:05:57 AM

CYNTHIA CURRAN, Director, Teaching and Learning Support, Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), Juneau, explained that language in section 9 says a school district "may not include in the average daily membership of the school students who are four years of age if the students are enrolled in a program that receives state funding other than funding under this chapter." They believe that inserting "state" allows the programs to seek other grant funding: federal or private. If that word is not there, they may be precluded from being able to do that.

8:06:51 AM

CO-CHAIR THOMAS removed his objection. Finding no further objection, he stated that Amendment 1 was adopted.

CO-CHAIR THOMAS asked how SB 6 might affect the Moore settlement.

8:08:21 AM

MS. CURRAN answered that the assistant attorney general determined that they would be able to work through any concerns that might come up with the Moore settlement.

CO-CHAIR THOMAS asked Senator French if he could review the Crime Summit information and share it with Senator Stevens after the meeting.

8:09:51 AM

SENATOR FRENCH said that Senator Stevens was interested in the dollar savings that can be generated from pre-kindergarten programs in areas outside of education. In Monday's meeting, Senator French said he had talked about the beneficial educational effects in the PPVT study, the Dial-3 curves and so forth, and he wanted to note two pieces of information. One, the first Crime Summit, was conducted in Alaska and led to a Cost of Crime Study done by the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER). It looked at a series of rehabilitation programs that could lower the crime rate and reduce the rate of recidivism. Surprisingly, the best program they found state-wide was Head Start. The study revealed that Head Start for young children saves six times more than it costs and reduces the

future crime rate among participants by about 16 percent. He noted that it could take a while to pay off, but the dollar savings were pretty well established.

8:12:04 AM

SENATOR FRENCH stated that a much more in-depth report on the same subject came from Annie Pennucci with the Washington State Institute of Public Policy. She analyzed the findings from 11 individual studies that directly measured crime outcomes and plotted the effect sizes to summarize whether there was more or less crime for pre-school students vs. non-pre-school kids, and how much less crime. The students were sometimes followed into adulthood to see if they had committed crimes. Findings from individual studies indicated a range of how much crime is avoided from preschool; one study found a very small increase, but on average, crime went down for preschool students about .23 standard deviations, a 20 percent reduction in the crime rate, which is similar to what the ISER study revealed.

He said that her study qualified the costs in Washington where you can get a year and a half of preschool for about \$7,295. The three most significant areas of savings are:

- 1) The reduced crime stemming from lower criminal justice and victims costs were worth about \$6,066.
 - 2) The educational gains stemmed from increased earnings for the individual were worth about \$9,800.
 - 3) The reductions in special education spending that you have to do for kids who go to pre-kindergarten was worth about \$1,000.
- If you add all that up, for a \$7,295 investment in pre-kindergarten you get about \$21,000 back in savings, a 3:1 ratio. Those numbers jibe with State of Alaska numbers and it's good to keep in mind that pre-kindergarten pays benefits outside the typical areas people think of in the area of education.

8:13:17 AM

CO-CHAIR THOMAS commented that through discussions with the Department of Corrections commissioner he found this issue was pervasive throughout the system and that the department was definitely starting to keep statistics on it.

CO-CHAIR MEYER said those were interesting numbers and that even the governor's own council had indicated a definite cost savings in having a pre-K program of some sort. He asked Senator French if the Head Start Program was the best nationwide or just in Alaska and how long that had been the case.

8:14:41 AM

SENATOR FRENCH answered that this was ISER looking at programs currently operating in the State of Alaska and Head Start is the number one provider here of pre-K at the time. The fact that the Washington State Institute for Public Policy sort of pulled back and looked at a series of studies across the nation combined with the local result from Alaska was just good confirmation that it's a phenomenon that is repeatable.

CO-CHAIR MEYER commented that pre-K was not initiated in the past due to the lack of data tracking children from 4 years of age to age 18 to see what happened to them. But Head Start has been around long enough to have that data now.

8:16:30 AM

SENATOR FRENCH said the administration deserved some credit for generating so much information during the pilot program. The data shows that pre-K education pays off in later gains in education and in other areas like reducing crime.

8:16:38 AM

SENATOR STEVENS joined the meeting.

CO-CHAIR MEYER commented that the administration's task force recommendations would not be ready until the June 1 and he was hoping that they would say that Head Start was the way to go. Since they don't have that information, he thought they should go forward with SB 6.

SENATOR STEVENS stated that he was comfortable with what the committee had done so far and that they could move forward.

8:18:57 AM

CO-CHAIR MEYER moved to report CSSB 6 (), version 27-LS0058\I, as amended, from committee with individual recommendations and forthcoming fiscal note(s). There was no objection, and CSSB 6(EDC) moved from the Senate Education Standing Committee.

8:19:31 AM

At ease from 8:19 a.m. to 8:21 a.m.

SB 120-EARLY CHILDHOOD ED: PARENTS AS TEACHERS

8:21:54 AM

CO-CHAIR THOMAS announced the consideration of SB 120.

8:22:10 AM

CO-CHAIR MEYER moved to adopt CSSB 120 (), labeled 27-LS0788\M.

CO-CHAIR THOMAS objected for the purposes of discussion.

8:22:30 AM

SENATOR FRENCH, sponsor of SB 120, said this is a nice compliment to SB 6, which was prekindergarten operated by school districts or Head Start. This bill takes the idea of early childhood development a step further with Parents as Teachers (PAT). Parents as Teachers is designed to help convey to parents around the state, since they are a child's most important teacher, a child's first teacher, how better to handle a young person in their lives.

He said Parents as Teachers first began in Alaska in 1995 when it was implemented in Hoonah, Alaska. It is a long standing, well supported program that now operates in 41 communities around Alaska serving over 900 children. It is designed to provide education services to newborns continuing until the child reaches the age of five. It is a purely voluntary program.

SENATOR FRENCH said they all know that parental involvement in a child's learning is linked to the development of a child's academic skills including reading and writing and Parents as Teachers is about engaging families in understanding the way that their child's brain develops and how to create the best possible learning environment for their child. Their services include personal visits, group socialization opportunities with other families, and developmental screenings to pick up on a child's learning disabilities in order to be referred to services as needed and as soon as possible.

There is good evidence about the benefits of this program and this bill has wide support. They had received 129 letters of support from Ketchikan up to Savoonga. The bill simply expands the reach of the current program and asks the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) to report back to the legislature on the program's effectiveness in 2015 after it has been running for three years. The CS pushes that report date out one year, because he filed the bill last year and three years would have come up a little too fast for last years' bill.

8:25:41 AM

CO-CHAIR MEYER asked how this bill differs from SB 6 that basically expands the public school system to provide prekindergarten for four year olds. This seems to ask the parents to be the teachers for the pre-kindergarteners.

8:26:07 AM

SENATOR FRENCH answered that SB 120 is the perfect complement to SB 6 and probably the more important of the two, because kids will spend at the most four hours a day in a pre-school environment and while they get great benefits from that they will spend 20 hours a day in their home. They have been raised up until age four by their parents. And a parent is a child's most important teacher and this is just putting tools in the hands of Alaska's parents to try to get the most out of that precious child in their residence with as little governmental involvement as possible.

8:27:10 AM

SENATOR DAVIS commented that Parents as Teachers is a wonderful program, but it is not a pre-K program. This helps children get ready to learning by involving parents in their homes and schools.

8:28:43 AM

DEBI BALDWIN, Director, Childhood Development Division, Rural Alaska Community Action Program (RurAL CAP), Anchorage, thanked the committee for letting them share their experiences in over 19 communities with the Parents as Teachers (PAT) program. She invited Ms. Ramstad to provide a general introduction to the program.

KRISTIN RAMSTAD, Program Director, Parents as Teachers, Rural Alaska Community Action Program, Anchorage, said she supported SB 120. She said that Parents as Teachers has four goals nationally: to increase parent knowledge over early childhood development and improve parenting practices, provide early detection of developmental delays and health issues, prevent child abuse and neglect and increase children's school readiness and later school success.

The PAT model is made up of four components: personal visits to families that focus on child development and help explain children's behaviors, developing rapport with parents and children, modeling best practices and helping parents to interact with their children. Families additionally are invited to one or two community social events every month where they get to learn and play together; parents have the opportunity to network with each other and children have the opportunity to gain social skills from their peers. Additionally, PAT conducts developmental and social emotional screenings to make sure that children are on track and hearing and vision screenings, referring when necessary.

8:31:28 AM

MS. RAMSTAD said the final component of the Parents as Teachers program is connecting families with local, regional and statewide resources. During the personal visits, topics will come up that are beyond the scope of the PAT program and knowledge, and they refer on and follow up with the families. They talk about barriers to accessing the resources and assist families in advocating for access to them.

8:32:01 AM

MS. RAMSTAD said PAT has certified parent-educators that provide research-based information and utilize evidence-based practices. Basically, they partner with families and promote child/parent interaction. The promote development-centered parenting, working on child's behavior and parenting decisions and reactions. This helps parents understand what to expect during each stage of development. PAT serves children birth to five years of age, including teen mothers and special needs children; it is present in both rural and urban communities of Alaska.

8:34:20 AM

SENATOR FRENCH asked her to explain how this program works with the various challenges military families face with respect to early childhood development.

MS. BALDWIN answered that the Department of Defense (USDOD) invested in PAT a few years ago in the "Hero's at Home Project," which was offered to families on military bases. It provided support and strength to families with one parent deployed overseas. It was very successful on both the Anchorage and Fairbanks bases. However, that funding was cut by the Department of Defense and now the PAT program is reaching out to those military families; but only 24 spaces are available in the Anchorage community and a waitlist has been established for military families that are still interested in the program.

8:36:01 AM

SENATOR STEVENS asked who does the visit and what a certified parent educator is.

MS. RAMSTAD answered that PAT has developed a three to five day training curriculum for certification and Alaska and is fortunate in that it has two national trainers. Once individuals are certified, they are tested.

The most important thing she had discovered was that the family visitors are from the local community and she said that RurAL CAP has all local family visitors of varying levels of education from paraprofessionals up to master's degree in education.

8:37:21 AM

MS. BALDWIN added that this model is very attractive for Alaska, because it doesn't have many professionals in the early childhood field, a career field that they hope will take off in the next several years. It is one of the few early childhood programs where people must be tested before they deliver the material to the participants.

8:37:54 AM

SENATOR STEVENS asked if these people have gone through police checks and if they get paid.

MS. BALDWIN answered that all PAT staff must clear background checks before they are allowed to visit families in their home. Completing the training is point for entry into the early childhood profession and many continue on to get their AA and BA degrees. PAT works with the State Training and Employment Program (STEP) in the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) that provides assistance for the cost of the certification. AS incentive to become the top in the field, a 10 percent wage increase is tied to the completion of the course and another 10 percent on completing an AA degree; a BA gets another 10 percent.

CO-CHAIR THOMAS asked what becoming a certified parent teacher requires.

MS. BALDWIN answered that PAT educators have to keep current each year with 10-15 hours of ongoing professional development on the latest information coming out of the early childhood field.

8:39:52 AM

SENATOR DAVIS asked how many educators the program retains once they begin to get their AA degrees.

MS. BALDWIN answered it is a fact that school districts pay better than many of the early childhood programs and many of their teachers are shared with the community once they have reached their bachelor degree level, but the PAT program in RurAL CAP doesn't experience that.

8:41:09 AM

That led Ms. Ramstad to a chart of who delivered the program in the State of Alaska last year that indicated 50 percent of the children were served by non-profit agencies and 50 percent were served by school districts that operate the PAT model. She summarized that PAT served 738 families in 41 communities last year; 3 percent of those families were teen parents. The chart showed the ethnicity of children served, which greatly affects funding sources and where they are located.

8:42:04 AM

MS. RAMSTAD explained that Parents as Teachers connects parents to other parents in real ways. A major stand out is that they actually use an evidence-based curriculum that is based on brain development and home visitors leave resources in the homes to help parents extend their learning opportunities there.

8:43:30 AM

MS. RAMSTAD said the advisory board is made up of members from all around the state - from local school boards, Head Start, local PAT programs, Alaska Native Regional non-profits and thread. Certified parent educators have to complete 20 hours of professional development education within their first year, 15 hours in the second year and 10 hours for every year after that. The PAT model promotes universal access and is not designed for any socioeconomic status or cultural group, but the biggest thing is that the modest investment results in high returns and outcomes. On average, the program spends \$3,200 to \$4,000 per family, depending on the cost of living where they are located.

8:45:09 AM

MS. RAMSTAD explained that results from a 2011 RurAL CAP PAT survey indicated that of the 261 parents who returned the survey, 260 said they increased their understanding of their role as their child's first teacher and 257 reported gaining improved parenting skills including learning more positive discipline techniques. All of them understood the importance of reading and early literacy activities, and all of them stated that they had observed an increase in the skills needed for their child to succeed in their next learning environment. Additionally, of all the children that have been in RurAL CAP's PAT program, 89 percent demonstrated age appropriate skills going into their Head Start Program.

8:46:56 AM

MS. RAMSTAD explained that a continuum of early learning graph indicated that PAT works well and is a compliment to Head Start,

private public pre-school and school districts and that they collaborate on a local, regional and state level with all of those entities.

8:47:44 AM

MS. BALDWIN addressed Senator Meyer's earlier comments about the district teacher report that will be coming out from the Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council saying she is a member of that council, as well as 16 other representatives from around the state. A draft recommendation lists seven priorities that are going to be recommended to the legislature and the governor; they are voted in order of priority based on what the council sees would be most helpful to the state. These priorities range from short term to long term actions and look at services and systems development. The number-one recommendation was to immediately begin services to an additional 5,000 children across the state through proven models that have historically had success in Alaska; those models are Head Start and Parents as Teachers.

8:49:08 AM

CO-CHAIR MEYER asked to receive a draft report and for an explanation of how it dovetails with SB 6 that they just passed in which public schools provide statewide pre-K program for four-year olds and up.

MS. BALDWIN answered that there is no draft report, but rather a draft of the priorities that their report will address. She added that the impetus to making the addition of another 5,000 children the group's number-one priority is the direct correlation between the amount of parent involvement in a child's education and their school success. The reason Head Start is so successful is because they have a strong family/parent involvement component. Regarding SB 6, they highly suggest that any pre-school program coming out of the district also have a strong parent/family involvement to it. Without it there will be marginal outcomes.

8:50:49 AM

SENATOR STEVENS asked what the additional 5,000 students would cost.

MS. BALDWIN answered to provide a spectrum of services it would cost from \$30,000 (for services like PAT) to \$104,000 (for intensive services) annually.

SENATOR STEVENS asked if they are talking roughly about \$2 million.

MS. BALDWIN answered that they wanted the legislature to take a look at the children's needs around the state in terms of existing wait lists for services before making a decision on allocation of resources.

8:53:42 AM

PENU LUCIER, Director, System for Early Education and Development, thread, Anchorage, applauded them for passing SB 6 but said there is a gap. The critical years are zero to three and in SB 6 pre-K begins at four years of age. So, Parents as Teachers is a very important program in that it serves newborns though age thee.

MS. LUCIER said she is the outgoing executive director of the Alaska Children's Trust whose mission is to prevent child abuse and neglect and that they know absolutely that providing parent support and education about child development reduces child abuse and neglect. Anecdotally, she related the joy she felt when a public health nurse visited her mother for the birth of her brother in Fairbanks, adding that the experience sticks with her today. She hoped they gave credence to the letters of support, especially from the rural areas, because they need the additional support most.

8:55:25 AM

SENATOR STEVENS asked her to explain what thread is.

MS. LUCIER answered that thread used to be called "Childcare Connection," and it is the childcare resource and referral network for the State of Alaska. Besides referrals, they provide training and education for people in the early childhood field.

She added that she recently became an advisory board member on the PAT program.

8:56:01 AM

CO-CHAIR THOMAS asked if she was also speaking on behalf of Sarah Leonard.

MS. LUCIER answered yes and that Ms. Leonard was also with thread.

8:56:14 AM

LYNNE OSHEIM, Executive Director, Parents as Teachers, Hoonah, said she had been involved with early childhood programs for 40 years in three states and many different cities and programs. She recently served as director of the PAT program in Hoonah and had been on the state board since its inception.

MS. OSHEIM said nothing has changed dramatically for professionals in this field; the big change has occurred in the area of brain development and the proof of the importance of the early years (previous to kindergarten) and the effects they have on a child's life. And after hearing all the testimony about the cost benefits of early childhood and family program, she didn't know why the state wouldn't put its money where it would get the best results and be ethically and morally right, as well.

As a supervisor of PAT for seven years, she said she had witnessed many positive changes for children and families. One of the most important components of this program was that it embraced the whole family in whatever form it may be. She added that the PAT program is research-based, comprehensive, very organized and relatively easy to implement. Complications come with the many complications of today's families, which is all the more reason to support this program that supports those families.

CO-CHAIR THOMAS stated he would hold SB 120 in committee.

8:59:30 AM

CO-CHAIR THOMAS, finding no further questions, adjourned the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting at 8:59 a.m.