

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**

March 25, 2014

5:13 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Lora Reinbold, Chair
Senator Gary Stevens
Senator Hollis French

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Cathy Giessel, Vice Chair
Representative Mike Hawker
Representative Geran Tarr

OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT

Representative Wes Keller
Representative Lynn Gattis
Representative Tammie Wilson
Representative Lance Pruitt
Representative Paul Seaton
Senator Mike Dunleavy

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION: EXPLORING THE CONCERNS OF THE NEW ALASKA STATE
ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND THE POTENTIAL IMPACTS TO ALASKA'S
EDUCATION SYSTEM - PART 1

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

TERRENCE MOORE, Ph.D., Professor
Hillsdale College
Hillsdale, Michigan

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on academic standards.

ANTHONY ESOLEN, Ph.D.; Professor of English
Providence College

Providence, Rhode Island

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on academic standards.

SANDRA STOTSKY, Ed.D. Professor of Education Reform
Department of Education Reform
Curriculum and Standards
University of Arkansas
Fayetteville, Arkansas

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on education standards.

ZE'EV WURMAN, Engineer; Visiting Scholar
Hoover Institution
Stanford University
Stanford, California

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on education standards.

RON FURHER, President
National Education Association, Alaska (NEA-Alaska)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on the new Alaska State Academic Standards and potential impacts to Alaska's educational system.

JACOB BERA, Teacher
Eagle River High School
Eagle River, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on Alaska State Academic Standards.

MARTY VAN DIEST, Parent
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on Alaska State Academic Standards.

JOE ALWARD, Teacher
West High School
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on Alaska State Academic Standards.

TROY CARLOCK, Teacher
West High School
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on Alaska State Academic Standards.

MIKE HANLEY, Commissioner
Department of Education and Early Development (EED)

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified and answered questions on academic standards.

SUSAN MCCAULEY, Director

Teaching and Learning Support

Department of Education and Early Development (EED)

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified and answered questions on academic standards.

ACTION NARRATIVE

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CHAIR LORA REINBOLD called the Administrative Regulation Review Committee meeting to order at 5:13 p.m. Representative Reinbold and Senators Stevens and French were present at the call to order. Representatives Keller, Gattis, T. Wilson, Pruitt, and Seaton and Senator Dunleavy were also in attendance.

**Presentation: Exploring the Concerns of the New Alaska State
Academic Standards and the Potential Impacts to Alaska's
Education System - Part 1**

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CHAIR REINBOLD announced that the only order of business would be the presentation entitled: Exploring the Concerns of the New Alaska State Academic Standards and the Potential Impacts to Alaska's Education System - Part 1. She said this will be the first of many hearings on the topic.

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TERRANCE MOORE, Ph.D., Professor, Hillsdale College, reviewed his background and said that he currently teaches history. He also works with the Barnry Charter School Initiative, whose purpose is to help set up classical charter schools around the country for parents and communities who desire that type of education. Previously, he was principal of a K-12 classical charter school in Colorado, which was twice ranked the number one high school in the state. He said he has written on the Common Core Standards, and he has also been a long-time school reformer. He obtained his doctorate from the University of Edinburgh, where he wrote on the history of education in the

18th century and its influence on the founding fathers. He also served as a lieutenant in the U.S. Marine Corps.

DR. MOORE said that the term "standards" is often used but very few people actually know what it means. It is a very great term since it is difficult to argue against higher standards of education. However, he urged legislators to read the standards and see if they can make sense of them since they are written in "education speak," which is a language that is impenetrable by citizens. In fact, when the standards are translated to regular English they say ridiculous things, for example, one standard is that kindergarten students should learn the common spellings of the five major vowels. He questioned how many spellings the vowel "A" has.

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SENATOR STEVENS asked whether he was speaking about the Alaska Standards or the Common Core Standards.

DR. MOORE related his understanding that the Alaska Standards look like a blueprint of the Common Core Standards or a "cut and paste" job; however, if that is not true then that's great. He said his testimony is meant to warn the legislature about things found in the Common Core Standards.

CHAIR REINBOLD related her understand that the Alaska Standards are 95 percent identical to the Common Core Standards.

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SENATOR FRENCH asked whether it is fair to say he has not read Alaska's educational standards.

DR. MOORE suggested that if the Alaska Standards are a "cut and paste" job, it is a rebranding of the Common Core Standards that has happened in Arizona or in states such as Indiana, which has supposedly pulled out of the Common Core Standards.

SENATOR FRENCH interjected that he takes that as a "no."

DR. MOORE said it is the responsibility of parents, educators, and legislators to find out if that "no" is really a no.

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CHAIR REINBOLD asked whether Dr. Moore has read the Common Core Standards.

DR. MOORE answered yes.

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DR. MOORE continued, stating that one of the things in Common Core Standards is the idea of text complexity and how that drives the specific text chosen for schools. In the Common Core Standards, it is decided by the Lexile framework. He urged legislators to find out if that is the way Alaska will determine its complex text, since that framework is notorious for containing mistakes. For example, the Grapes of Wrath is rated as second to third grade reading level since the Lexile framework underestimates great literature. The purpose of Common Core Standards is to diminish the number of literature texts and, instead, increase the number of informational texts, such as modern textbooks that devalue literature but increase political propaganda. These texts are inserted into the classrooms under the pretext of 21st century thinking skills, which is something he has observed happening time and time again. Reviewing textbooks is one way to know if this is happening. If the textbooks are short on literature or only provide selections, students are being cheated from reading great works of classic literature. He expressed concern about the purpose of Common Core Standards and the College and Career Readiness Standards. In fact, college professors want students reading complete novels and complete works of great literature in order to prepare them for the type of thinking college freshman should exhibit.

DR. MOORE suggested legislators should also get a sense of the recommended books in College and Career Readiness Standards, if any; otherwise, the default will be mediocre textbooks without any classic literature. One main question that legislators should ask is whether students read complete works of great literature or if the textbooks devalue literature. Legislators should also examine testing that will be used to enforce the standards. They should determine whether testing will be done by reliable testing agencies, by Alaskans, or if testing will be done by one of the organizations such as Smarter Balance or a shadow organization created for states that opt out of Common Core Standards. He questioned whether these tests have been field tested, and if the organizations are testing on modern articles or political indoctrination that is heavy on environmentalism, but has very little to do with great

literature. These are leading questions to ask to determine if the standards aim at excellence, truth, and beauty in great things instead of setting a very low bar of college and career readiness, he stated.

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DR. MOORE asked how college and career readiness became the aim of a liberal education, since this wasn't a phrase that was even around 10 years ago. He has been around education reform for a long time, and, historically, education aimed at virtue, knowledge, happiness, and beauty. While this may sound philosophical and professorial, he recently spoke with parents that were upset that music and art are dying a slow death in schools. The reason to study great literature is that it teaches language, empathy, and insights into the human condition, which makes students more human. As legislators examine the standards, he suggested they look to see if they include Hans Christian Anderson, the Iliad, or Pride and Prejudice, or if the standards merely obtain superficial knowledge without imparting any lasting idea of knowledge or how the world works. These are educational values that parents want for their children and if they don't get it they will be upset.

CHAIR REINBOLD encouraged people to "Google" Dr. Moore. She appreciated his articles, she said.

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ANTHONY ESOLEN, Ph.D., Professor of English, Providence College, provided a brief biography, including that he has authored 13 or so books and has translated the Divine Comedy into English. For more than 20 years he has been writing about literature and teaching literature, art, theology, philosophy, and history. He has used a wide range of literature, ranging from those of the ancient Greeks and Mesopotamians, through literature from the end of the Renaissance and into the modern world. Further, he previously served as the head of the Rhode Island Homeschooling organization for seven years, during which time he considered what children need and what they will need when they begin a freshman Western Civilization course.

DR. ESOLEN said he has read the standards and finds them wrongheaded and inept. He seconded everything Dr. Moore said. The standards are wrongheaded because they do not arrive at the reason students should read good books. He has an old textbook from the 1920s, a public school textbook prior to Dewey changing

the education system, and the writer begins with what the English teacher really wants to do, which is to instill in her students the library habit, or learning to love good books and how to read them, which leads to the discovery of why these books are so admirable, grand, and loveable. If the main experience with the English language is from reading "trashy" literature or magazines and dumbed down newspapers, it will not lead to students becoming good writers or to understanding the capacity of the English language. If the goal is to teach students to use the English language well, the Alaska Standards are not going to achieve it.

DR. ESOLEN said the Alaska Academic Standards are written abominably. In fact, he teaches his students not to do the things included in them, like vagueness, dependence upon jargon, bureaucratic flummery, and the failure to state things simply and clearly. Seventy years ago, George Orwell spoke about this in his great essay, "Politics and the English Language," calling it a map for duplicity.

DR. ESOLEN said to begin with these are terrible standards. Just as he would not have someone covered with blood and filth in charge of hygiene at a hospital, he cannot embrace the writers who drafted these standards since they are terrible writers who purport to teach students how to write. Learning to write well cannot be achieved by these means, he opined.

DR. ESOLEN emphasized that the only way to learn to write well is to imitate those who do, to expose students to people who write well, to expose students to good books, and to instill in them a love for those good books. Students should read Pride and Prejudice, Bleak House, works by George Eliot, and other great works of literature, to gain an understanding of how language is used. Secondly, the [Alaska] Standards don't teach grammar. He emphasized the importance of teaching language as a systematic, coherent, and beautiful whole - a thing that clarifies and opens things up for them. You can only achieve that if grammar is taught as a whole, coherently, at the same time as reading. Grammar cannot be taught in bits and pieces, since a thorough learning requires one to two hours each day in 5th and 6th grade so it becomes second nature - in the same way students would study and learn Latin grammar. Students learn how the parts of language are related to one another, which is not done in the [Alaska Academic] Standards or elsewhere. In his experience, the only college students who know grammar are those who happened to take Latin when they were in high school. Although he did not have the Alaska Academic Standards in front

of him, he recalled that a "little grammatical thing" is introduced in second grade and one in 6th grade. He said that the object should be to get students to love reading good books and to introduce them to their great heritage of literature written in English, which is not present in the 24 or 26 pages of standards.

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SENATOR FRENCH referred to page 58 of standards for 11th to 12th grades. He stated that the standard is to write arguments and support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. He said it goes on to list additional requirements. He asked whether there was something wrong with that idea.

DR. ESOLEN acknowledged that there is nothing wrong with teaching students how to argue, but frankly if you really want to get students to learn how to think clearly, they must be taught grammar systematically in the 4th, 5th or 6th grades. Then these students will do naturally in their writing what is finally suggested that they do in the 12th grade.

DR. ESOLEN said that not only do college freshmen fail to grasp grammar, but they don't even know the names of great English poets or writers. If this continues, in 20 years the only ones who will know anything about the humanities are those who received a classical education.

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SANDRA STOTSKY, Ed.D. Professor of Education Reform, Department of Education Reform, Curriculum and Standards, University of Arkansas, stated that ten years ago she was the senior associate commissioner in the Massachusetts Department of Education in charge of all of the K-12 standards. She has also served on the Common Core Standards Validation Committee. She read Alaska's English language arts standards, which she found to be almost identical to the Common Core Standards. The chief difference was in the introductory material, which was very abbreviated or reduced in the Alaska Educational Standards. However, the Alaska Academic Standards seem to be almost identical to the Common Core Standards, she said.

DR. STOTSKY related that three private organizations in Washington D.C. developed the Common Core Standards: The National Governor's Association, the Council of the State School

Officers, and ACHIEVE. These standards were funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, she said. She surmised that the members of the Standards Development Workgroup were likely selected by the Gates Foundation and ACHIEVE since she was unable to find any official information.

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DR. STOTSKY reported that the committee developing the College and Career Readiness Standards were chiefly test and curriculum developers from ACT, SAT, ACHIEVE, and NCEE. This group of testing companies has never before been represented on standard development committees. Absent from the standards committee were high school math and English teachers, scientists, English professors, engineers, parents, state legislators, early childhood educators, and state or local school board members. She said, "They were simply not there." She expressed concern that records of meetings were not available, which leads her to believe the process was not transparent. This matters to her because she has been active in her community her entire life and has been involved in community activities as a representative town meeting member, a library trustee, and as a member of many selectman and school search committees. When she served on the [Common Core Standards] Validation Committee in 2009, she was asked to sign a confidentiality agreement agreeing to never disclose what occurred in the committee. She expressed alarm that nothing was transparent about any aspect of the process.

DR. STOTSKY turned to the qualifications of those who wrote the Common Core Standards used as the basis for the Alaska educational standards. She focused on ELA [English Language Arts] since that is her area of expertise. The two lead writers, David Coleman and Susan Pimentel, have never taught reading or English in K-12 or at the college level. Neither of them majored in English as an undergraduate, nor have they produced any serious work in K-12. At the time they were appointed to the [Common Core Standards' Validation Committee], they were as unknown to English and reading educators as they were to higher education faculty in rhetoric, speech, composition, or literary study. They were totally unknown, she said. She was baffled as to the reasons they were selected, what their charge was, who paid them, and who selected them.

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DR. STOTSKY said the purpose of the Common Core Standards Validation Committee was ostensibly to evaluate the soundness,

rigor, and validity of the standards that the standards writers were developing over a series of drafts in 2009 and 2010. The 25-29 members of the Common Core Standards Validation Committee included one mathematician and herself as the sole English language arts expert, but not one high school math teacher. The committee eventually added one high school English teacher. The bulk of committee membership was affiliated with testing, schools of education, or other related aspects of teaching in schools and not experts in math or English language arts standards. This important committee was supposed to verify that the standards were internationally benchmarked, were researched based, and included rigorous standards, she said. Although she was required to sign a letter by the end of the year attesting to that claim, she was one of five people who could not do so; she could not "rubber stamp" such a process. First, the Common Core Standards were not internationally benchmarked. She said she requested the names of the countries these standards were benchmarked to, and the information was not provided. Second, the standards were not research based, and third, the Common Core Standards certainly were not rigorous. She could determine this since she is quite familiar with language arts standards from her work at the Massachusetts Department of Education. Further, it is now known the math standards failed to include standards that will lead students to STEM careers, but she has no idea why they were omitted. The English language arts literary standards reduce literacy study in grades 6-12 and use an unproven approach to teaching Euclidian Geometry. They defer completion of Algebra 1 to grades 9 or 10, which is not what high-achieving countries do. The Common Core Standards are developmentally inappropriate in the primary grades, and they use 50 percent of the reading instructional time for high school English classes for informational reading.

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DR. STOTSKY turned to the specific flaws in the English language arts standards. First, both reading and English language arts standards are mainly content-free skills, with two or three content standards at the high school level - since she placed them there. Second, the Common Core Standards stress writing more than reading, even though 100 years of research indicates that good writers were first good readers. She predicted that teachers will spend substantial time trying to teach writing rather than reading. Of course students need to learn to write and practice writing, but they need more reading, she opined. Third, she highlighted that the Common Core Standard are developmentally inappropriate in many grades and lack

coordination between writing and reading standards so students are asked to set forth pieces of writing that are claimed, yet they have not seen a piece of reading with a claim unless their teacher found out students need to see this type of reading to be able to identify it.

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SENATOR FRENCH asked for further clarification on an imbalance between reading and writing standards. He referred to the Alaska Standards on page 46-61 and noted there are eight pages of standards for reading and the same amount for writing. He asked for further clarification on her claim that the Alaska standards are wrongly weighted in favor of writing standards.

DR. STOTSKY agreed it appears that the numbers are equal; however, it is also important to count sub-objectives under the writing standards. She suggested asking teachers if they are spending an enormous time on writing at every grade level, beginning in the primary grades. She emphasized that the sub-objectives amount to an entire objective. She said she discovered that these standards are not fewer, fairer, and deeper. Instead, what has happened is that several different objectives are bundled into one statement, but they are called one standard/objective. Thus, the standards are not fewer than what the state previously had, she said.

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DR. STOTSKY referred to Smarter Balance Consortium, which is the testing consortium that Alaska will use. When New Hampshire teachers gave feedback on an early version of the Smarter Balance test, the entire New Hampshire Teachers Union decided to collectively oppose the testing. She quoted, "The principal gathered the information and found out that his staff collectively believes that the results from the test will not measure the academic achievement of our students and will be mainly a test of computer skills and students' abilities to endure through a cumbersome task." That is the first feedback, she said, which provides empirical evidence from middle school teachers. No one really knows what the state is getting because it is not being piloted in one or several states. Teachers are not vetting these tests before giving them to their students.

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CHAIR REINBOLD related that Dr. Stotsky has an extensive biography and she encouraged people to review it.

SENATOR STEVENS related his understanding that Alaska is no longer a part of Smarter Balance Consortium, since it was withdrawn some time ago.

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ZE'EV WURMAN, Engineer and Visiting Scholar, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, stated that he served as a senior policy advisor at the U.S. Department of Education between 2007 and 2009, and he served as a commissioner on the 2010 California Academic Content Standards Commission that evaluated the Common Core Standards before they were adopted. He has also authored multiple studies to evaluate the Common Core mathematical standards and other state standards and serves as an executive in Monolithic 3D, a Silicon Valley startup company.

MR. WURMAN said that the 2012 Alaska Mathematics Standards are overwhelmingly a word-for-word copy of Common Core Standards. Their reduced rigor in K-8 will directly lead to reduced enrollment, particularly for disadvantaged and minority students in advanced mathematics courses in high school, who are bound to be harmed from pursuing challenging and rewarding careers. Additionally, he wondered if the ultimate value of high school Common Core Standards is that they are supposed lead to College and Career Readiness. He said that he compared the Common Core standards to Alaska Academic Standards and found them to, essentially, be identical, with the exception of two of forty K-8 standards. In two other grades, three standards were added, and in four grades, no additional standards were added.

MR. WURMAN related that the Alaska Academic Standards at the high school level only contain Common Core Standards, with several language clarifications. Secondly, he mentioned that over the last couple of decades the change in American education has been to push more students to take Algebra by the 8th grade, which led to an increase from 25 percent to 40-45 percent of students taking Algebra by 8th grade. This effort was taken due to the perception that overseas high-achieving nations seemed to be doing better than America in preparing students for technical careers. The science in Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) is not only physics or chemistry, but includes social science. Students who are not prepared to handle mathematics cannot succeed in these technical careers.

However, the Common Core Standards push Algebra to the 9th grade, which indicates a lack of rigor.

MR. WURMAN remarked that the importance of this depends on Alaska's goals since Common Core Standards prepare students for community colleges and non-selective colleges. If students are limited to Algebra 2 in high school, their chances of achieving a bachelor's degree drops to 50 percent, with a 50:1 success rate for those who desire a STEM career. This data is from 2012 National Center for Education Statistics. In other words, students will be prepared, at best, for non-selective colleges under a curriculum developed using Common Core and Alaska Academic Standards. In addition, since Algebra is pushed into high school, many students do not have any real chance to finish high school with calculus.

CHAIR REINBOLD looked forward to any feedback he could provide regarding his California experience.

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RON FURHER, President, National Education Association, Alaska (NEA-Alaska), said he represents 13,000 education support professionals and teachers in the state. He noted that he has provided written testimony. He paraphrased from his March 21, 2014, letter, which read, as follows:

To Whom It May Concern:

As president of NEA-Alaska, I represent 13,000 teachers and education support professionals who strive to lead their profession by providing the highest quality education to Alaska's children. In 2013, we voted on six guiding principles for leading our profession:

- Make every educator a great educator
- Create opportunities for innovative practices
- Increase the amount of time that students spend learning
- Create a quality teacher evaluation system
- Reinforce effective family-school partnering
- Delivery a rich and varied curriculum

With these principles in mind, NEA-Alaska supported the adoption of Alaska State Standards and continues

to support the idea of raising the bar for the quality of classroom learning in Alaska. The National Education Association endorsed Common Core in 2009 with the hope that we could move away from "teaching to the test" under No Child Left behind (NCLB) and place a new emphasis on fostering student learning and growth.

As Common Core standards have been implemented across the country, however, teachers and education support professionals have grown concerned. A recent survey of teachers showed that seven in ten teachers believe that implementation of the standards is going poorly in their schools. Teachers have not been given enough training, time, or classroom material to make the shift to the new standards.

We have a chance to get things right in Alaska, improving student learning and raising education standards. School districts, school boards, teachers, administrators, parents, and students have an important perspective to share and should all be involved in a collaborative implementation process.

Thank you for taking my testimony on this most important issue to Alaska's teachers and students.

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CHAIR REINBOLD asked whether he could provide any feedback in Alaska.

MR. FUHRER said he referenced the national study since Alaska's new evaluation system is at various stages of implementation. He offered to suggest a member who could speak to implementation of Common Core Standards in Anchorage schools.

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JACOB BERA, Teacher, Eagle River High School, stated he is a teacher at the Eagle River High School, in the Anchorage School District. He and his wife are both educators and have two small children who will start Alaska's public schools so they value a quality education.

MR. BERA offered to share his views from the perspective of the classroom on the new Alaska State Standards, teacher involvement

in the decision-making process, and the importance of teacher autonomy in relation to meeting standards. He viewed the purpose of standards as setting the academic bar of achievement, while more importantly allowing educators to decide what curriculum and educational approaches are appropriate for their students to meet them. This balanced approach is the ideal that Alaska is trying to reach, which is to provide consistency in what students should learn, but to allow teachers to decide how they should teach students to learn the curriculum.

MR. BERA turned to his area of expertise, the visual arts, noting he uses national and state standards as a guideline to help determine what his students should know and experience at each grade level. He also uses standards to create rubrics to assess his students' work. Still, he has the ability to choose the approach he will use with his students, and he knows what their interests are, what may challenge them, and what may not be appropriate for them. He uses recommended curriculum and texts from the district, but the ultimate decision as to what his students experience in the classroom rests with him. Some colleagues do not have the same latitude due to the pressures of accountability measures weighing more heavily on them. The climate of budget cuts and changing evaluations has also created added stress as these teachers try to achieve the worthwhile goal of meeting high standards.

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MR. BERA emphasized the importance of ensuring teacher autonomy by allowing him, as a teacher, to decide what is best for his students, which is one reason he is active in NEA-Alaska. He also wants to ensure that his colleagues are treated as professionals, are allowed to make educational choices for their students, and have a seat at table when educational decisions are made. He noted that he accepts responsibility for the decisions he makes and the performance of his students based on factors within his control. He sincerely applauded legislators and educational leaders in Alaska who value the importance of taking a thoughtful approach in making educational decisions.

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MR. BERA acknowledged the importance of setting the educational bar high, but he also cautioned the bar needs to be achievable and not set up educators and students for failure. He supported a process that allows teachers to have a voice in reviewing the Alaska State Standards, in order to share their insights and

expertise based on their classroom experiences. Although this may have already occurred, if more time is necessary to review the Alaska Academic Standards, he expressed his willingness to do so. He wants what is best for Alaska's students and to ensure that standards are appropriately implemented. This means granting teachers time and resources to adjust curriculum so students can meet the new academic standards. When the teacher perspective is taken out of the process, standards start to turn into top down curriculum choices that move the state farther away from individualized instruction. He opined that innovative approaches connect with students and help them feel excited about learning. A number of entities are working to do what is best for Alaska's students, including the legislature, the EED, the State Board of Education, and local school boards; however, he wants ensure that teachers can participate in the educational choices in Alaska, too. In closing, he advocated for the time and resources vital for student success and for teacher autonomy in the classroom.

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CHAIR REINBOLD said she wants to ensure magic between teachers and students without too many mandates. She also wants to empower teachers and make certain that resources are not diverted to testing the infrastructure necessary for testing. She commented that teachers matter and need to have a voice.

[6:14:32 PM](#)

SENATOR FRENCH asked whether the teachers agreed or disagreed with the following statement from the Alaska Academic Standards, which he read as follows:

These standards do not tell teachers how to teach nor do they attempt to override the unique qualities of each student in classrooms. They simply establish a strong foundation of knowledge and skills all students need for success after graduation. It is up to schools and teachers to decide how to put the standards into practice and incorporate other state and local standards, including cultural standards.

SENATOR FRENCH asked whether this is a true statement, a false statement, or needs elaboration.

MR. FUHRER answered "true."

MR. BERA said he believed that it is a true statement. He would emphasize the part that said it is up to school districts and teachers to decide how those standards are implemented.

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SENATOR STEVENS remarked that he keeps thinking that he should have had Terrence Moore and Anthony Esolen as professors in college, as he found their testimony exciting. He related that his liberal arts education and a classical education are important. He recalled Dr. Stotsky's earlier comments that more time should be spent on [reading] than on [writing]. He asked for feedback on the sense of this and if Dr. Stotsky is right. He viewed college students as spending more time on analysis and writing than on reading.

MR. BERA said he is a visual arts teacher, but the school has a school-wide goal to increase literacy. Teachers try to increase the amount of reading in all areas and do so in the art room, too. He focused his concern on allowing teachers to decide what the students are reading.

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SENATOR STEVENS inquired as to how to balance reading classics with other types of reading.

MR. BERA suggested that allowing teachers to have autonomy gives them the ability to shape classroom materials based on the community and the students. Regardless if the standards are Common Core Standards or Alaska Academic Standards, many reading lists also provide suggested texts. He recommended that teachers should be vocal if they have texts that are more appropriate for their students to meet the standards.

SENATOR STEVENS asked for further clarification on whether the standards "tie teachers' hands" on literature or for assigned readings.

MR. FUHRER said there are times when teachers engage students to think critically, which is when teachers are better apt to make the determination since they have developed personal relationships with students and are aware of their interests and abilities.

MR. BERA said he also serves on the Anchorage Curriculum Review committee for the visual arts. He offered his belief that the

ultimate recommendations should be left for teachers to decide, if not, he would challenge the educator to seek more autonomy.

CHAIR REINBOLD stated that the Alaska Academic Standards process is just beginning, noting the public and teachers are just becoming aware of the standards, and pilot projects were not used to test them out. She expressed concern about the unknown aspects and issues with regard to testing, as well as the overall effects on teachers and classrooms.

[6:21:37 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER said he found it interesting that the testimony does not seem to find the Alaska Academic Standards of high value; they do not matter as teachers ultimately have the standards in their hands. That would emphasize teacher education, he noted. The legislature is always looking for ways to improve education. "That's probably the source of the standards, ultimately some well-meaning person." He pointed out that the House just voted to eliminate the high school exit exam. He recalled being involved in that process and how the teachers really did pitch in and help, but, sadly, the standards "went down" as the test progressed, and "it left a lot of us pretty frustrated." He asked whether the state is wasting time by adopting any standards, because the teachers are saying not to worry about it because they have it covered in the classroom.

MR. FUHRER viewed the standards as providing the basics. Teachers' goals are to maximize student learning, and most hope to exceed the standards, so he tends to think of standards as the base level.

MR. BERA added that one positive to standards is that it helps to address transient students, such as military children. The teachers hope students can perform at a certain level.

[6:24:33 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS interpreted that he is not saying standards do not matter, but rather that they matter very much since they provide guidelines for school boards, administrators, and teachers.

MR. FUHRER replied yes; it is very important, particularly with transient students.

[6:25:36 PM](#)

CHAIR REINBOLD referred to the ESEA waiver standards which will be discussed later. She reiterated that Alaska is at an early stage in terms of academic standards, and it will take some time to figure it all out.

[6:27:52 PM](#)

MARTY VAN DIEST, Parent, paraphrased from the following written testimony, which read as follows:

My name is Marty Van Diest. I am a graduate of the University of Alaska Fairbanks, with a degree in education. I worked for eight years as a teacher and administrator in three small Christian schools in Anchorage and Palmer. My wife and I taught our four children at home over a period of more than 20 years. Our youngest is now 19 and attending the University of Alaska, Anchorage. Our oldest daughter was a National Merit Scholar, which is a level of academic excellence achieved by less than 40 Alaskan seniors every year. She did this without attending a single elementary or secondary classroom.

Although I am not actively engaged in education now, I am still very concerned that our children receive the best possible preparation for life.

I have three major problems for subjecting our children to the Common Core curriculum or standards that are aligned with it. First, this will continue the trend toward more centralization that has been occurring over the past 50 years. During the same time we've seen our quality in education decline. Americans are losing their place in innovation and ingenuity partly because we use the assembly-line model in teaching our children. This is centralization in the extreme. We need more diversity. Diversity encourages invention and innovative. Centralization discourages it.

Second, these standards will eventually lead to more federal intrusion into our educational system and into our classrooms. Standardized testing will need to continue on a massive and more intrusive scale than we have seen to date. Some type of enforcement or incentive-based system will ensue causing us to lose

our ability to choose the style of learning that is best for our schools and our children.

Lastly, I am concerned that these standards will eventually limit the ability to choose our own curriculum to teach our children. Already, most of the large publishers of educational material have dropped some information out and added other information to make sure they are aligned with Common Core. We will find our choices in curriculum limited and eventually may be forced to teach to the Common Core Standards in our private schools and homes.

Please stop this mistake. We have had enough of these factory-based educational models. Let's give freedom a try.

[6:31:39 PM](#)

JOE ALWARD, Teacher, West High School, paraphrased from the written testimony, which read as follows:

Recently the issue of Common Core Standards has become a very hot topic around our country. An explanation why it isn't working, and quite likely will never work in our current educational system, is in order.

First, let me point out that the idea behind state standards is fantastic, in theory. I think everyone can agree that having some standards to which all students should achieve is a good idea. After all, we do want students in our Nation's schools to improve, right?

However, like most ideals there are fundamental problems or flaws.

Since the implementation of this poorly thought out mandate I have noticed at our local level, in the Anchorage School District, one such flaw. There are supposed to be core courses being taught at each of the 8 major comprehensive high schools. That is, a student is supposed to be able to transfer from one school to another and continue earning credit in that course. However, this is not the case. For example, there are courses being taught at some schools that aren't being taught at any other. We have entire

programs, like Engineering at Dimond High School that are unique to a school.

Likewise, West High School, where I teach, is going to have a very unique facility for Career and Technical Education in the near future which will very likely offer courses no other school in the State will be able to offer. Because of the type of physical structure that is being built as well as the way it will be equipped with the latest high tech processing machinery, this will preclude students from being able to do so. In other words, there is no way a student who takes a course at West High's new facility will be able to transfer to another school, even in our own district, and have the next school's registrar, principal or counselor be able to place the student appropriately so he/she can continue earning credit in that same particular course.

[6:35:05 PM](#)

In addition, with these added courses in CTE it has pulled highly qualified Science teachers out of our Science department to meet the need for highly qualified personnel to teach in the CTE department.

This has created a loss of offerings in Science at our school. In order to counteract this downturn our district is allowing students the opportunity to earn Science credit for CTE coursework. Thus, the juxtaposition our local district has put us in by adopting these CCSS has put students, parent and our communities in a compromising position. This creates a problem we cannot resolve when students transfer, in or out of state, from school to school.

Next, if we can't do this on a local level, how in the heck are we expecting this to be done on a statewide level? Based on what we know from the ASD's website we have a very transient population of students in Anchorage. How are we going to get the small village schools all of the resources they will need to make this mandate work? For example, when a student transfers from Anchorage to the village, he/she may have been taking biology, but the village school may not be offering that course this year because they

don't have anyone qualified to teach it. Thus, the student doesn't get credit for that work.

In closing, Common Core was not well thought out nor implemented in such a manner to make it a successful endeavor. It may still have a chance in the future, with proper adjustments and with buy-in by all or most of the stakeholders. However, as it is right now, there are just way too many variables out of whack and that is why it should be dumped before it wastes any more time, resources, and does further damage to our students, school districts and Alaska's great educational system. Thank you.

[6:36:22 PM](#)

CHAIR REINBOLD remarked that it is important to hear from teachers. She said there is a ripple-down effect from the State Board of Education or EED, so it's important to address what happens on the front line. She stated that the concept is important, but the state needs to evaluate practicality in practice. She asked whether there were any concerns with respect to the teacher evaluations and the waiver.

MR. ALWARD said that once people begin to understand what Common Core Standards means with respect to student performance on tests, teachers will be more concerned about evaluations based on the criteria. Currently, it is difficult to have those discussions since the new standards haven't been rolled out by the states and have just been used at the local level on a voluntary basis.

CHAIR REINBOLD agreed, noting that the state is just now creating opportunities for parents to learn what happened to the standards and assessments in 2009-2011.

[6:38:15 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS related his understanding that Mr. Alward doesn't have a high regard for Alaska Standards and his concern about student transfers, but he did not see the relationship between those issues. He asked for further clarification on how standards have impacted transfers.

MR. ALWARD responded that he has struggled with the impacts the last few weeks. He clarified that he doesn't have an issue with specific standards, but the idea of Common Core Standards - the

idea of what is done in Alaska will be the same as what is done in Connecticut - concern him. He emphasized that Alaska is not the same as Connecticut.

[6:39:21 PM](#)

SENATOR FRENCH said it seems that the flaw Mr. Alward points out is premised in the fourth paragraph, which indicates core courses are supposed to be taught at each of the major comprehensive high schools. He questioned whether that is part of the Common Core Standards or if it is part of what the school district is doing to set up the curriculum. He asked whether he was missing something.

MR. ALWARD said he thought it was both. One problem that happens in Alaska is that when one course is being taught in one district it should also be taught elsewhere; otherwise, students can't take the course and move to the next district or school.

SENATOR FRENCH disagreed, noting that he is not speaking about the State Academic Standards or Common Core Standards, but of district policies on curriculum.

MR. ALWARD said he understood; however, he felt that the standards pit small schools against large schools. He offered his belief that the state will be faced with this issue even more so, now that the state is looking at implementation of this type of reform.

CHAIR REINBOLD emphasized the importance of hearing from teachers and parents who have the task of implementing this.

[6:42:42 PM](#)

TROY CARLOCK, Teacher, West High School, stated that he teaches at West High School and has been teaching there for 16 years. He also owns a small pavement maintenance business in Anchorage.

MR. CARLOCK said he totally agrees with Mr. Alward that the idea of standards is fantastic but should be done at the state and local level as a bedrock principle of the federal system. Mr. Alward has correctly pointed out that there are flaws with the system in the Anchorage School District. There will be untold sums of money wasted to see that the Common Core Standards are implemented throughout the state. When Dr. Jim Browder (PH) came to the Anchorage School District last year, he realigned the English and social studies curriculum so they would

correlate with each other. For example, sophomores would take world history alongside world literature and juniors would take U.S. history alongside American literature. Due to the large transient student population in the Anchorage School District, the plan was for students to be able to transfer between high schools and pick up where they left off.

[6:43:51 PM](#)

MR. CARLOCK said that this makes sense; however, each high school in Anchorage was given the right to choose elective courses for freshman, so courses do not necessarily correlate between schools. A student can take freshman consumer economics at Chugiak High school, then transfer in the middle of the semester to West High School, but need to take geography, Alaska studies, or ancient civilization history. He questioned how this will work at a statewide level, or a national level, if it can't be aligned at the local level.

[6:44:24 PM](#)

MR. CARLOCK asked whether schools like Palmer High School and West High School will have programs like the international baccalaureate program (IB). The IB program allows students to take four semesters of history of the Americas and allows seniors to graduate without taking any economics or U.S. government. He offered his belief that this doesn't even align with the current state requirements for graduation, but this program exists through special waivers. He questioned how Common Core Standards will affect this program. He pointed out that the state of Florida has adopted Common Core Standards and IB flourishes. Terrence O. Moore, Professor, Hillsdale College states, "They are deliberately killing the greatest stories of the greatest nation in history. I believe both these will rob our students of our nation's heritage."

[6:45:25 PM](#)

MR. CARLOCK said there is no doubt that universal education began in New England clear back to 1647; however, it was done at the state and local level. For example, the Massachusetts legislature passed a law requiring every community of [over] 50 families or households to set up free public schools to teach the fundamentals of reading, writing, ciphering, history, geography, and bible study. Dr. Moore goes on to later explain that townships that had 100 families or more were required to set up secondary schools to help students during that time to go

to Harvard. Our constitutional republic gives these powers and responsibilities to the states and local government. President Ronald Regan was very much a proponent of this principle, too. Founding forefather John Adams makes note of this when he states that they made an earlier provision by law that every town consisting of so many families should be furnished with a grammar school. They made it a crime for such a town to be destitute of a grammar schoolmaster for a few months, and subjected it to heavy penalties. The education of all ranks of people was under the care and expense of the public in a manner that he believes has been unknown to any other people, ancient or modern.

[6:46:33 PM](#)

MR. CARLOCK stated that the most literate populous of any country during those times was early America. He emphasized that state and local governments did these things and not the federal government. It was the state legislatures that imposed this on local citizens to see that public education was provided in their community. He concluded by saying that he believes the Common Core Standards should not be implemented because the standards represent cumbersome, overreaching federal control over the state and local education systems.

[6:48:24 PM](#)

CHAIR REINBOLD asked for a list of who was involved with Alaska Standards.

MIKE HANLEY, Commissioner, Department of Education and Early Development (EED), referred to a document in members' packets entitled "Alaska English Language Arts & Mathematics Standards," which provides a timeline. He said AS 14.03.015 states that:

It is the policy of this state that the purpose of education is to help ensure that all students will succeed in their education and work, shape worthwhile and satisfying lives for themselves, exemplify the best values of society, and be effective in improving the character and quality of the world about them.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY said that stated purpose isn't as fluid as "college and career readiness," but ultimately it means to ensure that students succeed in their education and work. He stated that the department is looking at standards that will

help students be successful in their education and work, which has been the department's goal all along.

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COMMISSIONER HANLEY referred to a review of the success and lack of success in Alaska students by the Fordham Institute. He said the institute rated Alaska's last set of standards as being an "F" in Language Arts and a "D" in Math. The Fordham Institute rated the University of Alaska's remediation rates poorly, with 53 percent of incoming freshmen needing remedial courses in math and/or English. Student completion rates for a UA degree were at 33 percent. One-fifth of the students could not pass the written exam to get into the military, he said. Twenty percent of Alaska's workers are nonresidents, and, in terms of NAEP [National Assessment of Educational Progress] scores, Alaska's students are 41st in math and 47th in reading.

[6:50:47 PM](#)

CHAIR REINBOLD asked what percentage of students take NAEP assessments.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY responded that a select sampling of fourth and eighth grade students is done by the U.S. Department of Education. The department provides the demographics of the schools and the U.S. DOE chooses the sampling that best matches the demographics of the state. In response to a question, he said he did not know the number of students tested.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY said that the data illustrates the need for something new and that was the driver for the Alaska Academic Standards. The aforementioned timeline speaks to Dr. Stotsky's comments regarding the lack of transparency with the Common Core Standards. He emphasized the openness and engagement of Alaskans that was used in development of the Alaska Academic Standards.

[6:51:59 PM](#)

SUSAN MCCAULEY, Director, Teaching and Learning Support, Department of Education and Early Development (EED), reviewed the aforementioned timeline, noting that beginning in February 2010 and extending for nearly two years, the department went through a process of developing and publicly vetting the Alaska Academic Standards (Alaska standards) which were then adopted in 2012. The development process entailed 230 Alaska

representatives from over 56 organizations over a period of eight meetings, being sure to include teachers of special education students and English language learners and representatives of post-secondary school. The Alaska standards were developed being responsive to what was known about Alaska's previous set of standards and to how Alaska students perform, with the goal of wanting to ensure that Alaska's students could be competitive in and outside of Alaska. The process included an extended six-month public comment period to ensure a clear and transparent process. In addition, five regional community meetings were held throughout the state, eight webinars were conducted, and 17 in-person presentations were given. The EED sent frequently-asked-questions (FAQs) and draft standards to 150 business and education organizations across Alaska, inviting comments on the standards. The draft standards were discussed in the department's annual report to the legislature in January 2013, and in June 2012, following a thorough review of the public comments, the Alaska Academic Standards were approved. In response to a question, Ms. McCauley answered that the state Board of Education approved the standards.

[6:54:23 PM](#)

SENATOR FRENCH asked for the amount of public comment received.

MS. MCCAULEY replied that it was extensive, primarily from Alaskan teachers with regard to two topics: the original standards did not include a set of standards for literacy, history, science, and technical subjects. She reported that overwhelming public comment from Alaskan educators indicated that they wanted a set of standards specific to literacy across the content areas included in Alaska standards. Second, questions arose regarding computational skills and what computational fluency was required at each grade level, primarily at the elementary education grade levels. This led to adding a fluency chart to the Alaska Academic Standards that clearly specify the computational skills students should attain at each grade level.

SENATOR FRENCH asked whether it was fair to say that dozens of teachers commented.

MS. MCCAULEY answered that there was extensive comment and she could easily provide it.

CHAIR REINBOLD requested a list of everyone who was involved in the process, including all of the public comments.

SENATOR FRENCH clarified that he was interested in rough numbers.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY related that these documents are public documents.

CHAIR REINBOLD referred to the 2009-2010 development period, noting she was not sure people knew about the Common Core Standards at the time, and "they didn't see the tsunami that was taking over education at the federal level." She said they still do not know what the National Governor's Association is, or about the Race-to-Top funding. She said people do not understand the waiver and the impacts on teachers and the curriculum. She asked how many of the 53 districts have adopted Common Core Standards or Alaska Academic Standards.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY related that the Alaska Academic Standards are the expectation for all districts, but several districts have adopted Common Core Standards prior to the adoption of the Alaska Academic Standards.

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CHAIR REINBOLD asked how many districts have adopted the standards. She recalled his testimony on June 2013 that Commissioner Hanley said there is an estimate of 95 percent similarity between the Common Core Standards and the Alaska Academic Standards.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY answered that since then the department has conducted a thorough review and has determined that Alaska has 320 individual language art standards, and 133 - or about 42 percent - of the standards are different than the Common Core Standards. In math, 49 percent of the 113 standards are different than the Common Core Standards, and Alaska has added an additional 26 standards that are not in the Common Core Standards, he said.

CHAIR REINBOLD suggested that that the state shouldn't purchase Common Core literature because the standards are so different.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY replied that the department hasn't told the districts what to purchase for curriculum.

[6:59:52 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS related that the Common Core Standards are at the national level and the Alaska Standards are at the state level. He expressed concern on Dr. Stotsky's comments about the enormous secrecy. He asked whether anyone was asked to sign a letter of confidentiality when developing Alaska's Academic Standards.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY answered no, and he has tried to get as many people involved as he could. He pointed out the department went to five communities around the state to conduct meetings.

SENATOR STEVENS offered his belief that the department has shown enormous ability to create transparency in the process. He expressed his appreciation.

[7:01:03 PM](#)

CHAIR REINBOLD asked for the percentage of teachers involved.

MS. MCCAULEY answered 230 Alaskans. Although she didn't have the figures in front of her, she offered to provide exact factual information to the committee.

CHAIR REINBOLD reiterated her interest in the exact number of teachers involved in the process.

[7:01:48 PM](#)

CHAIR REINBOLD asked how much was spent on the U.S. Department of Education ESEA waiver and the purpose of it.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY explained that the ESEA waiver is separate from the educational standards that began development in 2009 and 2010. He stated that Secretary Duncan realized the fallacy of the NCLB for everyone. One thing that needed to be done was to develop rigorous standards, he said. The only cost to the state was the cost of the department's time to put together the waiver. What it accomplished for the state was to allow moving forward with a system of accountability that makes more sense. He described the five-star ASPI [Alaska Standards Performance Index] as more understandable, with nearly all of our schools being deemed failures under the previous NCLB. He said, "It got us out of that and allowed us to move to something more accurate for our schools and our districts."

[7:03:32 PM](#)

CHAIR REINBOLD asked for further clarification that these are two separate topics, the ESEA flexibility waiver and the Alaska Academic Standards.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY answered yes, noting that one of the criteria was to have rigorous standards that help Alaska's students succeed in education and work. He said that was already being accomplished so that was one thing the department could do to allow the state to apply.

CHAIR REINBOLD disagreed since it seemed to her it was part of the requirement for the waiver.

[7:04:14 PM](#)

CHAIR REINBOLD pointed out that Maryland just requested \$1 million for the infrastructure. She asked what the department will need for Alaska State Standards assessments in terms of infrastructure and funding.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY responded that the assessment test will need to align with the standards, in other words, to "test what you teach." So any time that standards are changed, the tests must change to assure that the state is measuring it. Thus, when the state originally joined the Smarter Balance Consortium, it was one option the state had since no other assessments were being developed; however, as time went on the state chose to put out an RFP [request for proposal] to more fully understand what options were available and the number of vendors that would apply. Five vendors applied and the state chose the Achievement and Assessment Institute, based in Kansas. The state currently uses this institute for some alternative assessments and is in the process of finalizing a contract with them. Part of the proposal and scoring entails the cost of the proposal, and the cost of this proposal came in at or below the cost of the state's current assessments so the department doesn't need any additional funds. The department can provide a new assessment for the same cost, he explained.

[7:06:02 PM](#)

CHAIR REINBOLD asked for clarification on whether online exams will be necessary, and if so, what type of infrastructure will be necessary. She asked whether the department has invested in any infrastructure and what the investment over the next ten years will be. She said she understood the department will not be coming to the legislature for additional funding this year.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY said he did not anticipate the need for any funding this year. He related that the previous \$250,000 increase to the contract is already in place, and it is a matter of maintaining the contract. He said that the department is in the beginning stages, but the RFP came in under the bid price. In terms of infrastructure, the department has the responsibility to continue to assess students in grades 3-10. The state must meet the federal requirement to test all students in grades 3-8 and in high school after 9th grade; however, the state likes the continuity of data and has continued to assess students in grades 3-10. The department plans on continuing to do so. If it is necessary to use paper and pencil, the department will provide it; however, the goal is to move into the 21st century with technology-based assessments to the greatest extent possible. As districts become prepared to use technology in assessments, the department will incorporate and use adaptive tests. Adaptive testing is something that cannot be done with pencil and paper, and this will allow faster turnaround to provide information to students, counselors, and students much quicker.

CHAIR REINBOLD asked for further clarification on the paper and pencil assessments.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY reiterated that the state has the responsibility to assess all students in grades 3-10, and wherever possible will do so electronically, either web-based or cloud-based, and the other is local caching, where the test is downloaded to a local server, avoiding the need for additional bandwidth. The third way is to use paper and pencil exams.

[7:08:54 PM](#)

CHAIR REINBOLD asked whether the tests are aligned to Alaska Academic Standards.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY answered yes; they will be related. In response to Chair Reinbold, he answered that the language arts has 42 percent differences, and math has 49 percent difference from the Common Core Standards.

[7:09:07 PM](#)

CHAIR REINBOLD asked for further clarification on the ESEA flexibility waiver from the U.S. Department of Education if the department considers it a federal mandate.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY answered no; the state could return to NCLB. The waiver was granted at the state's request, but it is optional. The state could say it does not want the waiver and return to Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). In response to additional questions, he said the waiver was received in December 2013, and no federal funding was tied to the waiver.

CHAIR REINBOLD asked if any federal funding or Gates Foundation funding has been provided to adopt these new standards - Alaska Academic Standards, Common Core Standards, or College and Career Readiness Standards.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY answered no; the department's budget is a public document shared with the finance committees. In fact, if the state chose not go with the waiver, the state would have adopted Alaska Standards because that was the direction the state was moving. The waiver process identified the current standards. In response to a question, he said he was unsure of the amount of Title 1 funding.

CHAIR REINBOLD related her understanding that Title 1 funding ranged from \$30-50 million.

[7:11:58 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS, recalling earlier testimony that Common Core and Alaska Standards are 95 percent identical, he related his understanding from today's testimony that the math standards are 51 percent similar. He asked whether the statement that the standards are 95 percent identical is a fallacy.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY answered yes; but offered to walk through the differences. He provided an example of seemingly minor changes that have significance, such as meeting a Kindergarten standard "with scaffolding," which means with support and is different. The department has built in some things it believes are important, he said.

[7:13:18 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER recalled Chair Reinbold set the goal of exploring concerns related to Common Core Standards for this meeting. He noted his appreciation for Commissioner Hanley's offer to review the differences.

[7:14:38 PM](#)

CHAIR REINBOLD said this discussion is the first in a series, and the number of meetings depends on the interest from the public, teachers, parents and others. She said she will follow this topic for many years, because it involves the minds of Alaska's youth, which is the state's most valuable resource. This is the most important topic, and she said she wants to get to the bottom of it. "This is a transformation of our educational system," and there is national and widespread pushback on the Common Core Standards. She said the legislature should not be left in the dark, and there is a \$2 billion deficit and she is very concerned about the costs, and she asked what grades are going to be tested and the time spent.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY said there has been a national movement to go from testing grades 3-10 to grades 3-11. The department took the question to the State Board of Education and they chose not to put it out to public comment as they were comfortable with staying at grades 3-10. Currently, districts take parts of three days for testing, and he assumes that the time spent will be similar.

[7:17:15 PM](#)

CHAIR REINBOLD directed attention to funding for tests, infrastructure, and teacher education. She asked for projected costs and whether the state will be receiving any federal funding for the waiver.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY responded that currently school districts are required to review curriculum every six years and to budget for that review. He assumed new standards would require review and by the same token the state should be doing so, but it's been closer to 10 or more years since the state has updated standards. He maintained there is not any inherent additional cost to the department. The department has performed its work as part of its duties without any increment. He acknowledged that districts have a challenge to raise the bar and shift focus, so professional development is a requirement. In addition, schools must review their curriculum. Over the last three years, districts have been notified of the new standards, and the department has urged them to consider this during their curriculum adoption. The districts could certainly use more support for professional development, he said. He offered to discuss the department's efforts to assist districts at a subsequent meeting.

[7:20:08 PM](#)

CHAIR REINBOLD asked if the state has received any "Race to the Top" funding, funding for the NCLB waiver, or Gates Foundation funding and if the commissioner anticipates more testing costs.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY offered to provide budget documents, but related that no money was provided for the standards. He highlighted efforts the Gates Foundation has made in terms of funding libraries, museums, and universities, but no money has been tied to the new standards. Further, the state did not apply for Race to the Top funds.

[7:20:58 PM](#)

SENATOR FRENCH asked if the Koch brothers have provided funding.

CHAIR REINBOLD asked the commissioner to finish.

[7:21:13 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER HANLEY, in response to the cost or the assessment, responded that the department is doing work as best as it can. Additional funding would allow the department to provide greater training and professional development, but staff are "maxed out" right now, and the department is not asking for an increment at this time, but there is ongoing professional development. He expressed hope that districts will testify regarding challenges to do more with the continued funding. In response to a question, he said he does not know about a correlation between the Gates Foundation and Common Core Standards. The foundation did not support Alaska Academic Standards, but he assumes that the Gates Foundation supports the standards in some states.

[7:22:50 PM](#)

SENATOR FRENCH related his understanding that Chair Reinbold is planning a series of meetings on this topic. He expressed hope that the committee will make the best use of time and focus more on the standards than on the source. Good ideas should be embraced. He referred to page 40 of the standards, with respect to grades 3-5, noting each of these grade levels are to "demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking." He said he fully supports this idea. He then referred to page 42: grade 4 students should "use common grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots." He said he thought these are good ideas no

matter where the idea originated. He referred to an article in members' packets about Indiana withdrawing from the Common Core Standards: "The Common Core was developed by the National Governor's Association and state education superintendents. Indiana adopted the standards in 2010, but by 2012, Tea Party anger had engulfed the national education standards, and conservative anger over the national requirements helped turn the superintendent out of office." He expressed hope that the state would not fall into Tea Party anger instead of studying the standards themselves.

[7:25:03 PM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS agreed with Senator French, but at the same time the committee also needs a response to the professors who testified today, relating that the standards are 95 percent identical and that states are not teaching love of literature, music, and art, but rather are teaching College and Career Readiness. He expressed hope for a response in the future.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY offered to do so.

[7:25:51 PM](#)

CHAIR REINBOLD said 25 states have introduced legislation. She said there is pushback on the Common Core standards, including from left-leaning people who will speak at a future meeting. She further said she has received concerns about new curriculum, the impact on test taking in the classroom, and teachers. She added that she does care where the standards come from, whether the standards have been vetted, and if they are age appropriate.

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER thanked Chair Reinbold, noting that it was helpful to review these issues.

[7:27:26 PM](#)

CHAIR REINBOLD stated that the motivation is pure, and she wants to ensure that teachers remain in loop and that morale does not drop. She has been staying in contact with numerous teachers and parents, and she highlighted that the regulations specify the need for feedback from all stakeholders.

[7:28:18 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the Administrative Regulation Review Committee meeting was adjourned at 7:28 p.m.