

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 1, 2013

9:01 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Lora Reinbold, Vice Chair  
Representative Gabrielle LeDoux  
Representative Dan Saddler  
Representative MR. Paul Seaton  
Representative Peggy Wilson  
Representative Harriet Drummond

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Representative Lynn Gattis, Chair

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

OVERVIEW: DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT

- HEARD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

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

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided the EED overview.

PAUL PRUSSING, Deputy Director  
Teaching and Learning Support  
Department of Education and Early Development (EED)  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Responded to questions, during the EED overview.

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

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Responded to questions, during the EED overview.

## **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[9:01:58 AM](#)

**VICE CHAIR LORA REINBOLD** called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. Present at the call to order were Representatives Reinbold, LeDoux, Saddler, Seaton, Wilson and Drummond.

### **OVERVIEW: DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT**

[9:02:27 AM](#)

**VICE CHAIR REINBOLD** announced that the only order of business would be an overview from the Department of Education and Early Development (EED).

[9:03:03 AM](#)

**MIKE HANLEY**, Commissioner, Department of Education and Early Development (EED), proceeded with an overview of the structure, responsibility, and authority to which the department adheres. Referring to the Alaska Constitution Section 7.1, covering public education and defining the responsibilities, he paraphrased the defining language, which reads [original punctuation provided]:

SECTION 1. Public Education. The legislature shall by general law establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all children of the State, and may provide for other public educational institutions. Schools and institutions so established shall be free from sectarian control. No money shall be paid from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or other private educational institution.

**COMMISSIONER HANLEY** said the language in statute "establish and maintain" has been further defined to mean: adequately fund education, provide oversight and support for the schools, set content standards for learning, and establish assessments for measuring student progress towards attaining the standards. He then referred to AS 14.03.015 to paraphrase the policy language that read [original punctuation provided]:

Sec. 14.03.015. State education policy. 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 underscored that an important aspect of the statute is that the state level responsibilities do not include local decision making, such as personnel and curricular choices. He directed attention to the committee handout, titled "State of Alaska Department of Education and Early Development," dated February 1, 2013, page 3, to indicate a list comparing state and local responsibilities and duties. The state purview includes: financing of public schools, establishment of standards and assessment systems, and assignment of district and school accountability designations. The local school authorities requirements are: auditing all school accounts, providing an educational program for each school age child enrolled or who is a resident of the district, and to review and select all textbooks and instructional materials. He said that, when determining educational programs, a school could, for instance, adopt a traditional model, correspondence model, or organize a charter school. He pointed out that Anchorage has recently adopted a new math program to suit that district's needs.

[9:08:01 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON established that if a teacher did not have text books, it would not be the department but the local authorities that would address the issue.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY said correct. The local structure would call for the principal to be the first contact, who would then approach the superintendent, and finally the school board would ultimately be responsible.

[9:08:28 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON noted that some initiatives are statewide, such as the District 6 iPad program, funded through the state. He asked if the state has the responsibility for the assessment of that program and for providing the information to the legislature, or are assessments to be expected from the individual districts.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY responded that it depends on the approach taken with the initiative, and the iPad program was a direct appropriation facilitated by the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB); all program data is held by the association. Other exceptions are theme based education programs where data is maintained by the districts, such as exists in the Iditarod School District.

[9:09:46 AM](#)

VICE CHAIR REINBOLD requested a report to the committee regarding the outcome of the iPad program.

[9:10:31 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX asked for background on the iPad program.

VICE CHAIR REINBOLD said that a distribution of iPads occurred in District 6, with the expectation to achieve certain outcomes.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY explained that funding was appropriated for a 1:1 initiative, which provided every student with an iPad. The expectation was for a complete change of how teachers delivered curriculum, as well as a change in the participation level of students. Professional development was provided to the primary grade teachers to allow them to implement the iPads for the school year just past. Reading programs were focused on, and the department did recognize significant, positive strides in this area.

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX clarified that it was a pilot program, held in a specific school district.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY said it was not termed a pilot as much as a one-time project. The governor's current proposal for the digital 1:1 initiative takes into account the impacts that the District 6 program had, and proposes to implement a similar program on a larger scale.

[9:12:19 AM](#)

COMMISSIONER HANLEY presented a flowchart to illustrate the overall structure of EED, which differs from that of other state agencies. The department is headed by the State Board of Education and Early Development with the Commissioner acting similar to a chief executive officer (CEO). Five divisions exist below the commissioner, which are: Teaching and Learning

Support, School Finance and Facilities, Administrative Services, Libraries Archives, and Museums, and Mount Edgecumbe Boarding School. He pointed out that an additional three divisions are not connected to the other flow chart divisions and said they are considered active partnerships, namely: Professional Teaching Practices Commission, Alaska State Council on the Arts, and Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education. These partnerships are operated by the appropriate commission or board and the department provides administrative services.

[The 5 major divisions and 3 partnership divisions are comprised of components, which for purposes of these minutes will be referred to as sections and the offices housed therein.]

[9:13:39 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX asked how admission to Mt. Edgecumbe occurs.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY answered that it is an application and screening process.

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX inquired whether there is preference for Native students or residence location considerations.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY said there is not a Native preference, although there are a high percentage of Native students enrolled. He agreed to provide a copy of the application for additional review.

VICE CHAIR REINBOLD interjected that an overview from Mt. Edgecumbe is slated as a future committee agenda item.

[9:15:26 AM](#)

COMMISSIONER HANLEY said the Professional Teaching Practices Commission is in place to handle complaints against teachers and administrators, or other school employees, who violate professional standards. The department provides administrative support for the Alaska State Council on the Arts, as well as the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education, which implements the Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS). Commissioner Hanley continued, stating that the Teaching and Learning Support division is the largest, with a staff of 93 in the six sections. The Early Learning section is comprised of the offices for Head Start, AKPreK, Head Start Collaboration, Best Beginnings, and Parents as Teachers. He reported that eight districts operate

AKPreK programs, based on a competitive grant process. The Best Beginnings has been funded by the legislature and is part of the Imagination Library, establishing local support activities in communities distributing free books on a monthly basis. The funding for Best Beginnings resides in the EED budget, but it is not operated by the department. Parents as Teachers are also early learning programs.

[9:17:13 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON asked how many, of each of the named early learning programs, exist.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY offered that not all Head Start programs are supported by the state.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON said that Wrangell has a Head Start program, and she requested further information on the number of schools in the state implementing early learning programs.

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX noted that some programs, such as Head Start, have been operating in Alaskan districts for a length of time. She asked whether empirical studies exist regarding the outcomes of former program attendees, as compiled by the state or at the federal level.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY reported that the state has accumulated data on the pre-K Head Start programs. He shared that during a recent education summit Senator Hollis French, Alaska State Legislature, provided information indicating a correlation between early learning and remaining out of jail. Head Start provides wrap around services for the entire family, and the department provides additional academic components to the program, such as Teaching Strategies GOLD, to help prepare children for kindergarten and first grade.

[9:21:03 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked what the youngest age is that a child might become involved in the public education system.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY responded that, aside from the eight pre-K programs that begin at age four, the youngest would be kindergarten age. The Best Beginnings program accepts parents with children from birth but it is not considered part of the public school system.

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND added that special needs children can begin at age three in the Anchorage district.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY confirmed that the Child Find program does allow early intervention for special needs.

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND said that Head Start longitudinal studies indicate that for every dollar spent on a child to participate in the program, society saves seven dollars in juvenile and adult social programs.

VICE CHAIR REINBOLD agreed that early intervention can prove successful. However, it is important to ascertain which programs have the most impact and she asked that the department plan to provide appropriate reports. She stressed the importance for targeted funding.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY said the AKPreK is in its fourth year of operation and agreed to distribute findings to the committee, as well as for Parents as Teachers also available directly from the department.

[9:24:51 AM](#)

COMMISSIONER HANLEY moved onto the Statewide Mentoring Program section. He said the Teacher Mentor Project has been positive for teacher retention and added that student performance has also been shown to improve when a new teacher receives mentoring. The Administrative Coaching Program is also effective for improving the abilities of principals and superintendents to support and empower teachers. Commissioner Hanley pointed out that the Student and School Achievement section has five offices, which include: Assessment and Accountability; Charter and Correspondence Schools; Alaska Learning Network (AKLN); Health and Safety; and Federal Grant Program offices for Special Education, Career and technical Education (CTE), and No Child Left Behind (NCLB). He elaborated to say that the office of Assessments and Accountability facilitates the statewide, annual assessments, which include: standards based assessments (SBAs), TerraNova, and WorkKeys. He said that the AKLN is a distance learning program, supported with continued funding in the governor's budget. The focus of AKLN is to provide access to highly qualified teachers for students in the most remote areas. Health and safety has also been a focus of the governor, and the Health and Safety office has adopted components to address domestic violence and sexual assault, including the Fourth R curriculum to help students

build healthy relationships and Coaching Boys into Men (CBIM). Athletic coaches implement the CBIM program to instill respectful behavior both on and off the court. He said works hand in hand with these programs but the EED budget provides only incremental support, which are primarily funded through the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) and the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (DVSA) council. Additionally, he mentioned, several federal grant programs are also part of the department, including: Special Education-Title I, and student nutrition.

[9:27:42 AM](#)

COMMISSIONER HANLEY indicated that the Teacher Certification section represents a small aspect of the Teaching and Learning Support division, with offices for the Alaska Teacher Certification Program and the Professional Teaching Practices Commission. The certification program ensures that all teachers meet professional qualifications and that re-certifications are current.

[9:28:01 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND requested elaboration on the departmental oversight of the federal grant programs listed under the Student and School Achievement section; Special Education, CTE, and NCLB.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY responded that the department receives program funding, as well as accountability measures for the three named programs, and said he chose not to include the extensive list in today's presentation. Regarding NCLB, he offered that there are a number of follow-up requirements related to the funding and several employees are dedicated to these federal components.

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND referred specifically to the special education aspect, and asked, "Do you get a piece of funding for special education and then assess how our schools are doing based on that."

COMMISSIONER HANLEY deferred.

[9:29:21 AM](#)

PAUL PRUSSING, Deputy Director, Teaching and Learning Support, Department of Education and Early Development (EED), responded

that a small amount of state administrative money is provided for special education. He said a team of three education specialists review all of the grants for the districts, and an administrator oversees the program. He said the federal annual performance report was recently completed and other duties include: grant review, budget review, on-site monitoring, and collection of data required by the federal government.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY added that the performance bar for NCLB was recently raised and, further, it requires that every child, in every district of every state, must be determined proficient by next year; the U.S. Department of Education is offering waivers to the mandate.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON asked how many employees at the department administer the NCLB program.

MR. PRUSSING said the team has 11 staff.

[9:31:52 AM](#)

COMMISSIONER HANLEY continued on to name the offices that are within the Statewide System of Support section, which include the Education Content Specialists, Technical Assistance Coaches, Content Coaches, and the Yupiit Trustee. He stated that there are three content specialists, which focus attention on the areas of literacy, math, and science. The specialists provide districts with available resources and materials as well as ensure employee access to appropriate training and professional development. The ten school improvement coaches work directly with the three intervention districts; building capacity at the local level for districts with chronically underperforming students. Finally, the federally funded Child Nutrition section maintains offices for the National School Lunch Program, the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), Child and Adult Food Program, and Donated Commodities.

[9:32:53 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX inquired how many children are involved in the subsidized breakfast and lunch programs.

MR. PRUSSING answered that Alaska has 300 Title I schools, which are poverty based, and he agreed to provide the committee with the exact numbers.

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX further asked what the threshold is for qualification to the program, and whether everyone attending a Title I school is eligible.

MR. PRUSSING said an income questionnaire is required and the threshold for qualification is defined as the federal poverty line, which may allow the participant to purchase a free or reduced meal. However, anyone may purchase the meal.

[9:34:58 AM](#)

VICE CHAIR REINBOLD said that the state public assistance office reports that 190,000 Alaskans are receiving some type of government support, including the school food program. She noted that EED receives \$300 million in federal grants, of which a significant amount is directed for school food programs and she asked to have clarification of the money distribution provided to the committee.

[9:36:14 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked if there is overlap of the four named food programs.

MR. PRUSSING indicated that each of the programs provide several different services, which could come in many forms and may allow multiple eligibilities. He said overlap is possible and offered to provide data regarding duplication of services.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY interjected that the Child and Adult Food Program is not necessarily an in-school service, and suggested further clarification.

MR. PRUSSING allowed that TEFAP is a federal program specifically designed to be ramped up for emergency situations, such as a flooded village. The Child and Adult Food Programs provide subsidized meals typically through privately owned pre-schools and adult care facilities.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked whether EED is involved in the adult food programs and suggested that there may be "mission creep" if the education department is providing services to older people.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY agreed and clarified that the services are each an aspect of the same federal funding component and EED administers the program.

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND reported that 58 of the 90 schools in Anchorage serve student breakfasts. She said this indicates that there are a multitude of issues in Anchorage; otherwise children would be eating a morning meal at home. A facility, such as the student nutrition center in Anchorage, which serves 20,000 students per day, should be operating on a 24/7, 365 day per year schedule to process food for all community members in need, she opined.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON commented that the food stamp program provides families with an allowance that should cover three meals per day. The same families may also qualify for free breakfast and lunch programs and are possibly being relieved from providing those two meals. She asked how many school districts serve meals and how many would like to be in the program but are precluded due to facility limitations.

MR. PRUSSING agreed to provide the information to the committee.

VICE CHAIR REINBOLD commented that the mission of education is education and social services are the purview of DHSS. She asked to have the [Child Nutrition] administrative costs provided to the committee stating it would be important to determine whether a departmental restructuring needs to be considered. Additionally, private non-profit organizations, such as United Way and the Rasmussen Foundation, could be partnered with to provide food services, freeing teachers to focus on classroom related duties, she suggested.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY agreed to provide all EED administrative costs to the committee, as requested by the chairman.

[9:42:46 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX noted that the nutrition programs are federally funded and the only state money is for administration through the four section offices.

MR. PRUSSING clarified that the state provides about \$68,000 and the districts contribute local matching funds of about \$400,000. He said the EED Child Nutrition team is 100 percent federally funded.

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX recalled that the history of the school lunch programs began with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

MR. PRUSSING said it is still under the purview of the USDA.

[9:44:08 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND noted the Donated Commodities office and asked if it is the USDA commodities program, and further, what the departmental oversight is at the district level.

MR. PRUSSING confirmed that it handles the USDA donated commodities, and that oversight includes the coordination for transportation of goods and other logistics. He agreed to provide further information to the committee.

[9:44:58 AM](#)

COMMISSIONER HANLEY moved to the next division, Education Support Services, and named the sections, which are: Executive Administration, Administrative Services, and School Finance and Facilities. The Executive Administration section is comprised of offices for the State Board of Education and Early Development, as well as the Office of the Commissioner. These offices work directly with superintendents, school boards, schools, and the legislature. The Administrative Services section is comprised of the seven offices in charge of operating the department, which are: State and Federal Reporting, Human Resources, Payroll, Budget Preparation and Execution, Procurement and Accounting, Contract Administration, and Information Technology Services. The School Finance and Facilities section offices are: Public School Funding, Capital Improvement Project (CIP) Listing, and Major Maintenance Listing.

[9:46:29 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON recalled the consolidation of state human resource offices and asked whether decentralization has occurred and if state departments have re-established independent offices.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY deferred.

[9:47:15 AM](#)

LES MORSE, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Education and Early Development (EED), responded that many of the personnel services remain centralized. The functions of the EED office

are for internal actions; in-house position postings, disciplinary measures. One staff member provides support to all of the EED divisions, he said.

[9:47:57 AM](#)

COMMISSIONER HANLEY said the division of Libraries, Archives and Museums is comprised of 69 staff for the offices of Collections, Museum Education, and Museum Development. The new State Libraries Archives and Museum (SLAM) project is under construction and will replace the existing structures, as well as consolidate the materials and services into a cost efficient building.

[9:50:25 AM](#)

COMMISSIONER HANLEY said the final division is Mt. Edgecumbe High School, which is the only state run school. An advisory board handles the daily operations and policy calls but the State Board of Education is the institutions school board. Funding is through the base student allocation (BSA) with an additional component for dormitory housing. He pointed out that there are boarding schools in Galena, Nenana, and Bethel which are run by the respective districts.

[9:51:32 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked whether there has been consideration of placing Mt. Edgecumbe under the auspices of the local school district and relieving the state of the obligation.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY said high level discussions have possibly taken place but the idea has not been actively pursued. To a final committee question, he said he did not have on hand the dates when the other residential programs were established.

[9:52:50 AM](#)

VICE CHAIR REINBOLD thanked the participants and announced the next meeting.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:53 a.m.