

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

April 8, 2013
8:13 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Lynn Gattis, Chair
Representative Gabrielle LeDoux
Representative Dan Saddler
Representative Paul Seaton
Representative Peggy Wilson
Representative Harriet Drummond

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Lora Reinbold, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE CS FOR CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 57

"An Act relating to parental involvement in education; adjusting pupil transportation funding; amending the time required for employers to give tenured teachers notification of their nonretention; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED HCS CSSB 57(EDC) OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 179

"An Act providing for public school funding for Internet services; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED CSHB 179(EDC) OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 190

"An Act providing for course credit in secondary school based on demonstrated mastery of the subject."

- MOVED CSHB 190(EDC) OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 189

"An Act relating to hazing."

- BILL HEARING CANCELED

HOUSE BILL NO. 197

"An Act requiring the establishment of a reading program in school districts for grades kindergarten through three; providing for student retention in grade three; and providing for a report on the reading program and on student retention."

- BILL HEARING CANCELED

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 57

SHORT TITLE: LITERACY, PUPIL TRANSP, TEACHER NOTICES

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) STEVENS

02/15/13	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/15/13	(S)	EDC, FIN
03/13/13	(S)	EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
03/13/13	(S)	Heard & Held
03/13/13	(S)	MINUTE(EDC)
03/20/13	(S)	EDC RPT CS 2DP 3AM SAME TITLE
03/20/13	(S)	DP: STEVENS, DUNLEAVY
03/20/13	(S)	AM: HUGGINS, STEDMAN, GARDNER
03/20/13	(S)	EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
03/20/13	(S)	Moved CSSB 57(EDC) Out of Committee
03/20/13	(S)	MINUTE(EDC)
03/28/13	(S)	FIN AT 9:00 AM SENATE FINANCE 532
03/28/13	(S)	Heard & Held
03/28/13	(S)	MINUTE(FIN)
04/02/13	(S)	FIN AT 6:00 PM SENATE FINANCE 532
04/02/13	(S)	Moved CSSB 57(FIN) Out of Committee
04/02/13	(S)	MINUTE(FIN)
04/03/13	(S)	FIN RPT CS 2DP 4NR SAME TITLE
04/03/13	(S)	DP: MEYER, DUNLEAVY
04/03/13	(S)	NR: HOFFMAN, FAIRCLOUGH, BISHOP, OLSON
04/05/13	(S)	TRANSMITTED TO (H)
04/05/13	(S)	VERSION: CSSB 57(FIN)
04/06/13	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/06/13	(H)	EDC, FIN
04/08/13	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106

BILL: HB 179

SHORT TITLE: BROADBAND DISCOUNTS FOR SCHOOLS

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) NAGEAK

03/20/13	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/20/13	(H)	EDC, FIN
04/08/13	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106

BILL: HB 190

SHORT TITLE: CREDIT FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL COURSES

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) SEATON

03/28/13	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/28/13	(H)	EDC
04/03/13	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106
04/03/13	(H)	Scheduled But Not Heard
04/05/13	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106
04/05/13	(H)	Heard & Held
04/05/13	(H)	MINUTE(EDC)
04/08/13	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106

WITNESS REGISTER

TIM LAMKIN, Staff
Senator Gary Stevens
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented SB 57 on behalf of the bill sponsor, Senator Stevens.

JOHN ELCANTRA, Representative
National Education Association - Alaska (NEA)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified and answered questions during discussion on SB 57.

BRUCE JOHNSON, Executive Director
Alaska Council of School Administrators
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 57, testified in support of HB 179, and testified in support of HB 190.

MIKE COONS
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 57.

DEENA PARAMO, Superintendent
Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified and answered questions during discussion of SB 57 and testified in support of HB 179.

REPRESENTATIVE BENJAMIN NAGEAK
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Introduced HB 179 as the sponsor of the bill.

PEGGY COWAN, Superintendent
North Slope Borough School District
Point Hope, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 179.

LINDA THIBODEAU, Director
Office of the Director
Libraries, Archives & Museums
Department of Education and Early Development (EED)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified and answered questions during discussion of HB 179.

DAVE JONES, Assistant Superintendent
Kenai Peninsula Borough School District (KPBSD)
Soldotna, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 179.

CARL ROSE, Executive Director
Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 179.

GENE STONE, Assistant Superintendent
Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified and answered questions during discussion of HB 190.

HERB SCHROEDER, Vice Provost
University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA)
Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program (ANSEP)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 190.

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

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified and answered questions during discussion of HB 190.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:13:02 AM](#)

CHAIR LYNN GATTIS called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:13 a.m. Representatives Gattis, Saddler, LeDoux, Drummond, P. Wilson, and Seaton were present at the call to order.

SB 57-LITERACY, PUPIL TRANSP, TEACHER NOTICES

[8:13:50 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS announced that the first order of business would be SENATE BILL NO. 57, "An Act relating to parental involvement in education; adjusting pupil transportation funding; amending the time required for employers to give tenured teachers notification of their nonretention; and providing for an effective date." [Before the committee was CSSB 57(FIN).]

[8:14:11 AM](#)

TIM LAMKIN, Staff, Senator Gary Stevens, Alaska State Legislature, speaking on behalf of the sponsor, Senator Stevens, stated that proposed SB 57 was an effort to increase parental involvement in student literacy skills by the third grade; to change the layoff notification deadline for tenured teachers; and to adjust pupil transportation funding. He declared that the data for student success emphasized the need for parental involvement in order for students to gain proficiency in reading by the third grade. He pointed to the learning tools used by many states, including identification and assessment, intervention with remediation, and policies for retention which were all necessary strategies prior to that age. He explained that the proposed bill would communicate these strategies and information on the importance of early literacy annually to the parents. These communications would include a media campaign with an internet website, as well as local television and advertising programs for better recognition of the importance for literacy proficiency by the third grade. He offered his belief that the lay-off notification date for tenured teachers and the transportation funding for the next three fiscal years also contained in the proposed bill had already been discussed in the committee.

[8:18:22 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON indicated that a Conceptual Amendment would be offered following the testimony.

[8:19:42 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:19 a.m. to 8:22 a.m.

[8:22:14 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS brought the committee back to order.

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND asked if the committee had already moved a similar pupil transportation bill.

CHAIR GATTIS expressed agreement, and reminded the committee that the sponsor had noted that bills similar to sections of proposed SB 57 had already been moved by the committee.

[8:23:34 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS opened public testimony.

[8:24:00 AM](#)

JOHN ELCANTRA, Representative, National Education Association - Alaska (NEA), said that he represented the 13,000 members of the National Education Association - Alaska. He referred to a letter submitted to the bill sponsor, dated March 18, 2013, which had discussed the notification of tenured teachers [Included in members' packets]. He reported that there was considerable concern from teachers, especially those in the "disciplines of art, music, and counselors, folks that are a little outside the general education mainstream and are a little more worried, rightfully so..." He pointed out that their smaller numbers would allow for non-retention more quickly in the current budget cutting environment. He suggested that a date of April 20, or a few days following the adjournment of the legislature, would be a more appropriate date for non-retention notification to tenured teachers, as school districts would better understand the upcoming budget. He offered a personal anecdote regarding motivation and encouragement by his daughter's music teacher. He declared support by the NEA for proposed SB 57, only suggesting a change of date for notification of non-retention.

[8:28:25 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX questioned whether job fairs would also change dates in response to the date change in the proposed bill.

MR. ELCANTRA expressed his agreement regarding the job fairs held in Alaska, but he questioned a corresponding change for job fair dates in other states.

[8:29:13 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND reiterated that, once education funding had been recognized, an earlier date was better.

MR. ELCANTRA expressed agreement that more time for non-retained teachers to pursue their career was better.

[8:30:13 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER commented that, as there were various interpretations to the length of session, this could affect the aforementioned date.

MR. ELCANTRA expressed his agreement.

[8:30:40 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON directed attention to the aforementioned NEA letter of support included in the members' packets.

[8:31:31 AM](#)

BRUCE JOHNSON, Executive Director, Alaska Council of School Administrators, stated support by the membership for proposed SB 57 as it would inflation-proof the pupil transportation costs and contracts. He declared support for the early literacy programs, as well. He indicated that school districts often offered contracts and set non-retention dates that worked for the area and in anticipation of legislative funding. He declared the importance for retention of specialists and core teachers through early action.

[8:33:40 AM](#)

MIKE COONS declared that, if NEA was against something, he supported it. He stated that school administrations already distributed non-retention notices prior to the finalization of the education budget by the legislature. He noted that he was

unemployed and knew how to look for other jobs. He declared that job resumes could be withdrawn if a job was available. He declared his support for the date of May 15 in the current version of the proposed bill.

[8:35:41 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS closed public testimony.

[8:35:50 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON offered Conceptual Amendment 1, which would add language to repeal Section 4 on November 1, 2015.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON objected for discussion.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON explained that, as there was intention for "statewide coordinated pupil transportation contracts," the Consumer Price Index adjustment would be in effect for the school year, 2015, but this would allow for negotiation of new transportation contracts without any provisions already in place. He added that the sponsor of SB 57 had determined this to be a friendly amendment.

[8:37:23 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON declared this to be an important amendment because of the possibility for increasing competition for a statewide pupil transportation contract.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON removed her objection.

[8:38:17 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS reminded the committee of a prior House Education Standing Committee discussion on transportation, which had agreed to "bridge the gap from now until those bus contracts."

[8:38:53 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX asked for further information regarding a date change from May 15 to April 20.

[8:39:03 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON suggested that the fiscal note be revised to reflect the date change.

[8:39:34 AM](#)

There being no further objection to Conceptual Amendment 1, it was adopted.

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX renewed her request for more information regarding the date change.

[8:40:10 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS opened public testimony.

DEENA PARAMO, Superintendent, Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District, said that the new date stipulated in proposed SB 57 was within the parameters for knowledge of school district funding, and allowed the districts to ensure the best teachers for the following school year. She declared that this date worked for the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District.

[8:42:04 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX asked whether there were concerns for moving the date earlier in the year, as suggested by the NEA.

DR. PARAMO replied that the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District preferred the May 15 date, as it would take a significant amount of time to get contracts prepared by April 20. She reported that the local contribution to the school district was not determined until after the state legislature had made its decisions.

CHAIR GATTIS closed public testimony.

[8:43:16 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON moved to report CSSB 57 (FIN), as amended, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, HCS CSSB 57 (EDC) was moved from the House Education Standing Committee.

HB 179-BROADBAND DISCOUNTS FOR SCHOOLS

[8:44:09 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS announced that the next order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 179, "An Act providing for public school funding for telecommunications or Internet services."

[8:44:24 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE BENJAMIN NAGEAK, Alaska State Legislature, explaining the proposed bill, paraphrased from the following prepared statement [original punctuation provided]:

The E-rate program provides federal funding for a portion of a school district's telecommunication cost. HB 179 will provide state funding for the portion not covered by the federal discount. For FY 14 that amount is approximately \$13.8 million dollars.

This bill also allows school districts to increase their bandwidth. Right now about 1/3 or approximately 170 schools have less than 10 megabits per second of Internet services. HB 179 will allow school schools below 10 megabits per second to come up to that minimum level and receive state reimbursement. For schools that are already at that level or higher, HB 179 allows those schools to increase 10% over their prior year and receive state funding. This bill does not limit any school district to higher increases but does limit the state contribution at that point. This bill will benefit all school districts across the state. HB 179 will assists school districts with their Internet needs and bring all schools across Alaska to a minimum level of Internet services. Thank you for again for hearing this bill today. I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have. My staff is available and there are people from the Department online to answer questions as well.

[8:46:24 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON moved to adopt the proposed committee substitute (CS) for HB 170, labeled 28-LS0679\U, Mischel, 4/5/13, as the working draft. There being no objection, Version U was before the committee.

[8:47:01 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE NAGEAK explained the changes in the CS, and paraphrased from the following prepared statement:

Removed "telecommunication" from the bill on advice from the department.

Removed Title 1 references on advice from the department.

For FY14 the state match would be the total of the applicant's share. This is considered the "base amount."

Beginning in FY15, for those school districts whose Internet services are faster than 10 megabits-a-second the amount they are eligible to receive is limited to 10 percent increase from the previous year's amount.

Beginning in FY15, for those school districts whose Internet services are slower than 10 megabits-a-second the amount they are eligible to receive can increase more than 10 percent from the previous year's amount.

[8:48:27 AM](#)

PEGGY COWAN, Superintendent, North Slope Borough School District, stated that the proposed bill supported all the school districts in Alaska, as increased costs and flat funding created a continuing challenge to provide the necessary student programs. She declared that funding for internet services was critical for education. It allowed the State of Alaska to leverage federal funds for a percentage of district telecommunications services. She encouraged support for proposed HB 179.

[8:50:08 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON asked for an explanation of the E-rate program.

[8:50:23 AM](#)

MS. COWAN explained that it was a per school determination, with an application that required the school district to bid out its telecommunication services. She stated that a formula, established by poverty rates, would define the average reimbursement percentage to each school district, with a specific rate to specific schools. She compared reimbursement percentages among various Rural Alaska school districts. She noted that the amount of reimbursement was based on the amount

spent on telecommunication, but that the level of reimbursement was based on federal poverty guidelines for the school district.

MS. COWAN, in response to Representative P. Wilson, said that the proposed bill would allow her school district to receive an increase of more than 10 percent reimbursement for internet services up to 10 megabits-a-second, beginning in 2015. She declared that this was a big step forward for rural school districts. She reported that, currently, the rural schools in her district had less than 3 megabits, compared to 100 megabits in the Alaska legislative offices. She pointed out that any school districts with more than 10 megabits would also be eligible to increase funding by up to 10 percent.

[8:54:11 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER, asking about the Department of Commerce, Community & Economic Development statewide broadband task force to increase bandwidth for rural communities, questioned how the proposed bill would "mesh with that effort."

MS. COWAN replied that, although proposed HB 179 would not solve the broadband issue, it was a step in the right direction. The populated areas of the state did not have the Internet access issues that the rural areas had, and this was the concern for the taskforce. She offered her belief that there would be an attempt to bring up to 450 megabits to all the rural communities. She clarified that the proposed bill would allow the rural school districts to afford to utilize the current technology, and make available distance courses in order for students to compete for the performance scholarship. She emphasized that this was not the fix that the task force was researching.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER called attention to previous legislation regarding bandwidth.

[8:57:23 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON asked to clarify that each school contracted for these services.

LINDA THIBODEAU, Director, Office of the Director, Libraries, Archives & Museums, Department of Education and Early Development (EED), offered her belief that currently the services were contracted through the school district, but that

the services in the proposed bill would go to each school individually.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON asked if it would be possible to have a statewide contract for these services.

MS. THIBODEAU replied that it would be a huge leap forward beyond the proposed bill, but that, conceptually, it was possible. She explained that the E-rate requirements were for a competitive bidding process, so that a school district would not be required to buy from a provider.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON asked to clarify whether it would be possible, and if the providers could bid for this contract.

MS. THIBODEAU explained that the providers would bid to the school districts individually, and that the school districts would buy from the cheapest option.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON asked if a statewide approach would be advantageous.

MS. THIBODEAU replied that it could be very advantageous, but would require a lot of study.

[8:59:47 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS opened public testimony.

[9:00:01 AM](#)

DAVE JONES, Assistant Superintendent, Kenai Peninsula Borough School District (KPBSD), stated support for proposed HB 179 and said that, although it would only have a limited effect in the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District, it would provide great opportunities for other rural areas of the state.

[9:01:02 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON asked about the statewide contract approach.

MR. JONES declared that services were currently bid on a district wide basis and that the federal reimbursement was determined on an individual basis. He said that the volume in the district could bring the cost down, but he questioned that a single company had the ability to service the entire state.

[9:02:30 AM](#)

DEENA PARAMO, Superintendent, Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District, stated support for HB 179. She declared that her school district invested heavily in technology and on-line courses, to ensure that its students were well connected. She pointed out that digital learning was an integral part of the school district curriculum, and allowed students mastery of on-line research methods and course work, in order to adequately prepare for a future immersed in technology. She reported that, as this was a responsibility of the school district, the partnerships with service providers had increased the area network for connection to more schools. She emphasized that this connectivity had brought higher costs, which had been paid by the community. She declared support for proposed HB 179.

[9:04:13 AM](#)

BRUCE JOHNSON, Executive Director, Alaska Council of School Administrators, stated support of HB 179, declaring that it would be beneficial for payment of ever increasing higher costs, while providing greater internet access in Rural Alaska.

[9:05:14 AM](#)

CARL ROSE, Executive Director, Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB), stated support of proposed HB 179, observing that digital technology needed to be extended into the schools.

[9:05:45 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS closed public testimony.

[9:05:55 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER stated his support for proposed HB 179. He referenced page 7, footnote 8, of the Legislative Research Report 00.007 titled "The Federal E-Rate Program and ASTF Grants: Helping to Connect Alaska's Schools," dated March 17, 2000 [Included in members' packets]. The footnote pointed out that although wireless connection in schools would be much more cost effective, it would entail a change to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rules. He suggested that this could be a better long-term fix.

[9:06:48 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX asked to clarify that the schools were not able to utilize wireless internet access.

[9:07:09 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS explained that schools could use wireless but there was a federal issue.

[9:07:32 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON moved to report CSHB 179, Version 28-LS0679\U, Mischel, 4/5/13, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, CSHB 179(EDC) was reported from the House Education Standing Committee.

HB 190-CREDIT FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL COURSES

[9:08:12 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 190, "An Act providing for course credit in secondary school based on demonstrated mastery of the subject."

[9:08:22 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON, sponsor of HB 190, reviewed the intent of the proposed bill, and stated that students taking college courses were not receiving full course credit because of a lack of "seat time." He explained that the proposed bill allowed students who had demonstrated mastery of the course content to challenge to test out of the course and receive the full academic credit. He reported that each school district would still define the demonstration of mastery for the course subject, and would be required to provide an assessment for a challenge to a course. He pointed out that although some school districts had already established policy for challenging courses, other districts had not, and the bill required this for every school district. He noted that the course credits would apply toward fulfillment for the Alaska Performance Scholarship, but it was not required that these credits be factored into a grade point average. He shared that this challenge did not include credit for any of the prerequisite courses. He directed attention to the Credit By Choice program in the Anchorage School District [Included in members' packets], and clarified that it was not the intent for all the policies to be the same.

He reiterated that each school district could determine its own policy of course challenges for credit, which would only apply to those courses already offered by the school, and that a fee could be charged for the assessment. He stressed the need for progressive education and to keep students engaged.

[9:13:21 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON offered her belief that some classes would be more easily assessed than others, expressing her support for the opportunity to challenge offered by proposed HB 190.

[9:14:32 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS shared an anecdote about required coursework, and commented that students were often held back due to the lack of opportunity to challenge out. She stated support for HB 190.

[9:15:18 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER directed attention to page 1, lines 10-11, and asked about the implied cost for development of an assessment tool. He pointed out that, although the fiscal note was zero to the state, the school districts would have some cost to develop a fair assessment tool. He asked the sponsor for an estimate to the cost of a fair assessment tool.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON replied that, a final exam could be used for any class using a text book. For classes that required actual production, it could require individual time from a teacher, which was the reason the Anchorage School District required an \$85.00 challenge fee. He opined that scholarships for fees would be available, if necessary. He declared that there was not a mandate to design a separate assessment tool for every student.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER suggested that school districts share standards and approaches, which could lead to more consistency.

[9:18:30 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON directed attention to page 1, lines 10-11, which stated that a school district "shall" establish as assessment tool, and she suggested a need for the language to be more flexible. She proposed that this could be better addressed as each course challenge arose.

[9:19:31 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND expressed agreement that assessments should only be required when a course was challenged.

[9:19:44 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON indicated that it was not the sponsor's intent to have a challenge assessment established in every district for each class offering, but merely to ensure the response to a student request. The district would still determine the definition for mastery and the determination for a passing grade.

[9:20:58 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS opened public testimony.

[9:21:04 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS asked about a requirement for advance assessments versus creation of an assessment when the course was challenged, and how this program would work in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District.

GENE STONE, Assistant Superintendent, Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District, said that the circumstances were tailored to each situation in order to have this program work. He relayed that the student consulted with a guidance counselor, a teacher, and an administrator, all prior to allowing a student to challenge a course. He described that the on-line support programs could be used to determine the level of mastery, which would allow for a shorter course completion time and recovery of the credits. He stated that it made no sense to have a student sit through a full semester class if they had already mastered a significant part of the course. He explained that students could also receive both high school and college credit by taking a college level course, and then demonstrating mastery. He referenced a situation whereby a student failed the first semester of a course, but stayed in the course, and then passed the end of year examination, which demonstrated mastery of the entire subject.

[9:25:28 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked how many students succeeded with their challenges.

MR. STONE replied that the challenge option was only available to students when the teachers had a high degree of confidence for success. He offered his belief that this process could become more frequent.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked if the school district had a stock of assessments, or would develop new ones.

MR. STONE responded that the school district had invested in APEX Learning for credit recovery, but that other school districts would need to determine what was going to be used for an assessment tool.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked if the school district would share its assessment tools.

MR. STONE replied that it would be necessary to invest in the APEX Learning on-line courses, but that the other assessments were the standard teacher generated tests of the curriculum, including year-end final examinations to demonstrate mastery.

[9:28:15 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS explained that the aforementioned APEX Learning was an on-line credit recovery and advanced placement course. She noted that there was a proprietary cost involved with APEX.

[9:29:07 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asking if the final examination for Algebra I did encompass the entire scope of the year, questioned whether a final examination was a full assessment of the students understanding of the range of the course.

MR. STONE replied that this would be necessary for each school district to determine, and possibly augment the assessment for certain courses.

[9:30:24 AM](#)

BRUCE JOHNSON, Executive Director, Alaska Council of School Administrators, stated support for HB 190, and said that seat time was becoming increasingly obsolete in some classes. He declared that it was appropriate to have the determinations

placed under the purview of each school district. He suggested that the standards based assessments results could be used for determinations, as well as a variety of other tools which could be deployed on an individual basis. He opined that this was in the best interest of students, and that the standards would evolve and make the assessment process much easier.

[9:32:00 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER questioned whether testing out or challenge programs were being implemented in other educational systems.

MR. JOHNSON replied that it had been a standard in other states and universities for some time, and that many nationwide school districts were now implementing this approach.

[9:32:57 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked if there were associated costs to the programs in the other states.

MR. JOHNSON offered his belief that in the two states in which he had worked, Illinois and North Dakota, there had not been significant costs.

[9:33:31 AM](#)

HERB SCHROEDER, Vice Provost, University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA), Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program (ANSEP), stated his support for HB 190. He declared that ANSEP classes had "raised the bar for education for our students," as incentives were provided to the students. He reported that, although most ANSEP students completed college courses while still in high school, many would not receive equivalent high school credit. He declared that this was a de-motivator for hard work, and that students needed encouragement to take these college courses. He pointed out that proposed HB 190 provided a mechanism for students to be rewarded for academic excellence.

[9:35:26 AM](#)

MIKE HANLEY, Commissioner, Office of the Commissioner, Department of Education and Early Development (EED), in response to a request by Representative Seaton, reflected on page 1, lines 10-11 and the concern for the language stipulating "shall establish an assessment tool." He offered his interpretation

that, although this would be a school district responsibility, it did not necessarily require any response prior to the challenge for a course.

9:36:30 AM

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX asked for his interpretation of assessment tool preparation as a practical matter.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY opined that it was not difficult for a school to prepare an assessment for testing out of most courses. He declared that it would be a task for a school district which had not thought of assessment for challenges, but that school districts would be prepared if the proposed bill was passed.

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX inquired about what was an acceptable delay for an assessment to test out of a class.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY hypothesized that the school district would encourage the appropriate action to meet the requirements of law. He offered his belief that it behooved the district to be prepared.

9:39:34 AM

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked if it would be appropriate to alter the language in the proposed bill to allow the districts some latitude for preparation.

9:40:06 AM

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON indicated that preparation time was inherent in the process to implement a policy, as the current version would allow school districts to develop their policies ahead of time. He offered his belief that school districts would request teachers to prepare assessments appropriate to their courses, which could include the standard based assessments, independent assessments, or final examinations. He surmised that it did not require a school district to drop everything, and immediately develop an assessment for every class. He declared that teachers would already have some assessment tool for the end of the class. He allowed that the most important aspect for each school district was to determine the bar for mastery of a course, currently a 90 percent assessment in the Anchorage School District. Although he defined mastery as the ability to move on to the next course and succeed, he declared that the state should not make the

determination of mastery for each school district. He reported that data from previous testimony in the House Education Standing Committee indicated that "most kids that drop out of school have already passed the high school exit exam, and the reason they're dropping out is because they're held in courses that are not challenging"

[9:43:27 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX expressed her concern for a student interested in testing out of a class which was necessary for graduation. If the district was slow to provide an option, and the student did not take the class and ultimately did not pass the assessment, there could be a difficulty. She declared her assumption that "the districts will get their act together and provide an assessment in a reasonably timely manner." She opined that this could be revisited at a later date, if this was not the case.

[9:44:35 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS expressed her agreement with Representative LeDoux, offering her belief that the school districts understood the necessity for supporting students in a progressive way, and that the proposed bill provided another tool for attaining that goal.

[9:45:33 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER related that the intent of HB 190 was not an immediate mandate for each school district to establish assessment tools for every class, but to create the assessments as needed by reasonable interpretation. He suggested that school districts determine the classes most likely to be challenged, and prepare those assessments. He advocated that a "B" grade was sufficient for mastery, although this policy would be defined by each school district. He requested that the school districts maintain data for the number of challenges, and the percentage of successful challenges.

[9:46:31 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON directed attention to the Anchorage School District policy for course challenge, as it had established parameters that would be helpful to other school districts.

[9:47:03 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS, in response to a comment by Representative Seaton, asked to clarify whether the student transcript should note that a course was credited by examination.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON shared that this was the policy of the Anchorage School District, and that each school district could determine its own policies.

CHAIR GATTIS closed public testimony.

[9:47:59 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON, directing attention to page 1, lines 10 - 11, maintained her concern for the "shall" language, which she opined required an assessment tool for every course provided by the school district. She suggested a conceptual amendment which would better define the limitations.

[9:49:18 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS expressed her agreement for a timeline to the challenge and testing interval.

[9:49:54 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON cautioned that it would be counterproductive to place a deadline in statute. He declared that the most important aspect of the proposed bill was the requirement for each school district to act. He pointed out that any course that was being offered would have a teacher to easily make an assessment.

[9:51:34 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND suggested that students be required to indicate an interest for a challenge at course registration time. She expressed agreement with earlier testimony that school districts would prepare assessments once a challenge had been requested.

[9:52:46 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS pointed out that many course assessments were already in place.

[9:53:00 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER suggested that a conceptual amendment inserting "within a reasonable time following a demonstrated need" would better clarify the intent.

[9:53:46 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX opined that "reasonable time" was implicit in the language of the proposed bill.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER shared that a school district could determine that a final examination was sufficient to meet the intent of the proposed bill.

[9:54:39 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER moved to adopt Conceptual Amendment 1, as follows:

Page 1, line 10, after "shall establish"

Insert ",within a reasonable time following a demonstrated need,"

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON objected for discussion and asked for clarification that this was a conceptual amendment.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON removed his objection. There being no further objection, Conceptual Amendment 1 was adopted.

[9:56:19 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON moved to report HB 190, as amended, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, CSHB 190(EDC) was moved from the House Education Standing Committee.

[9:56:47 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:56 a.m.