

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 26, 2014

8:06 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Lynn Gattis, Chair
Representative Lora Reinbold, Vice Chair
Representative Gabrielle LeDoux
Representative Dan Saddler
Representative Paul Seaton
Representative Peggy Wilson
Representative Sam Kito III (Alternate)

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Harriet Drummond

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 9

Urging the commissioner of education and early development and the state Board of Education and Early Development to delay implementation of statewide education standards.

- HEARD & HELD

HOUSE BILL NO. 93

"An Act relating to the authorization, monitoring, and operation of charter schools."

- SCHEDULED BUT NOT HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HR 9

SHORT TITLE: DELAY IMPLEMENTATION OF ED STANDARDS

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) T.WILSON

01/21/14	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/21/14	(H)	EDC
03/19/14	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106
03/19/14	(H)	Heard & Held
03/19/14	(H)	MINUTE(EDC)
03/26/14	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE TAMMIE WILSON
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented the proposed committee substitute (CS) for HR 9, as prime sponsor.

KRIS ZAVOLI, Senior Director for State Government Relations
Western Region
National Office of the College Board
San Jose, California

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to HR 9.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:06:34 AM](#)

CHAIR LYNN GATTIS called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:06 a.m. Representatives Seaton, P. Wilson, LeDoux, Saddler, Reinbold, Kito III, and Gattis were present at the call to order. Representative Saddler arrived as the meeting was in progress.

HR 9-DELAY IMPLEMENTATION OF ED STANDARDS

[8:06:47 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS announced that the only order of business would be HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 9, Urging the commissioner of education and early development and the state Board of Education and Early Development to delay implementation of statewide education standards. [Version U was before the committee.]

[8:07:26 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TAMMIE WILSON, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, presented the committee substitute (CS) for HR 9 and explained the intent of the resolution. The Task Force on Sustainable Education [formed with passage of HR 8] conducted hearings throughout the state. Communities expressed concern that too many changes were occurring, including changes to standards, the new curriculum, teacher development, and school assessment based on attendance and outcomes. It wasn't a matter of whether the districts wanted to do these things, but rather that the multitude of changes being made were just too much. Since then, teachers have begun to feel more comfortable with

teacher evaluation and understand the merits of making the changes. Although she understands that many districts have invested time and resources into implementation, she favored conducting a cost analysis to ascertain district costs not just the department's costs, noting some other states have found implementation too costly. She questioned whether the new test should be given next year or if it should be delayed another year to allow districts more time to establish the new curriculum. She suggested the local communities will need to weigh in since [implementation costs] could adversely impact smaller communities.

[8:11:06 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS remarked that she has received feedback from school administrators and teachers who have indicated an interest in implementing the new standards. She asked whether this resolution will pivot direction and change to something new.

REPRESENTATIVE T. WILSON answered no; that the standards are in place and districts have a choice. She noted the Anchorage School District has adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). She directed attention to the testing and teacher evaluation aspect. She emphasized that having a third party review the system as a whole may be necessary to consider infrastructure needed to meet the requirements and to review the costs for teacher development. Given the emphasis on standardized testing, the biggest question she has is whether districts are prepared to administer the new tests and if the districts have sufficient preparation time to put the new curriculum in place and obtain necessary teaching materials. She feared that student scores will drop since the standards are being raised. Although she did not object to more rigorous standards, she questioned whether teachers will be able to mesh the specific standards to the curriculum and teach those portions.

[8:13:59 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX asked for further clarification of the effect of delaying the standards, if any, on the "No Child Left Behind (NCLB)" waiver.

REPRESENTATIVE T. WILSON answered that the standards wouldn't be delayed. The resolution would require a third-party review of the entire system to determine whether sufficient time to perform testing and teacher evaluations. Again, the standards

are in place and the districts are working on the aforementioned two issues; however, the state will determine when the initial new examination will be given.

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX asked for further clarification on the new test and if it is based on the WorkKeys assessment.

REPRESENTATIVE T. WILSON answered the Standardized Base Assessment (SBAs) currently being taken will no longer be given since they are based on the old academic standards being replaced. The state has determined it will form its own test and will develop cut scores based on the new standards. She said the initial test is planned for 2015 and will replace the current Grade 3-11 testing outside WorkKeys.

REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX related her understanding that the proposed test would not be a pass or fail test, but an assessment test.

REPRESENTATIVE T. WILSON answered absolutely. In response to a question, she answered that [HR 9] Version U is currently before the committee.

[8:16:15 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON pointed out that the title of Version U includes the language to "delay implementation" in the title.

REPRESENTATIVE T. WILSON agreed an amendment is in order.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON asked for further clarification on whether the governor's education bill included language that teacher evaluations would be based in part on student performance. He asked for further clarification.

REPRESENTATIVE T. WILSON answered that a slowdown may be necessary. Each district will need to evaluate its curriculum to determine if the curriculum matches the more rigorous standards. She acknowledged that this will be much easier for larger districts to accomplish since they have dedicated staff. She highlighted that her goal is to for districts to continue to work toward implementing the new teacher evaluation and testing assessment, but HR 9 will capture implementation costs and not rush the transition. She reported that the test has not yet been developed for 2015.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON asked for further clarification on whether the sponsor would like to delay teacher evaluations that include student progress or if HR 9 addresses delaying the five-star school rating system.

REPRESENTATIVE T. WILSON explained the two major parts of the five-star rating system. First, districts must put in place a new teacher evaluation system; and second, implement the student assessment for student testing in grades 3-11. The outcomes of those tests are related back to the classroom, she said.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON asked whether the proposal under HR 9 would delay the teacher evaluation portion.

REPRESENTATIVE T. WILSON answered it would delay full implementation of the statewide education standards.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON asked whether the proposal is to delay the new teacher evaluations.

[8:20:40 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KITO III reiterated the language "delay implementation" is in the resolution's title. He asked for further clarification on the timeframe, since HR 9 resolves to provide a phase-in schedule for full implementation of the new standards. He asked whether this delay would be an indeterminate timeframe delay or if the sponsor anticipated a specific time period for the department to conduct the assessment and arrive at costs. Second, he related his understanding from previous testimony that many districts are already fully into implementation. He further asked whether the department would assess and identify costs for districts already fully implementing the standards.

REPRESENTATIVE T. WILSON suggested the proposed amendments to HR 9 would answer some questions.

[8:21:48 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD moved to adopt Amendment 1 to HR 9, Version U, labeled 28-LS1224\U.1, Mischel, 3/24/14, which read, as follows:

Page 1, line 2, following "**delay**":
Insert "**the full**"

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON objected, noting she doesn't have Amendment 1.

CHAIR GATTIS asked that Amendment 1 be distributed.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON maintained her objection.

[8:23:25 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE T. WILSON explained that the title is being altered from a "delay" of the "full implementation" so if districts are moving forward on implementation they should continue to do so. The third party can still assess whether the districts can meet the 2015 assessment date or if it will be advantageous to delay full implementation.

[8:24:24 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON said the language indicates a delay of the full implementation, which she interpreted to mean delaying everything.

REPRESENTATIVE T. WILSON agreed that the original version of HR 9 reflected her initial interest in stopping implementation; however, the next amendment she will offer will specify a third-party analysis. She explained that Alaska's school districts range from very small to large districts. She pointed out the NCLB waiver created this [new standards] process and the choices are probably good choices. However, she would like to slow down the process to ensure that teachers and children won't be judged on a system that districts haven't had time to put in place. She supported increasing the curriculum level for students, but also wanted be sure students are adequately evaluated. All of this will take time to implement, she said.

[8:27:37 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD commented that the Administration Regulation Review (ARR) committee has been holding a series of hearings since testing often comes through the regulatory process.

CHAIR GATTIS asked members to focus on Amendment 1.

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD stated that the ARR committee has focused on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the lack of educators involved in this process. She expressed concern

that [the change in standards] does more than change standards since it impacts the curriculum and tests. She has received numerous concerns about the new curriculum, she said, and has subsequently removed her name from the resolution as a cosponsor and will be a "no" vote. She asked for further clarification on whether this resolution is to stretch out the time a little longer for the implementation of the Alaska academic standards.

REPRESENTATIVE T. WILSON answered no; that this is to delay the process to allow time for a better evaluation of all facets. She said it is important to evaluate the aspects and to maintain appropriate standards. She said many states have done the same thing, including Tennessee, Texas, and Indiana. In addition, she has been interested in determining the overall costs to districts. She hoped to have a third party outside state government review the process. At this point, many things have been put in place but an evaluation hasn't been done to identify what "all these pieces mean" and "is that where we want to go." She related her understanding everyone agrees that changes to [academic] standards are necessary. The districts determine the curriculum to meet the standards, she said.

[8:31:30 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON noted Amendment 1 is before the committee and the discussion should be focused on the amendment.

[8:31:50 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KITO III expressed concern that it appears that Amendment 1 does not remove the implication for delay since it adds "the full" as a modifier to "implementation," so the title suggests the legislature wants to delay the process. He reiterated his concern that this might suggest the standards should also be delayed.

[8:32:22 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON moved to adopt an amendment to Amendment 1, to add "partial" so it would read "to delay partial implementation" of statewide education standards. She said she is open to suggested language.

CHAIR GATTIS agreed that movement has begun and it is important to continue on the path.

[8:33:37 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON stated that the title must reflect the language in the resolution. He suggested that the pending amendment to Amendment 1 be set aside until the committee determines the resolution's content.

CHAIR GATTIS agreed.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON withdrew the amendment to Amendment 1.

8:34:37 AM

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD withdrew Amendment 1. There being no objection, Amendment 1 was withdrawn.

8:34:49 AM

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD moved to adopt Amendment 2, labeled 28-LS1224\U.2, Bullock/Mischel, 3/25/14, which read as follows:

Page 2, lines 12 - 13:

Delete "until the state Board of Education and Early Development identifies"

Insert "pending the determination by an independent third party under contract with and under the supervision of the House Task Force on Sustainable Education of"

Page 2, line 16, following "assessment,":

Insert "and the receipt of that determination by the House Task Force on Sustainable Education,"

CHAIR GATTIS objected for discussion purposes.

8:35:05 AM

REPRESENTATIVE T. WILSON explained that Amendment 2 changes the process the State Board of Education and Early Development uses to conduct an evaluation to a third party evaluation. She offered her belief that a third party can review the system and ensure that the state has the ability to implement standards fairly. In fact, a third-party evaluator might recommend something else [besides moving forward with the new academic standards] due to the issues, the cost, and the districts' viewpoint. She stressed this would allow someone outside the education system to make a determination. "At the end of the day we want our children to be learning to the best of their

capabilities," she said. Further, she emphasized the importance of ensuring that the system being put in place allows that to occur.

[8:36:18 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON pointed out the independent third party is not identified in the amendment. She asked for further clarification on who will select the third-party evaluator to identify any associated costs.

REPRESENTATIVE T. WILSON responded that a Request for Proposal (RFP) would need to be issued. She directed attention to page 2, lines 10-17 of HR 9 and indicated the third-party evaluator would consider the costs of curriculum alignment, technological improvement, teacher preparation, new standards-based assessment, and costs to provide a phased-in school for full implementation of the new standards.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON suggested that [third-party evaluator] travel costs will be expensive. She suggested that if the Amendment 2 passes the resolution would likely need a referral to the House Finance Committee.

REPRESENTATIVE T. WILSON agreed; however, she envisioned that the third-party evaluator could obtain significant data from the department, but she surmised the evaluator would also need to speak to the superintendents. She envisioned such a process would identify statewide needs and determine the estimated costs to implement the new state standards.

[8:39:10 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked what type of third-party evaluator would likely bid on the RFP.

REPRESENTATIVE T. WILSON responded companies exist that evaluate school systems. In response to a question, she declined to specifically mention companies by name since anyone can bid on the RFP.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked whether the Task Force on Sustainable Education (TFSE) has a budget to consider this type of undertaking.

REPRESENTATIVE T. WILSON answered yes. She estimated \$230,000 of \$250,000 in [Task Force on Sustainable Education] funding

remains. She anticipated that these funds would cover the evaluation costs.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked for further clarification on the reason the EED should not handle this.

REPRESENTATIVE T. WILSON suggested that the third-party report could perhaps validate the work the EED has done. However, she questioned how the department could evaluate itself since the state developed the state academic standards.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER related his understanding that she didn't have faith that the department could properly evaluate itself.

REPRESENTATIVE T. WILSON answered no. She said a number of questions have been brought to the department, such as whether sufficient wireless broadband communication exists in schools or the types of testing available that have led her to think the data exists but the department can't distill it. For one thing districts will be evaluated on the new standards, yet she questioned whether districts have adequate resources to implement changes.

[8:41:49 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked whether a corresponding decrement will be taken in the EED to offset the \$250,000 in funding for the [Task Force on Sustainable Education].

REPRESENTATIVE T. WILSON answered that the implementation and costs fall on the districts, not on the state.

[8:42:34 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS reframed the question, which is since a third party will perform the evaluation whether the EED's budget will be reduced since otherwise the department would evaluate the process.

REPRESENTATIVE T. WILSON answered no. She viewed the third-party review as determining whether additional work is expected of districts that it not currently part of the formula funding.

[8:43:04 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KITO III expressed concern about removing the department from the process, as well as delaying the

implementation pending determination by an independent third party. He offered his belief that this might create disconnects since it tells the commissioner to delay implementation until the [Task Force on Sustainable Education] creates a third-party report. Thus, the department would not have any control over continuing to implement the standards and the process may be halted, he said.

[8:44:19 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS interjected her concern for the mixed message that appears to be in the resolution; however, the intent is to have some legislative oversight over the process. She further expressed concern that it sends the wrong message. She said the students and teachers must "step up to the plate." Although six months ago she would have agreed with the resolution she has subsequently found districts have made impressive changes and have risen to the challenge. However, she supported the intent of Amendment 2 since evaluating the costs and processes is also important.

[8:46:03 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON raised a point of order.

[8:46:09 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE T. WILSON maintained that a "disconnect" doesn't exist since the department provides the information and will determine when the assessment tests are taken. She emphasized that it's the legislature's responsibility to ensure that students have the tools they need. She viewed the third-party evaluation process in HR 9 as providing assurance that the state is taking the right direction.

[8:47:17 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KITO III related his understanding that HR 9 seeks a report on the status of the implementation of the college and career readiness standards. He suggested the department could provide the legislature with information on progress made in each of the districts rather than creating a completely separate third-party report.

[8:47:56 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON, referring to page 2, line 12 of Version U, expressed concern that the language in this resolve urges the commissioner to "delay full implementation of the college and career readiness standards" and the third-party contract identifies "all related improvements and adaptations necessary" including "technological improvement, teacher preparation, and new standards-based assessment." The second part of Amendment 2 would require "the receipt of that determination by the House Task Force on Sustainable Education" in addition to the third-party report. He suggested that this resolution may impose multiple roadblocks to the educational system improvements the legislature has been continuously seeking. Further, based on other evaluations, he surmised it appears to be a \$6-12 million project and not a \$100,000 third-party evaluation project. He favored asking the commissioner to respond to a number of the questions rather than to have a mini-contract perform analysis. He concluded by saying that he could not support Amendment 2.

CHAIR GATTIS asked for further clarification as to whether the legislature would be imposing roadblocks. She understood him to mean the legislature has been working on accountability, higher standards, and that [Amendment 2] might create a roadblock.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON agreed; explaining that the legislature has been attempting to move forward with improved education processes. The sequences being proposed in HR 9 appear to delay the legislature's goals for improved education.

[8:51:46 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD appreciated the intent of Amendment 2; however, she suggested the State Board of Education would be tasked with further scrutiny. She expressed her disappointment in information the EED has supplied. For example, at one June 2013 hearing, the legislature was advised that the new Alaska Standards were about 95 percent aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), whereas yesterday the department indicated it was about 40 percent aligned. She emphasized that teachers have reported implementation is completely impracticable due to the diversity in schools and villages. She expressed concern that the proposed changes have adversely impacted teacher morale. She said this effort appears to be a dramatic federal overreach into education.

[8:53:31 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS asked to have comments focused on Amendment 2.

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD responded that her comments have been focused on the amendment in regards to the [Task Force [on Sustainable Education (TFSE)] and identifying who is responsible for reviewing the system in its entirety. She stressed the importance of having the educational system reviewed and for parental and public involvement. She hoped the system would be audited to determine whether this is the direction that should be taken by the state.

[8:54:18 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS removed her objection.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON objected.

[8:54:33 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE T. WILSON remarked that HR 9, Version U, isn't intended to create a roadblock. She suggested that an evaluation should have been done by the State Board of Education [and Early Development] on curriculum, improving teacher development, and providing assessments. She emphasized the importance of affirming the direction the new academic standards is taking, understanding the costs, the state and districts' role. She stressed the need to have the third-party evaluation proposed in Amendment 2 to be sure that districts are adequately prepared and avoid the necessity of directing districts to make significant changes two years from now. She favored using state funding to obtain the best outcome, which is the intent of Amendment 2.

[8:56:36 AM](#)

CHAIR GATTIS wondered if the [Task Force on Sustainable Education] could continue to work on these issues if HR 9 doesn't pass. She asked whether the TFSE needs the resolution.

REPRESENTATIVE T. WILSON answered no; but offered her belief that just having the discussion has been good.

CHAIR GATTIS expressed an interest in holding HR 9 over.

[8:57:21 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD withdrew Amendment 2.

8:57:29 AM

CHAIR GATTIS opened public testimony on HR 9.

8:58:04 AM

KRIS ZAVOLI, Senior Director for State Government Relations, , Western Region, National Office of the College Board, , stated her opposition to HR 9, paraphrasing from a prepared statement, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

My name is Kris Zavoli, Senior Director for State Government Relations at the national office of the College Board. I have been coming to Juneau, Alaska in this capacity for 15 years. During that time I have observed improvement as measured by our own college readiness indicators as evidence that state policy makers have raised their expectations for students in order to make them more successful and competitive in today's world.

Many states have chosen to raise their expectations for students. Some did it by adopting the common core. Alaska is one of four states that did not adopt common core. Instead they raised standards on their own.

This week I met with several state legislators and the governor's office to share good news about the progress the students in Alaska are making with College Board programs namely AP, SAT and PSAT. During my data deliveries, I learned about this resolution to delay implementation of Alaska's new standards.

I believe this action will be a serious set-back and will arrest the positive momentum I have witnessed in student achievement in this state. It will be detrimental to the excellent work the state has done during the last two years preparing for implementation.

Monday night I had dinner with the Chancellor John Pugh and Vice Chancellor for Enrollment Joe Nelson at U of AK Southeast. We discussed the Alaska Performance Scholarship and the need to get more students ready for college and career readiness. They

also described their initiatives in working with teachers to provide professional development so they can begin implementation the new standards.

I urge you not to reverse the college and career readiness progress in Alaska by voting no on this resolution.

[9:00:56 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked what evidence she used to support her view on significant improvement in the past 15 years in student performance and college readiness.

MS. ZAVOLI answered that she has observed the growth in the number of Alaskan students taking the PSAT [Preliminary SAT] exams, the investment the [Department of Education and Early Development] has made in providing district funding to allow sophomores to take the PSAT exam to assess student readiness for more rigor, and that the number high school students obtaining college credits has increased from 16 percent to 25 percent. These are all indicators of improvements in Alaska, she said. Further, she emphasized the very strong growth in advanced placement [AP] high school courses. Finally, she noted that the University of Alaska (UA) will undertake an upcoming two-day professional development process to help prepare teachers to teach college courses in high school.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked for further clarification that her comments are based on the state's participation with "college board" products [such as the PSAT].

MS. ZAVOLI answered that her comments are also based on the national data, which she offered to share with the committee.

[HR 9 was held over.]

[9:02:35 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:02 a.m.