

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATION REVIEW COMMITTEE
Eagle River, Alaska
June 18, 2014
8:07 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Lora Reinbold, Chair
Representative Geran Tarr

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Cathy Giessel, Vice Chair
Representative Mike Hawker
Senator Gary Stevens
Senator Hollis French

OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT

Representative Lynn Gattis
Representative Tammie Wilson (via teleconference)
Representative Sam Kito (via teleconference)

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

IMPLEMENTATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACHER EVALUATION SYSTEMS

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

SANDRA STOSTKY, Ed.D, Professor Emerita
University of Arkansas
Brookline, Massachusetts

POSITION STATEMENT: Expressed concern with tying teacher evaluations with a single test.

ANDY HOLLEMAN, President
Anchorage Education Association
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided remarks on the teacher evaluation system.

MARK VANARSDALE, Parent & Technology Coordinator
Eagle River High School
Anchorage School District
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Expressed concerns with the teacher evaluation system.

MATT PRNKA, Teacher
Eagle River High School
Anchorage School District
Eagle River, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Expressed concerns with the teacher evaluation system.

GLENN MORDINE, Retired Teacher, Administrator
Eagle River, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided remarks regarding Alaska's teacher evaluation system.

RICK SMITH, Teacher
(No address provided.)

POSITION STATEMENT: Expressed concern with the proposed teacher evaluation system.

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

POSITION STATEMENT: During hearing teacher evaluation systems, answered questions.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:07:41 AM](#)

CHAIR LORA REINBOLD called the Administrative Regulation Review Committee meeting to order at 8:07 a.m. Representatives Tarr and Reinbold were present at the call to order. Also in attendance were Representatives Gattis, T. Wilson (via teleconference), and Kito III (via teleconference).

Implementation and Effectiveness of Teacher Evaluation Systems

[8:08:43 AM](#)

CHAIR REINBOLD announced that the only order of business would be to hear public testimony from teachers across the state regarding the teacher evaluation regulation adopted by the Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development in December 2012. She stated that there was overwhelming concern regarding these regulations, in fact, over 800 public comments were received by the Department of Education and Early Development (EED) during the public comment period, and the majority of the comments were in opposition to the regulations. The main concerns were with regard to confidentiality, student data collection, and the evaluation of student scope and performance. During the December 6-7, 2012 board meetings, an amendment was adopted that changed the student scope and performance from a base of 20 percent in fiscal year 2015-2017, to 36 percent in 2017-2018, and to 50 percent in 2018-2019. Therefore, by 2018, 50 percent of a teacher's evaluation will be determined by student growth and performance, including performance on one standardized test, she explained. Chair Reinbold opined that the aforementioned criterion does not take into consideration variables outside the control of the classroom teacher. This change to the regulation, she pointed out, is based on a public comment submitted by the governor, and the teachers were not provided sufficient time to comment on the proposed change. Therefore, this hearing is to provide teachers the opportunity to voice their concerns with the change and to hear EED's reasoning behind the regulations and the amendment.

[8:10:27 AM](#)

SANDRA STOTSKY, Ed.D, speaking on her own behalf, informed the committee that she is a former member of the Massachusetts Department of Education where she was a senior associate commissioner from 1999-2003. She further informed the committee that she was a member of the Common Core Validation Committee and is now a retired professor of education reform from the University of Arkansas.

[Due to a technical difficulty, there is no audio from 8:13 a.m. to 8:17 a.m. and the audio of Mr. Holleman's testimony begins mid-testimony.]

[8:17:37 AM](#)

ANDY HOLLEMAN, President, Anchorage Education Association, [poor quality audio] indicated concern with regard to the small amount of data. He discussed using test scores of students to evaluate teachers and expressed the desire to delay [that portion of the teacher evaluation system] until there is more (indisc.) regarding its accuracy.

[8:18:42 AM](#)

CHAIR REINBOLD inquired as to how Mr. Holleman would recommend grading students [and evaluating teachers] if not based on student growth.

MR. HOLLEMAN [poor quality audio and most of his response is indiscernible]. Mr. Holleman opined that [teachers should be evaluated] via classroom observations to identify any problems and develop a plan of improvement for the teacher.

[8:21:23 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TARR [poor quality audio that is indiscernible].

MR. HOLLEMAN [poor quality audio that is indiscernible].

[8:21:55 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TARR [poor quality audio that is indiscernible] related her understanding that the goal is to identify [problems with teachers] early to intervene appropriately.

MR. HOLLEMAN [poor quality audio that is indiscernible] opined that at the end of the year, if there is not a lot of growth, the principal should address it.

[8:25:01 AM](#)

MARK VANARSDALE, Parent and Technology Coordinator, Eagle River High School, Anchorage School District, speaking first as a parent of a learning disabled student, expressed great concern

with the up to 50 percent of data used to evaluate his son's teacher. He related that his son is a chronically flat performer on any type of [written] evaluation, particularly a formative or summative database test. He said his son has been blessed with some wonderful special education teachers, but "my son would disproportionally make his teachers look terrible." All of his teachers who have worked with him have great concern for his son's overall growth as a person as well as academically. However, he opined, when it comes to any type of written assessment, his son would disproportionately negatively impact his teachers. Mr. VanArsdale opined that obtaining quality special education teachers is remarkably difficult. Therefore, he expressed concern that for special education teachers with low class sizes and poor performers like his son, tying 50 percent of their evaluation to student data would make them look bad when in fact they are remarkable. From a parent perspective, Mr. VanArsdale expressed fear that this type of evaluation system would become very punitive in nature rather than incentivizing better instruction. Speaking as a teacher, he informed the committee that he is a technology collaborator for Eagle River High School, and therefore he is a specialist. He explained that although he carries one to two student classes per year, there is no formal test to evaluate his performance as a technology collaborator. However, he pointed out, if he does not do his job, many teachers in the building cannot do their jobs. Furthermore, he said, there are a large number of educators who will be evaluated who are not language arts and math teachers. Noting that he is not opposed to the use of data [in teacher evaluations], he opined that the use of 50 percent of data in the evaluation of teachers ties the hands of principals, whose main objective is to build a group of good educators into better educators by evaluating them in meaningful ways.

[8:31:02 AM](#)

MATT PRNKA, Teacher, Eagle River High School, Anchorage School District, expressed concern regarding the definition of growth, particularly for those teachers with special needs students who are on the lower end of academic achievement. He said that the lack of growth could destroy a teacher's [evaluation] score. On

the other end of the spectrum, there are teachers with a large number of honors and above-average students who are already performing above the state test scores at the beginning of the school year. Therefore, they will still score above average at the end of the school year, which technically means there is no growth. In such a situation, he questioned whether that would be detrimental to the teacher's evaluation score. Mr. Prnka then expressed concern for the many teachers of courses that cannot be assessed by standardized tests, such as theatre, debate, choir, and physical education.

8:34:27 AM

REPRESENTATIVE TARR asked if anyone has an idea of a different way to implement teacher evaluations rather than the one in regulations, such as a more collaborative approach in which families are involved. She spoke of students who are challenged by bad home situations, where things that should be happening at home to help a child learn are not happening, and the teachers can be limited in their impacts.

MR. PRNKA, drawing from his experience with individualized education program (IEP) committees with various other education professionals, students, and their families, indicated that having multiple people reviewing a student's learning and achievement levels from their various perspectives and specialties can be positive; "multiple pairs of eyes can really take something apart and look for ways of improvement." However, he didn't see how such could be achieved for all students merely due to the time involved. He mentioned parent teacher conference nights that can provide great insight into a student's life outside of the classroom, but it's a short timeframe and is voluntary in terms of parent and student attendance.

8:38:41 AM

GLENN MORDINE, Retired Teacher, Administrator, (Indisc. - poor quality audio throughout this testimony) speaking as a retired teacher and administrator, reviewed his past involvement in teaching, including his time as a special education teacher and

director of special education programs. He indicated a difference between [the views of] standardized testing in low-income schools and high-income schools. He pointed out that the federal law, IEP, trumps state and local laws for special needs students. Mr. Mordine said that he could understand the frustration of teachers as one cannot generalize about a group of students and expect the same outcome from all of them. He emphasized the need to consider special needs students as they cannot be held to the same standard as [non-special needs students] unless there is agreement from the parent and educator.

[8:43:57 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GATTIS inquired as to how Mr. Mordine's testimony may have changed the testimony of others had he testified first.

MR. VANARSDALE maintained concern with 50 percent of the teacher evaluation being based upon student data, as special education teachers can be disproportionately impacted by the poor performance of a few students.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTIS surmised, then, that Mr. VanArsdale is concerned with the low student-to-teacher ratio, particularly in special education, as it could skew the evaluations for the teacher.

MR. VANARSDALE highlighted how difficult it is to get special education teachers and how their small student-teacher ratio [in conjunction with this evaluation criterion] could make it worse.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTIS offered, on the other hand, that perhaps more people would be attracted to become special education teachers because of the low student-teacher ratios that could provide a greater opportunity to excel, and "the opposite could be true as well."

MR. VANARSDALE pointed out the unreliability of information from very small sets of data.

[8:48:28 AM](#)

SANDRA STOSTKY, Ed.D, Professor Emerita, University of Arkansas, expressed great concern that a decision was made to tie teacher evaluations to any percent of a single test, especially not 50 percent, without having testing experts talking to the state board of education or the Governor about the problems with a single test and a test based on Common Core standards. She said there is no professional basis for tying any percentage of the score to a test that is based on standards that have been validated. "We need to go back, and think how you use a test that isn't even going to be vetted by Alaska reviewers that will be used to evaluate teachers when the test is based on standards themselves that have not been validated." Even if the test is based on Alaska's standards, which are almost identical to the Common Core standards that are not internationally benchmarked or research-based. The result is to base 50 percent of a teacher's evaluation on a dubious test based on dubious standards. She opined that the aforementioned is neither professional nor fair to the teachers. In fact, she said she was not sure how student growth would be evaluated, because value-added methodologies have been subjected to a great deal of criticism. She suggested that perhaps the effort to hold teachers [accountable] would be better placed if there were tougher licensure tests for prospective teachers and administrators. She further suggested that Alaska's use of the Praxis test for elementary teachers and other specialists should be reviewed by EED. Dr. Stotsky, noting that she was on the National Mathematics Advisory Committee, informed the committee that research has shown that the only characteristic of an effective teacher is mastery of subject matter. Although mastery of subject matter should be placed first, somewhere, and it is not included in the professional standards as the priority. Therefore, subject matter mastery should be addressed rather than tying evaluations of teacher, who have been prepared without a focus on mastery of subject matter, to student scores from a test that is based on non-internationally benchmarked and non-research-based standards.

[8:52:42 AM](#)

DR. STOTSKY, in response to Representative Gattis, confirmed that research shows that teachers need to know the subject they are teaching; this is what the research shows. Dr. Stotsky said what matters is the correlation between a teacher's mastery of the subject and improvement in student scores. In further response to Representative Gattis, Dr. Stotsky opined that the basis for evaluating teachers is whether they can knowledgeably, sensibly, and rationally teach the content for what they are licensed to teach. The aforementioned is what a good administrator used to be able to review when they observed a teacher's classroom, she added. How well a teacher teaches a subject is based on the pedagogy they are supposed learn, which is built on the teacher's academic knowledge of the subject matter. [The teacher evaluation system in Alaska] does not get at the aforementioned because of the problem with the test and the standards on which they are based.

8:56:11 AM

CHAIR REINBOLD inquired as to number of people on the Validating Committee for the Common Core standards. She also inquired as to who on the committee had research-based experience with curriculum and had an understanding of what good standards are.

DR. STOTSKY answered that by the end of 2010, there were 29 people on the committee of which 5 did not sign off on the standards as internationally benchmarked, researched-based, or rigorous. She explained that the Validation Committee consisted of only one English language arts standards expert, herself, and only one mathematician, and he had a PhD in mathematics; both she and the mathematics expert did not sign off on the standards. Although there were other members referred to as math experts, they were all located in Departments of Education or had doctoral degrees in mathematics education. Dr. Stotsky emphasized that the Common Core standards have yet to be internationally benchmarked in the years since they were adopted, which was practically overnight, by a variety of different states. She highlighted that some states changed the name of the standards so that it would look as if they were not the Common Core standards, although they essentially were.

8:58:35 AM

CHAIR REINBOLD inquired as to why she did not validate the Common Core standards.

DR. STOTSKY explained that she did not validate the English language arts standards because they were not internationally benchmarked, which is also one of the reasons why the expert mathematician did not validate the math standards. Furthermore, the standards were not research-based, which was related to how the standards were organized in that 50 percent of what teachers teach in K-12 is referred to as informational text and literary study has to be reduced to about 50 percent in the English class. The English language arts standards emphasized writing more than reading, which is in opposition to 100 years of research on the topic.

9:00:07 AM

CHAIR REINBOLD inquired as to how the Alaska Academic Standards compare to the Common Core standards.

DR. STOTSKY replied that the Alaska Academic Standards for English language arts seem identical, except for the introductory material.

9:01:45 AM

CHAIR REINBOLD related that she initially was open-minded about the Common Core standards and then she became a skeptic, and now she is really questioning whether the Common Core is right for Alaska. She then asked if the Common Core is more rigorous or just different, particularly with the English language arts (ELA) subject.

DR. STOTSKY stated that the ELA standards are inappropriate at the primary grade level in many ways, because they ask for writing that small children simply cannot do yet. "I wouldn't call that rigor; I would simply call it inappropriateness," she added. Rigor means more challenging academically, Dr. Stotsky said, and there is nothing at the high school level that is more

challenging academically in Common Core standards than what was already available in many states. "Common Core is so mediocre that it cannot help but drag Alaskan students down," she opined. She further opined that the Common Core does not include anything that will challenge students, as the standards really reflect skills rather than content. The ELA standards are not rigorous, she reiterated.

9:05:26 AM

CHAIR REINBOLD related her understanding that WorkKeys, ACT, and SAT are all aligned with the Common Core standards.

DR. STOTSKY agreed that appears to be the case, but she hears different messages from those who represent ACT and SAT. "Many of them are trying to say both things simultaneously," she stated. When David Coleman became the head of the College Boards in March, he said he was going to align the SATs to the level of Common Core, "which means they would be aligned downward," as would the AP tests, she opined. The SAT sounds like it will be easier. She suggested that the higher education institutions in Alaska should come together to develop a matriculation test—that means that high school graduates would have to aim for this test in order to get into one of Alaska's higher education institutions. She added that Alaska does not need the SAT, WorkKeys, or ACT, it needs tests developed by its own educators for Alaska students.

9:07:33 AM

CHAIR REINBOLD then inquired as to Dr. Stotsky's view of 50 percent of a teacher's evaluation being linked to [test scores].

DR. STOTSKY characterized it as a very bad idea as it is unfair to teachers and makes no sense for anyone who understands testing and measurements. The tests are based on standards that have not been validated. She questioned how the governor could have made such a recommendation on his own or how a state board could have even approved and incorporated such a recommendation without having hearings with testing experts.

9:09:20 AM

CHAIR REINBOLD highlighted that www.act.org specifies that the ACT is pleased to be an active partner with Common Core state standard initiatives. She then related her understanding that the university is aligned to the Common Core standards.

DR. STOTSKY informed the committee that in the [Race to Top] application for a waiver, states had to commit to obtaining cooperation of higher education faculty that students who passed a college-readiness test will be able to take credit-bearing classes in their freshman year of college. Any test based on Common Core-like standards will result in students with 8th grade or Algebra I level mathematics going to a higher education institution. Therefore, university mathematics departments will have to ensure the mathematics courses are accessible to them. The aforementioned, she emphasized, makes it important for higher education to become involved in terms of vetting tests used with state standards.

9:12:39 AM

CHAIR REINBOLD recalled that at a recent Board of Regents meeting one of the academic officials said [the university system] is in alignment with the national agenda and set on obtaining more data. She noted that many Alaskan students are not going to attend higher education schools in Alaska. Moreover, she stressed the need for the university to focus on excellence in order to attract students.

DR. STOTSKY expressed the need to have details of the national agenda, particularly in terms of the level of knowledge in an academic area. In further response to Chair Reinbold, Dr. Stotsky said that professors will not pay attention to high school standards unless invited to do so.

9:15:43 AM

CHAIR REINBOLD asked if there is any correlation between the NCLB [No Child Left Behind] waiver and the Common Core initiative.

DR. STOTSKY explained that the U.S. Department of Education waiver was an effort to let states off the hook that were committed under NCLB to have all students reach the level of "proficient" by 2014. All states knew they could not achieve proficiency with all of their students, and many asked and received waivers, but the waivers commit the states to adopting Common Core standards and the tests associated with them. "In other words, they come with strings attached," she stated. "If Alaska wants strings, that's a choice your governor [and] your legislature can make."

[9:17:29 AM](#)

CHAIR REINBOLD expressed frustration that the State Board of Education and EED moved forward with adopting the standards and applying for a waiver without consent/involvement of the legislature.

DR. STOTSKY remarked that most legislatures were in the dark, but pointed out that it is never too late to determine to what the state is committed as there will certainly be bills.

CHAIR REINBOLD said that is why she has the EED on line. She noted that it has been very difficult obtaining information regarding funding and the [structure] of the total package in terms of the strings/costs associated with the federal requirements. She said she is glad the EED is on line and she will be asking, again, what the federal mandates are. The train is going very fast, and the legislature is overlooked, she opined. Chair Reinbold emphasized the need for the elected officials to listen to teachers and parents on these matters and to have authority and oversight on education. She said she is studying the waiver.

[9:19:29 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GATTIS said she did not think that Alaska applied for Race to the Top money, and she inquired as to what an international benchmark is, and how that may apply to Alaska state standards.

DR. STOTSKY explained that international benchmarking determines whether a course's standards are comparable to those in high-achieving countries, most of which are Asian countries. Experts in the topics need to compare the subjects across the countries.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTIS pointed out the huge hurdles and concerns with measuring domestically, and asked why it is necessary to measure internationally.

DR. STOTSKY clarified that international benchmarking matters legally, particularly since those who created the Common Core standards promised the state that the standards would be internationally benchmarked. Furthermore, the [federal] Race to the Top application contained legal language specifying that states will be given internationally benchmarked standards. If standards are not aligned to the best standards available and have not been validated, she questioned why teacher evaluations would be tied to student test scores.

[9:24:33 AM](#)

CHAIR REINBOLD mentioned that HB 278 includes lots of links with the NCLB waiver. She pointed out that now states are required to pay for the ACT, SAT, and WorkKeys tests that are aligned to the Common Core. There's no escaping the Common Core, she opined.

DR. STOTSKY suggested that if Alaska developed its own state test, it would get itself out of this trouble.

CHAIR REINBOLD related that Alaska has maintained some state control by setting the cut scores.

[9:28:33 AM](#)

GLENN MORDINE (indisc. - poor quality audio throughout this testimony) opined that administrators were left out of this, although administrators have the goal of assisting and helping teachers obtain the maximum performance from their children. He remarked that from a practical standpoint, there has to be an

understanding of the population. He provided remarks drawing from his recent experiences as a high school principal.

[9:31:52 AM](#)

RICK SMITH, Teacher, said that teacher evaluations by principals can be biased based on the relationship between the two people, and he believes there should be a more objective evaluation process. But, he expressed concern when teachers are evaluated on the test scores of students, even when the teacher is making progress with their students it may not bear out in the test score because student achievement is based on many things over which teachers have no control. Students have a life outside of school that impacts their learning and their test scores. He questioned what would happen in those schools with large populations of students impacted by their socioeconomic levels and home life, upon which the teachers will be adversely evaluated. He suggested that teachers are being made scapegoats for parents and society failing the students.

[9:37:03 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GATTIS surmised then that there are teachers who are considering moving elsewhere because they will be evaluated negatively compared to teachers with students whose parents are involved. In low-performing schools, one would assume that there is some function or some way that they would welcome something like coaching or mentoring. Representative Gattis opined that discussion of the lack of parental and community involvement does not advance the need to educate kids to get them out of a bad situation [socioeconomically or otherwise], and the only way out for these youth is to become educated. She said the question is how to facilitate giving "those kids the opportunity to get out of that mess." She said her employees like a plan for improvement to know where they are, where they made mistakes, what they have to do to improve, and where the next step is. She said she does not see that as a bad thing.

MR. SMITH agreed with Representative Gattis, adding that there are definitely teachers that need to be out.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTIS surmised that the challenge is to develop a teacher evaluation system that targets teachers who would be better suited for another industry. It is not fair that others have to take up the slack, she added. She understands that teachers are concerned about ousting good teachers, but there are parents that are concerned about wasting a year of their children's education [on a bad teacher]. "I think we all know something should be done." She then commended the department for advancing forward the idea that something needs to be done.

[9:41:37 AM](#)

CHAIR REINBOLD reminded everyone that the legislature does not write regulations; the boards and departments write regulations based on statutes passed by the legislature. She noted that the passage of her legislation, HB 140, will provide legislators 10 days to review and weigh-in on regulations prior to their adoption and the opportunity to interact with the departments when regulations are being developed.

[9:43:09 AM](#)

CHAIR REINBOLD informed the committee that research her office gathered found that approximately 42 states have adopted, or are in the process of adopting, a plan to revise teacher evaluations with the Common Core initiative. She said she understood the need to consider new standards, per the 1996 law governing teachers and administrative evaluations. However, she questioned why it is occurring now and whether it is part of the NCLB waiver. She then questioned how the department is addressing the 800 comments it has received, particularly the concerns from teachers. She directed the department to address the concerns surrounding special needs students and unfair weighting on math, language arts, and science teachers. She then asked the department to describe the difference between the Common Core standards and Alaska's standards. She also inquired as to why 50 percent of a teacher's evaluation is related to [student test scores] and how tied the state is to the NCLB waiver. She also asked how different the Applied Measurement Professionals, Inc. (AMP) test is from the Smarter Balanced

Assessment Consortium (SBAC) and Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) tests.

[9:46:47 AM](#)

LES MORSE, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Education and Early Development, said he will try to address what the department was asked to speak about, and he will also attempt to address many of the issues that have been brought up at this hearing. He then provided some background, including when the process started, which he opined would illustrate disconnect from any federal agenda. He then said he would review the regulatory process followed by response to the questions raised in any remaining time.

CHAIR REINBOLD interjected that she would like the questions that have been raised during today's meeting to be answered first.

MR. MORSE turned to the question of why now. He explained that in 2008, Alaska brought together 400 stakeholders from across the state. The stakeholders identified teacher quality as one of the key areas for developing an education plan. In 2009, EED put together a teacher quality working group that included 37 individuals who were not departmental staff or Alaska State School Board members; two were principals, one was from the Alaska principals association, and three were from NEA. After working a number of years, in March, 2012, that working group provided a report to the Alaska State Board of Education and took action on a number of items in the report, including the purpose of the evaluation and adding more objectivity to the evaluation. There was an issue of subjectivity when principals evaluate teachers. The working group wanted to focus on student learning rather than student achievement. The aforementioned is an important distinction, he opined, because focusing on student achievement would potentially result in focusing only on the test that is given. He highlighted that the regulations are clear that this is not focused on a single test but rather multiple measures designed locally with teachers engaged in the process. In June 2012, the board put out the regulations for an extended public comment period; those regulations addressed the

cultural standards included in the evaluation, the purpose and scope of the evaluation, reporting, and student learning data. The public comment period lasted from June 13, 2012, to November 2, 2012, he said. In response to Chair Reinbold, Mr. Morse recalled that they received about 800 public comments. The public notice on June 13, 2012, stated that after the public comment ends, EED will adopt these or other provisions dealing with the same subject without further notice. The public comment that was provided in writing was included in the Alaska State Board of Education packet that was put out for the public to review, including the public comment that was received from the Governor. The Governor's public comment encouraged the Alaska State Board of Education to consider 50 percent of the evaluation being student data. The main job of schools is to improve student learning; therefore, it makes sense that student learning would be part of a teacher's evaluation, he opined. In fact, it seems counter intuitive that student learning has not been part of a teacher's evaluation. Although some people felt that student learning/data should be 100 percent of a teacher's evaluation, the Alaska State Board of Education felt that observational information learned from teacher evaluations should be included. The Alaska State Board of Education took a gradual approach to implementation of the regulations, he explained. Mr. Morse highlighted that the department reviewed the public comments very carefully. In fact, so much public comment was received early on that the department re-noticed the regulations at its October meeting to point out the 11 adjustments to the regulations in October, although the adjustments were not very significant and fell within the scope.

[9:53:08 AM](#)

CHAIR REINBOLD, relaying questions from someone in the audience, inquired as to how much the regulations were changed. She then inquired as to the trends that manifested in the 800 public comments. She also asked if the department took action based on the input from the teachers across the state.

MR. MORSE replied yes, reiterating that 11 changes were made to the regulations. He noted that there were comments that were beyond the scope of the noticed regulations, some of which have

been mentioned at this meeting as well. For example, there were concerns with regard to data collection, which is not really an issue. There was also concern regarding confidentiality, but the confidentiality of the teacher evaluation system was not impacted by these regulations. In fact, there are some strong confidentiality protections that remain in place in statute. Therefore, the department could not respond to some of the comments because they were outside the scope of the process.

[9:54:15 AM](#)

MR. MORSE, returning to the timeline of the process, informed the committee that the Alaska State Board of Education adopted the regulations in December 2012. He then explained that this regulation requires that measures of student learning are used in teacher evaluations. Furthermore, it requires at least two, but up to four, measures that the local districts develop by working with their teachers. The regulation does not require every teacher in the district to be evaluated identically. Therefore, special education teachers who only deal with special education students may be looked at differently. Moreover, the regulation does not require the sole source of use to be state assessments. The regulation, 19.099, defines "measurement" clearly as "assessment of student knowledge, understanding, or skill and may include an assessment that is not a standardized test". Therefore, the measurement could be a performance of music or physical education or based on student projects. Mr. Morse explained that in terms of including student learning, the districts are supposed to pilot a system next year and, by next summer, bring it before their local board for adoption. For 2015-2016 and 2016-2017, 20 percent of the rating of the overall system would include student learning, and that will increase to 35 percent by 2017-2018 and to 50 percent by 2018-2019.

[9:56:57 AM](#)

MR. MORSE, in response to earlier questions/concerns, informed the committee that testing experts were consulted. He further informed the committee that the department has worked with the University of Alaska and will continue to do so. He refuted the notion that the test is dubious. With regard to the comments

that there should be tougher measures in terms of the Praxis, the Alaska State Board of Education expressed its concerns with that at its March and June meetings. To the comments that content knowledge is not important to Alaska's teachers, Mr. Morse pointed out that 4 AAC 04.200, standard 4, is about content knowledge. There are eight standards for teachers, and one targets content knowledge and all eight are a priority. With regard to the concerns that there is subjectivity in the process of evaluation, this work is actually about removing subjectivity. Concerns that this is limited to a written assessment are not true, as it can be a performance, he said. Furthermore, it is not the department's objective to make [the teacher evaluation system] punitive but rather to improve learning in schools, improve achievement, and help teachers perform better. Drawing from his 28 years in the profession, 11 of which were in the classroom, Mr. Morse said he was a better teacher with feedback. With regard to the concerns about data, the department is not suggesting collecting data that it has not already collected and can now be used to help teachers perform better and students to learn more. In terms of the notion that principals should have been more engaged from the beginning, he reiterated that principals were engaged from 2009 forward. Regarding gifted students versus those in special education, those differences can be addressed because the system is designed locally. Noting that he taught both populations, he opined that it is more difficult to increase achievement of really high achievers, but one should not make the excuse that high achievers cannot learn more. The same should be true of low-performing students regardless of why they are low performing. He stated that the entire system is about moving students forward. Mr. Morse emphasized that [the department] was very deliberate in including more than standardized tests; it is about looking at local performance. With regard to comments that this evaluation system might attract more teachers to special education because achievement could be increased and teacher performance could be rated higher, he opined that such a result would be great.

[10:00:27 AM](#)

CHAIR REINBOLD thanked Mr. Morse and said there will be on-going hearings. She asked where people can send questions.

MR. MORSE recommended that people with questions can contact him or Marci Herman, legislative liaison. He noted that the department is doing a lot of work with districts as these systems are moved forward and response will be done in the balance of all those needs.

[10:01:33 AM](#)

CHAIR REINBOLD asked if these regulations are a requirement of the NCLB waiver.

MR. MORSE explained that the regulations were moved forward in 2008 and adopted in 2012, well before the waiver became part of the process in Alaska. Therefore, these regulations preceded the NCLB waiver. Because this system was in place by choice, the state was able to meet the requirement of evaluation within the waiver. He clarified that Alaska had a system that allowed the state to apply for the waiver, but the system was not built in response to applying for a waiver.

CHAIR REINBOLD asked if the regulations are a requirement of the NCLB waiver.

MR. MORSE answered that the department did not pass these regulations as a requirement of the waiver. In further response to Chair Reinbold, Mr. Morse said the NCLB waiver requires the use of student learning in evaluating teachers, which Alaska - by choice - had in place prior to the application for the waiver.

[10:03:08 AM](#)

CHAIR REINBOLD asked if the new teacher evaluation system is similar to evaluation systems in other states that have fully adopted the Common Core initiative.

MR. MORSE responded that he could not speak for other states as the department is focused on Alaska.

10:03:50 AM

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the Administrative Regulation Review Committee meeting was adjourned at 10:03 a.m.