

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

April 3, 2013

8:00 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Gary Stevens, Chair
Senator Mike Dunleavy, Vice Chair
Senator Bert Stedman
Senator Charlie Huggins
Senator Berta Gardner

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

SENATE BILL NO. 15

"An Act relating to prekindergarten programs within a school district; relating to pre- elementary students and pre- elementary schools; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD AND HELD

SENATE BILL NO. 82

"An Act providing for public school funding for telecommunications or Internet services."

- HEARD AND HELD

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 87(FIN)

"An Act relating to the governing board and duties of the special education service agency; relating to allocations to the special education service agency; extending the special education service agency; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD AND HELD

CONFIRMATION HEARING

State Board of Education & Early Development

JAMES FIELDS

- CONFIRMATION ADVANCED

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 15

SHORT TITLE: PREKINDERGARTEN SCHOOL PROGRAMS/PLANS

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) FRENCH

01/16/13 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/16/13 (S) EDC, FIN
04/03/13 (S) EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

BILL: SB 82

SHORT TITLE: BROADBAND DISCOUNTS FOR SCHOOLS

SPONSOR(s): SENATOR(s) OLSON

03/19/13 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/19/13 (S) EDC, FIN
03/25/13 (S) EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)
03/25/13 (S) Heard & Held
03/25/13 (S) MINUTE(EDC)
04/03/13 (S) EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

BILL: HB 87

SHORT TITLE: EXTEND SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICE AGENCY

SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) HIGGINS

01/28/13 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/28/13 (H) EDC, FIN
02/15/13 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106
02/15/13 (H) Scheduled But Not Heard
02/18/13 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106
02/18/13 (H) Moved CSHB 87(EDC) Out of Committee
02/18/13 (H) MINUTE(EDC)
02/22/13 (H) EDC RPT CS(EDC) NT 5DP
02/22/13 (H) DP: SEATON, P.WILSON, LEDOUX, SADDLER,
GATTIS
02/22/13 (H) LETTER OF INTENT WITH EDC REPORT
03/14/13 (H) FIN AT 1:30 PM HOUSE FINANCE 519
03/14/13 (H) Heard & Held
03/14/13 (H) MINUTE(FIN)
03/19/13 (H) FIN AT 1:30 PM HOUSE FINANCE 519
03/19/13 (H) Moved CSHB 87(FIN) Out of Committee
03/19/13 (H) MINUTE(FIN)
03/20/13 (H) FIN RPT CS(FIN) NT 8DP 2AM
03/20/13 (H) DP: HOLMES, MUNOZ, NEUMAN, THOMPSON,
T.WILSON, COSTELLO, STOLTZE, AUSTERMAN
03/20/13 (H) AM: KAWASAKI, GARA
04/02/13 (H) TRANSMITTED TO (S)

04/02/13 (H) VERSION: CSHB 87(FIN)
04/02/13 (S) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/02/13 (S) EDC, FIN
04/03/13 (S) EDC AT 8:00 AM BELTZ 105 (TSBldg)

WITNESS REGISTER

SENATOR HOLLIS FRENCH
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As sponsor, introduced SB 15.

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

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions related to SB 15 and SB 82.

PETER HOEPFNER, School Board President
Cordova School Board
Cordova, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 15.

RICH RHODES, Superintendent
Wrangell School District
Wrangell, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 15.

ELIZABETH COREY, representing herself
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 15.

BETH SNYDER, Early Childhood Specialist
Anchorage School District
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 15.

DIRK SHUMAKER, Executive Director
Kids Corp., Inc.
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 15.

DAVID SCOTT, Staff
Senator Donny Olson
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Explained the changes in the new CS for SB 82 on behalf of the sponsor.

JAMES FIELDS, representing himself
Glennallen, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during his confirmation hearing for the State Board of Education and Early Development.

REPRESENTATIVE PETE HIGGINS
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Sponsor of HB 87.

PATRICK PILLAI, Executive Director
Special Education Services Agency (SESA)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided information related to HB 87.

MIKE HANLEY, Commissioner
Department of Education & Early Development
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided information about SESA.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:00:52 AM](#)

CHAIR GARY STEVENS called the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Gardner, Huggins, Stedman, Dunleavy, and Chair Stevens.

CHAIR STEVENS reviewed the meeting's agenda.

[8:01:36 AM](#)

At ease

SB 15-PREKINDERGARTEN SCHOOL PROGRAMS/PLANS

[8:02:35 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS announced the consideration of SB 15.

[8:02:59 AM](#)

SENATOR HOLLIS FRENCH, Alaska State Legislature, as sponsor, introduced SB 15. He related that he came to the issue of pre-kindergarten school programs as a former prosecutor. He said in 2009 the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) delivered a study to the legislature based on a crime study

called "The Cost of Crime." He explained that the study deal with the question whether the state could reduce future crime and save money by expanding education and treatment programs.

He showed a slide called "How Effective Are Various Programs at Saving Money and Reducing Crime." He stated that the Head Start program for young children saves six times more than it costs and reduces future crime among participants by about 16 percentage points. He credited that information with the beginning of his interest in pre-kindergarten education as a crime deterrent.

[8:04:36 AM](#)

SENATOR FRENCH recalled information from a crime summit in 2012. He addressed slides called, "More Education, Less Crime," "Washington State Institute for Public Policy," "Crime: The Big Picture," and "An Example of Prevention: Early Childhood Education (ECE)."

[8:06:18 AM](#)

SENATOR FRENCH discussed the results of studies on crime prevention as a result of early childhood education: standardized test score went up, high school graduation rates increased, crime in later life decreased, special education placement decreased, as did other factors.

SENATOR FRENCH showed cost benefit information related to early childhood education. He summarized that there was a three-to-one benefit on the investment versus the payoff for the child and for society. The largest benefits were in education gains and earnings. He concluded that early childhood education investments nearly always break even.

He noted powerful, positive results from a three-year early childhood pilot program in Alaska.

[8:09:33 AM](#)

SENATOR FRENCH summarized a handout from a survey from various states that have taken up pre-kindergarten programs. He noted the wide range of states that have implemented programs.

He said SB 15 is straightforward and makes pre-kindergarten available on a voluntary basis for four-year-olds statewide.

CHAIR STEVENS noted that he was familiar with the Washington State program on education research, a non-partisan organization. He requested more information about SB 15.

8:11:07 AM

SENATOR FRENCH presented a sectional analysis. He related that Section 1 adds pre-kindergarten to the list of offerings in an elementary school. Section 2 allows pre-kindergarten children to be counted in the average daily membership at a half rate. Section 3 says a school district may provide a pre-kindergarten program for students who are four years old. He stressed that the program is optional.

He continued to describe the sections of SB 15. Section 4 sets the age limit at four years old. Section 5 adds language on page 3 to say that pre-kindergarten programs can be supervised by school districts. Section 6 defines a child of pre-elementary school age versus a pre-kindergarten age. Section 7 adds to the duties of school boards the obligation to implement regulations for pre-kindergarten programs. Section 8 allows for counting children for average daily membership. Section 9 says the school district may not include in the average daily membership of a school, students who are four years of age if the students are enrolled in a program that receives state funding other than funding under this chapter.

8:13:45 AM

SENATOR FRENCH said the fiscal note is for \$45 million. He opined that it is a little over-inflated because it is extremely unlikely that every child that qualifies for pre-kindergarten would enroll the first year. He suggested that the program would take several years to ramp up.

SENATOR GARDNER said she was not aware that kindergarten is funded at a half-time rate. She commented that all of the kindergarten programs in her district are full day programs. She asked why it is funded that way.

SENATOR FRENCH indicated that he did not know.

SENATOR DUNLEAVY wished to verify that the program is voluntary for students who are not currently in the system.

SENATOR FRENCH responded that Senator Dunleavy brought up a good point. He noted that 10 percent of eligible kids are enrolled in Head Start, in a pilot program, or in a private school. That leaves about 90 percent of kids in daycare because most parents have to work.

SENATOR DUNLEAVY commented on the issue of helping older students who are outside the system becoming part of the system. He said the bill would expand public education to include the students on a voluntary basis.

SENATOR FRENCH said it was a point well taken.

[8:16:23 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGGINS noted that correspondence students receive 80 percent of the base student allocation. He brought up the IDEA program and asked how the enrollment works.

SENATOR FRENCH requested more information.

SENATOR HUGGINS asked how much BSA an IDEA student would receive.

[8:17:12 AM](#)

SENATOR FRENCH deferred to the school district experts to answer. He suggested that students enrolled in a classroom would receive 50 percent of the BSA and IDEA students would be funded separately.

SENATOR DUNLEAVY said IDEA is a public school program.

SENATOR FRENCH said he could envision the programs working together.

SENATOR HUGGINS thought IDEA was one of the largest schools in the state.

SENATOR FRENCH stressed the importance of collaboration.

SENATOR HUGGINS inquired how Head Start compares to pre-kindergarten programs.

SENATOR FRENCH replied that they are similar, but not the same. There is no overlap or competition between the two programs. He thought Head Start was "stalled out" given the federal funding situation and is aimed at low income kids.

SENATOR HUGGINS asked if local daycare centers could expand their programs.

SENATOR FRENCH responded that pre-kindergarten is not daycare. It involves having a person who is skilled in early childhood development and education.

8:20:05 AM

SENATOR HUGGINS noted that there some parents that provide early childhood education well. He suggested a certificate may not be indicative of the success of a program.

SENATOR FRENCH answered that some babysitters are talented kids who can instill a love for learning; some are not. He said he hoped the credentialing program produces teachers that are enthusiastic and talented at teaching children.

SENATOR HUGGINS asked if the program was indicative of the fact that parents aren't parenting in the home or that the program is effective.

SENATOR FRENCH responded that most parents want the best for their kids. He stated the pre-kindergarten program, which has been proven to improve the chance of a child's success in life, is worth some state investment and time.

SENATOR HUGGINS asked if there are any gender factors.

SENATOR FRENCH answered no.

SENATOR DUNLEAVY stated that he applauded Senator French for considering all Alaskans in trying to provide a good education for kids. He asked if it matters where a child gets educated, as long as they receive an education.

8:22:20 AM

SENATOR FRENCH replied said it does not matter where the education takes place. He said that ideally early childhood education would happen at home.

CHAIR STEVENS reported that he was fascinated by the relationship between crime prevention and early childhood education.

SENATOR DUNLEAVY asked if the program should be extended to non-public schools.

SENATOR FRENCH explained that the fiscal note envisions every four-year-old in the state enrolled in an early education program in a school.

SENATOR DUNLEAVY asked if it has to be in a public school.

SENATOR FRENCH answered that the bill envisions it happening in a public school. He pointed out that the committee could change that.

SENATOR DUNLEAVY asked if Senator French would not be adverse to all Alaskan children having an opportunity for a quality pre-kindergarten program.

SENATOR FRENCH said the bill envisions a public school system, but the committee could change that.

SENATOR DUNLEAVY emphasized that the most important thing is that the child receive a quality education.

SENATOR FRENCH said yes.

[8:24:53 AM](#)

LES MORSE, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Education & Early Development, answered questions related to SB 15. He addressed Senator Gardner's question about funding part-time kindergarten. He explained that if a kindergarten student is enrolled for at least 4 hours of school, five days a week, they are funded as full time.

[8:26:05 AM](#)

SENATOR GARDNER asked if SB 15 were to pass, whether there would be adequate space.

MR. MORSE responded that SB 15 did not address the issue of space. He opined that some districts would find that a challenge.

CHAIR STEVENS ask Senator Huggins if he would like the IDEA program addressed.

SENATOR HUGGINS noted that IDEA is a public education program. He wondered if it would work within the bill's parameters.

MR. MORSE believed it would.

SENATOR HUGGINS stated that he had a bias for rejuvenating the K-12 program. He suggested that there should be a way to address that.

[8:28:44 AM](#)

MR. MORSE summarized that Senator Huggins was looking for a way to improve K-12. He noted that the department is moving forward

on several things that addressed that issue, such as early literacy program that are within the current funding for grades 1 through 3. Another goal is to raise standards and try to get districts to develop more rigorous curriculum.

[8:30:22 AM](#)

PETER HOEPFNER, School Board President, Cordova School Board, testified in support of SB 15. He commented on the benefits of pre-kindergarten programs, especially when programs such as Head Start and Best Beginnings are not available to the Cordova area.

[8:31:49 AM](#)

At ease

[8:32:29 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS opened public testimony on SB 15.

[8:32:57 AM](#)

RICH RHODES, Superintendent, Wrangell School District, testified in support of SB 15. He noted his dissertation was on closing the achievement gap and he stressed the importance of preschool programs. He stated that education was also the answer to preventing recidivism in prisoners.

[8:34:18 AM](#)

ELIZABETH COREY, representing herself, testified in support of SB 15. She shared a personal story of her son's behavioral improvement and success in preschool.

[8:36:06 AM](#)

BETH SNYDER, Early Childhood Specialist, Anchorage School District, testified in support of SB 15. She shared the components of a successful, quality preschool program: a research-based curriculum, a teacher trained in early childhood, an on-going assessment system, and regular professional development.

She shared data about personal growth exhibited by students enrolled in preschool. She said there is great carryover of preschool skills into kindergarten.

She concluded that preschool works and it matters to children, communities, and families. It is a proven intervention and it strengthens the overall education system.

[8:38:03 AM](#)

SENATOR GARDNER asked Ms. Snyder for clarification of the critical elements of a successful preschool program.

MS. SNYDER reiterated those qualities.

[8:38:26 AM](#)

DIRK SHUMAKER, Executive Director, Kids Corp., Inc., testified in support of SB 15. He concurred with the previous speaker's comments. He said the state's pilot preschool program shows that preschools can work and are successful.

[8:39:59 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS held SB 15 in committee.

SB 82-BROADBAND DISCOUNTS FOR SCHOOLS

[8:40:19 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS announced the consideration of SB 82.

SENATOR HUGGINS moved to adopt CS for SB 82, labeled 28-LS0637\0, as the working document.

CHAIR STEVENS objected for discussion purposes.

[8:40:54 AM](#)

DAVID SCOTT, Staff, Senator Donny Olson, explained the changes in the CS for SB 82, version 0, on behalf of the sponsor. He related that "telecommunications" was removed from the title and the bill, as was any reference to Title I, both on advice from the department. An effective date was added to the bill.

He explained that SB 82 intends that the state pick up the local share for broadband costs that are not cover under the federal E-rate Program. He pointed out that schools are facing higher costs and it is the intent of the sponsor to free up money for instruction.

He said the sponsor worked with the department to reduce the fiscal note. For FY 2014, the state match would not change; however, for FY 2015 on, for schools whose internet services are faster than 10 megabits-a-second, the amount they are eligible to receive is limited to a 10 percent increase from the previous year's amount. For schools with internet service slower than 10 megabit-a-second, they can receive more than 10 percent of the previous year's amount. This change results in a fixed-number fiscal note, not an indeterminate note.

[8:43:44 AM](#)

SENATOR GARDNER summarized that schools need state assistance to pay for their broadband costs because of the way the state is funding schools and because costs are variable across the state.

MR. SCOTT replied that schools are faced with higher costs, such as energy costs, and the sponsor decided that subsidizing broadband costs was one way the state could help.

SENATOR GARDNER asked if increasing the base student allocation would do the same thing, as well as allow schools to choose how to spend the extra funding.

MR. SCOTT said he could not speak for his boss, but he agreed.

[8:45:06 AM](#)

LES MORSE, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Education & Early Development, answered questions related to the fiscal note for SB 82. He explained the calculations used to determine a new fiscal note. He said the local share would be \$13.7 million next year for districts across the state. In FY 2015, if the schools within the district have the broadband called for in the legislation, they receive a 10 percent increase; if not, the department works with vendors to increase the broadband up to the qualifying amount.

He related that about one-third of the schools do not have adequate broadband. The two-thirds of the schools that do have adequate broadband, with the 10 percent escalator, would cost \$14.6 million and the one-third would cost \$7.3 million. The total for FY 2015 would be about \$22 million. The out years would see a 10 percent increase per year out to FY 2019.

[8:47:11 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS closed public testimony and held SB 82 in committee.

CONFIRMATION HEARING:
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION & EARLY DEVELOPMENT

[8:47:23 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS announced that the next order of business would be a confirmation hearing for the State Board of Education and Early Development. He asked Mr. Fields to introduce himself.

JAMES FIELDS, appointee, State Board of Education and Early Development, introduced himself.

CHAIR STEVENS asked Mr. Fields why he wished to serve on the State Board of Education and Early Development.

MR. FIELDS responded that he is currently the president of the local school board in the Copper River School District. He said he felt it was an honor to be able to represent the school district. He said he cares about kids.

[8:48:24 AM](#)

SENATOR GARDNER asked about Mr. Fields' business background and residency. She wondered how long Mr. Fields has been an Alaskan resident.

MR. FIELDS responded that he has been a full-time resident since 2002.

[8:49:58 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGGINS asked how long Mr. Fields has been the president of the school board.

MR. FIELDS said for three years.

SENATOR HUGGINS requested success stories from Glennallen.

MR. FIELDS replied that the school district was one of the first schools to take on the Common Core curriculum. He highlighted staff development as another success. He said the district is currently in the top 5 percent in test scores.

SENATOR GARDNER congratulated Mr. Fields for turning around some of the small schools in his district. She requested tips other schools might use to do the same thing.

[8:52:01 AM](#)

MR. FIELDS deferred to the superintendent to answer.

SENATOR GARDNER asked if there is a preschool program in the district.

MR. FIELDS answered that the district has a Head Start program.

CHAIR STEVENS asked if Mr. Fields has children enrolled in the district.

MR. FIELDS said yes.

[8:53:57 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGGINS moved to forward name of Mr. James Fields for consideration for an appointment to the State Board of Education and Early Development before a joint session of the legislature.

CHAIR STEVENS found no objection and announced the name would be forwarded.

HB 87-EXTEND SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICE AGENCY

[8:54:21 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS announced the consideration of HB 87. [CSHB 87(FIN) was before the committee.]

[8:54:35 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PETE HIGGINS, sponsor of HB 87, introduced the bill. He related that HB 87 extends the requirement for the Special Education Service Agency (SESA), which was established in 1986.

REPRESENTATIVE HIGGINS explained the changes the House made to HB 87. He said that SESA was extended until June 30, 2021, and realigned under the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) for oversight.

[8:56:41 AM](#)

PATRICK PILLAI, Executive Director, Special Education Services Agency (SESA), provided information related to HB 87.

CHAIR STEVENS noted that the committee was waiting for a fiscal note and a Senate CS.

MR. PILLAI addressed the oversight of SESA, which he saw as a policy decision. He said if the oversight moves from the Governor's Council to DEED, and if the structure remains the same with the continuation of an advisory board, it will have little impact on agency operations. He said he preferred SESA to remain under the Governor's Council because there are no problems with oversight at this time. He emphasized that SESA requires funding because it is looking at \$400,000 in cuts.

[8:58:21 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS reviewed the differences between the Senate and House version of the bill. He said governance and funding are the two main differences that need to be worked out.

[8:58:51 AM](#)

MIKE HANLEY, Commissioner, Department of Education & Early Development, provided information about SESA. He spoke in support of extending SESA. He noted that DEED currently actively works with SESA, and audit concerns have been addressed. He said SESA functions very well under the governance of the Governor's Council. He thought that moving SESA under DEED would be cumbersome.

CHAIR STEVENS said the committee is awaiting a fiscal note. If the governance were to transfer there would be a need for additional staffing in DEED. He requested information about the fiscal note.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY responded that the DEED would be tasked with oversight of SESA and that would require another staff.

[9:01:14 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS held HB 87 in committee pending a fiscal note.

[9:01:30 AM](#)

There being no further business to come before the Senate Education Standing Committee, Chair Stevens adjourned the meeting at 9:01 a.m.