

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

January 8, 2014
8:29 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Bert Stedman

OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT

Senator Hollis French
Representative Lynn Gattis
Representative Lora Reinbold

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

INFORMATIONAL HEARING - DISCUSSIONS & PRESENTATIONS ON: "THE
COMMON CORE AND ALASKA'S ACADEMIC STANDARDS"

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

See 01/07/2014 Senate Education Committee minutes.

WITNESS REGISTER

DAN SULLIVAN, Mayor
Municipality of Anchorage
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided an overview of the 2011 - 2012
Education Summit in Anchorage.

TIM PARKER, Representative
National Education Association (NEA)
Teacher-English Language Arts
Fairbanks Lathrop High School
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented "Position Statements & Implementation Efforts in the Classroom" to the committee.

CHRIS BENSCHOOFF, Representative
National Education Association (NEA)
Teacher-Mathematics
Fairbanks Lathrop High School
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented "Position Statements & Implementation Efforts in the Classroom" to the committee.

CHERYL ROMATZ, Representative
National Education Association (NEA)
Teacher
Kalifornsky Beach Elementary School
Soldotna, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented "Position Statements & Implementation Efforts in the Classroom" to the committee.

MARY JANIS, Representative
National Education Association (NEA)
Teacher-Kindergarten
Anchorage Orion Elementary School
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented "Position Statements & Implementation Efforts in the Classroom" to the committee.

LAURA NEVADA, Representative
National Education Association (NEA)
Teacher
Anchorage Bayshore Elementary School
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented "Position Statements & Implementation Efforts in the Classroom" to the committee.

DENISE LISAC, Representative
National Education Association (NEA)
Teacher-Elementary Reading Specialist
Dillingham Elementary School
Dillingham, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented "Position Statements & Implementation Efforts in the Classroom" to the committee.

JUAN SAN MIGUEL, President-Elect
Alaska State Parent Teacher Association (AK-PTA)
Anchorage, Alaska,

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented "Position Statement & Implementation Efforts Amongst AK-PTA."

CANDY JO BRACKEN, Chair
Education Committee
Alaska State Parent Teacher Association (AK-PTA)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented "Position Statement & Implementation Efforts Amongst AK-PTA."

DANIEL G. THATCHER, JD-Senior Policy Specialist
Education Program
National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)
Denver, Colorado

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented "Legislative Role in Implementing College & Career Readiness Standards."

MICHELLE EXSTROM, Director
Education Program
National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)
Denver, Colorado

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented "Teacher Impact & Data Collections."

LAUREN HEINTZ, Research Analyst
National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)
Denver, Colorado

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented "Common Core Assessments."

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

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented "Overview of Alaska's Data Collection and Assessments."

CARLY WILLIAMS, Student Advisor
State Board of Education & Early Development
Palmer High School
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented "Student Perspectives on Alaska's Academic Standards."

KOBE RIZK, Student Advisor
State Board of Education & Early Development
West Valley High School
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented "Student Perspectives on Alaska's Academic Standards."

ARIEL HASSE, President
Alaska Association of Student Governments (AASG)
Mat-Su Career & Technical High School
Wasilla, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented "Student Perspectives on Alaska's Academic Standards."

TODD POGUE, Superintendent
Alaska Gateway School District
Tok, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Reviewed the Alaska Gateway School District's academic standards.

SCOTT MACMANUS, Assistant Superintendent
Alaska Gateway School District
Tok, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Reviewed Alaska Gateway School District's academic standards implementation.

BARBARA HANEY, representing herself
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Stated support for higher mathematical academic standards.

MARIA RENSEL, Founder
Interior Alaska Conservative Coalition
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: State opposition to the adoption of the Common Core State Standards.

THERESA KEEL, Superintendent
Cordova School District
Cordova, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Spoke in support of the new Alaska Academic Standards.

JAMES SQUYRES, representing himself
Delta Junction, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Spoke in opposition to federal government involvement in education.

PAMELA GOODE, representing herself
Delta Junction, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Objected to the use of the Common Core State Standards.

STACY BROWNE, representing herself
Delta Junction, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Objected to the Common Core State Standards and data collection.

MYRNA MCGHEE, representing herself
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Spoke against the Common Core State Standards.

ROBERT THOMASON, PhD., Superintendent
Petersburg School District
Petersburg, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Spoke in support of the Alaska Academic Standards.

JEAN ELLIS, President
Petersburg School District
Petersburg, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in favor of Alaska Academic Standards.

AVA VENT, Education Director
Tanana Chiefs Conference
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Spoke in support of Alaska Academic Standards.

BOB WILLIAMS, Teacher
Colony High School
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of academic standards and funding.

EMILY FORSTNER, Teacher
Wasilla Middle School
Wasilla, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Spoke in support of academic standards.

DR. STEVE ATWATER, Superintendent
Kenai Peninsula Borough School District
Soldotna, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of Alaska Academic Standards.

CARA HEITZ, Instructor
King Career Center
Anchorage School District
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Spoke in support of Alaska Academic Standards.

COLT FRANKLIN, Staff
Representative Lora Reinbold
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Questioned the adoption of the Common Core State Standards and potential student data collection.

JERRY COVEY, representing himself
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of Alaska Academic Standards.

MICHAEL CHAMBERS, Chair
Alaska Libertarian Party
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Spoke in opposition to the Common Core State Standards.

JUDY ELEDGE, representing herself
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Voiced concerns with adopting the Common Core State Standards.

DEAN WILLIAMS, representing himself
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the use of academic standards.

JAMES FIELDS, Board Member
Alaska Board of Education & Early Development
Glennallen, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of the use of academic standards.

JACK WALSH, Superintendent
Craig School District
Craig, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Spoke in support of raised academic standards.

LISA SKILES PARADY, Assistant Superintendent
North Slope Borough School District
Barrow, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Addressed North Slope Borough's graduation rate.

ANDY HOLLEMAN, President
Anchorage Education Association
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Reported on the availability of on-line information in the Anchorage School District.

SUNNI HILTS, President
Association of Alaska School Boards
Seldovia, Alaska,

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified about the importance of investing in academic standards.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:29:33 AM](#)

CHAIR GARY STEVENS called the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting back to order at 8:29 a.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Gardner, Dunleavy, and Chair Stevens.

Informational Hearing - Discussions & Presentations On: "The Common Core and Alaska's Academic Standards"

CHAIR STEVENS announced the business before the committee was an informational hearing on the Common Core and Alaska's Academic Standards.

[8:30:58 AM](#)

DAN SULLIVAN, Mayor, Municipality of Anchorage, Anchorage, Alaska, provided information regarding "Results of the 2011 - 2012 Education Summit." He said he would not discuss the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) other than to say it is important to note that Alaska has set standards that are higher than the current standards.

MAYOR SULLIVAN explained why he got involved with education reform. He questioned the value the state is receiving from the amount of money being invested in education. He discussed his history with the Anchorage School District's budget. In 1999 the budget had just crossed the \$4 million line and it increased by 100 percent over nine years with no increase in student

enrollment, nor an appreciable increase in student performance. He stated his concern with the increased need for student remediation upon entrance into college coursework.

[8:33:19 AM](#)

MAYOR SULLIVAN shared information on the Mayor's Education Summit. He said that statistics provided by the Summit's presenters were "jaw dropping" regarding how Alaska compares in educational performance to the rest of the nation. He noted the wide cross-section of presenters who shared the goal of better student performance. He pointed out that Alaska was statistically the lowest in the country in several educational measures. After two days, a consensus was reached that Alaska needs to raise the bar for education.

[8:35:40 AM](#)

MAYOR SULLIVAN stated that Alaska's proficiency levels were set too low. The Summit concluded that school districts should offer more choices in program offerings and have a great teacher in every classroom. He noted Finland's education model and the elevated status of their teachers.

[8:38:02 AM](#)

MAYOR SULLIVAN said the final conclusion from the Summit was to seek to involve the community in educational matters, because without community involvement, change does not happen. He explained what Anchorage has done to promote community interaction in order to improve student performance. He noted the formation of a new non-profit corporation called Education Matters Incorporated (EMI).

MAYOR SULLIVAN stated that Alaska needs a great teacher initiative. He proposed an endowment program to meet that need by paying back student loans of new teachers if they teach for eight to ten years in Alaska. He summarized Finland's program that invested in teachers for 20 years.

[8:41:43 AM](#)

MAYOR SULLIVAN pointed out the decline in education when the federal government was involved. He emphasized that Alaska must take control of its own standards.

CHAIR STEVENS commended Mayor Sullivan for his leadership in education. He noted a previous successful student loan reimbursement program in Alaska. He agreed that a similar program that focused on teachers is needed.

CHAIR STEVENS asked if the student loan payback incentive was part of EMI.

MAYOR SULLIVAN stressed the importance of providing incentives for people to go into teaching.

[8:44:52 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS introduced the members of the committee.

[8:45:09 AM](#)

At ease

[8:48:41 AM](#)

TIM PARKER, Representative, National Education Association (NEA), Teacher-English Language Arts, Fairbanks Lathrop High School, Fairbanks, Alaska, addressed "Position Statements & Implementation Efforts in the Classroom." He shared that NEA believes in the new Alaska Academic Standards.

MR. PARKER pointed out that high state standards are critical because they set the bar on what students must know and be able to do. He maintained that standards are not the entire answer.

[8:51:38 AM](#)

MR. PARKER addressed the six items that are important in implementing state standards: (1) trust (2) local autonomy (3) professional development (4) assessment (5) accountability (6) student opportunity. He summarized the hope for new standard implementation.

CHAIR STEVENS thanked Mr. Parker and introduced Mr. Benschoof.

[8:56:25 AM](#)

CHRIS BENSCHOOFF, Representative, National Education Association (NEA), Teacher-Mathematics, Fairbanks Lathrop High School, Fairbanks, Alaska, stated that he was the 2013 Alaska State Teacher of the Year. He spoke about "Position Statements & Implementation Efforts in the Classroom."

MR. BENSCHOOFF addressed a crucial distinction between standards and curriculum. He noted the need for standards to provide a common language for educational expectations. He said standards also need to be rigorous, but allow for an appropriate level of local autonomy.

[8:58:10 AM](#)

MR. BENSCHOOFF gave examples from his classroom of the use of local topics, such as forest fire management, while incorporating the standards.

MR. BENSCHOOFF described the Alaska Academic Standards as rigorous, relevant, and precise.

[9:00:52 AM](#)

CHERYL ROMATZ, Representative, National Education Association (NEA), Teacher, Kalifornsky Beach Elementary School, Soldotna, Alaska, shared information on "Position Statements & Implementation Efforts in the Classroom." She explained how she makes use of the standards in her classroom and gave examples of a bar graphing lesson.

MS. ROMATZ addressed challenges with the new standards and described the work involved for teachers. She suggested that more professional development days would be valuable.

[9:06:45 AM](#)

MARY JANIS, Representative, National Education Association (NEA), Teacher-Kindergarten, Anchorage Orion Elementary School, Anchorage, Alaska, presented information about "Position Statements & Implementation Efforts in the Classroom." She spoke in support of the new standards because they raise the academic bar. She said that developmentally appropriate assessments are very important tools for teachers to use. She voiced concern that the new standards would lead to more state-mandated testing and loss of teaching time.

[9:08:50 AM](#)

MS. JANIS stated that recent assessment requirements are very time consuming and result in loss of teaching time. She suggested that a solution to this problem is to appropriate money for substitutes so that teachers can administer tests one-on-one.

MS. JANIS explained that her main focuses are on the student and teaching the state standards. She stressed that high-stakes mandated test scores do not accurately portray a student's ability.

CHAIR STEVENS discussed NEA's program, "Legislators in the Classroom" and his experience in a kindergarten classroom. He expressed gratitude for kindergarten teachers.

[9:12:30 AM](#)

LAURA NEVADA, Representative, National Education Association (NEA), Teacher, Anchorage Bayshore Elementary School, Anchorage, Alaska, addressed "Position Statements & Implementation Efforts in the Classroom." She described the use of Alaska Academic Standards and Common Core State Standards in her classroom. She provided examples she uses as a general education teacher in an inclusion classroom.

[9:16:06 AM](#)

MS. NEVADA summarized how the use of the standards has enhanced her students' learning across all content areas. She described the time and effort it has taken her to develop standards for her classroom. She stressed the importance of allowing teachers to be immersed in the standards through continued professional development opportunities and giving them time for reflection and collaboration with peers. She requested continued legislative support.

[9:18:17 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS noted that differences between the Common Core State Standards and the Alaska Academic Standards approaches do not seem to be a problem.

SENATOR GARDNER asked Ms. Janis about the problem of testing taking away from instructional time. She wondered which test Ms. Janis would recommend and which she would get rid of.

MS. JANIS replied that a standards-based report card does not describe the whole child. She suggested cutting back on the seven one-minute screenings because they are too time consuming.

SENATOR GARDNER noted hearing that math teachers in her district had to manually enter test data, which was very time consuming.

[9:21:53 AM](#)

DENISE LISAC, Representative, National Education Association (NEA), Teacher-Elementary Reading Specialist, Dillingham Elementary School, Dillingham, Alaska, spoke about "Position Statements & Implementation Efforts in the Classroom." She noted that she is the Alaska Teacher of the Year for 2014.

MS. LISAC stated that the Alaska Academic Standards provide a strong foundation for public schools. She noted the importance of reading proficiency emphasized by the standards.

[9:24:28 AM](#)

MS. LISAC opined that standards mean little without quality teachers in the classroom. She stressed the importance of training, professional development, and evaluation. She called on all stakeholders to work together to provide world class public education for Alaska students.

CHAIR STEVENS asked how long Ms. Lisac has been a teacher in Dillingham.

MS. LISAC answered thirty years.

CHAIR STEVENS asked Ms. Lisac to comment about the availability of housing for teachers.

MS. LISAC said that housing is a problem in Dillingham because no assistance is provided to teachers to find housing and heating costs are very high.

SENATOR FRENCH asked why teachers are leaving or staying in Dillingham.

MS. LISAC answered that affordability is a problem, as is difficulty in traveling to other places.

SENATOR FRENCH asked if locals are being recruited.

MS. LISAC answered that most top students leave Dillingham and do not come back.

[9:28:21 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GATTIS noted that the task force went to Dillingham and was weathered in. She spoke highly of Dillingham schools, teachers, and community involvement.

CHAIR STEVENS commended the teachers who testified.

CHAIR STEVENS asked what was happening within NEA regarding CCSS and Alaska Academic Standards.

[9:30:16 AM](#)

MR. PARKER replied that at the national level, NEA is in favor of CCSS and is focused on student learning. He noted that 45 states have accepted CCSS. He described the difficulty of educating students in areas of poverty. He pointed out that Finland lacks low-end schools and therefore has higher rates of success. Finland also does not test students on a regular basis. The United States is very successful with high-end schools such

as charter schools, unlike Finland that does not have such schools.

[9:34:04 AM](#)

MR. PARKER related that NEA supports the current Alaska Academic Standards which are effective, rigorous, and easy to understand. He suggested that teachers are already teaching to the standards and raising the bar based on student abilities.

CHAIR STEVENS inquired about problems with teacher evaluations being based on student progress.

[9:36:40 AM](#)

MR. PARKER said that the teacher evaluation process is still being developed and implemented. He addressed concerns that teacher evaluations will be based on student test scores. He emphasized the need for educators to receive solid professional development about how to address success for their students.

MR. PARKER reviewed the six points needed for successful implementation of the Academic State Standards.

CHAIR STEVENS noted the presence of Representative Reinbold.

CHAIR STEVENS asked what help was needed to implement state standards besides money.

[9:41:01 AM](#)

MR. PARKER replied that support from the Department of Education and school districts is needed for such things as smaller class size, professional development, and time for teacher involvement in decision making.

CHAIR STEVENS thanked the representatives of NEA-Alaska.

[9:43:51 AM](#)

At ease

[9:50:23 AM](#)

JUAN SAN MIGUEL, President-Elect, Alaska State Parent Teacher Association (AK-PTA), Anchorage, Alaska, introduced himself. He said he would speak on the "Position Statement & Implementation Efforts Amongst AK-PTA."

CANDY JO BRACKEN, Chair, Education Committee, Alaska State Parent Teacher Association (AK-PTA), Anchorage, Alaska,

introduced herself. She said she would speak on the "Position Statement & Implementation Efforts Amongst AK-PTA."

MR. SAN MIGUEL reviewed PTA's history, mission, and resolutions.

MR. SAN MIGUEL related that some state standards are inconsistent, do not prepare students for college, and are difficult for parents to understand. He noted the importance of consistent statewide standards.

[9:55:26 AM](#)

MR. SAN MIGUEL brought attention to parents' confusion with national standards. Constant information about the failure of American education raises questions about future workers' capabilities.

MR. SAN MIGUEL compared national and state standards for several grades, noting the differences. He reiterated the problem of parents not being able to understand standards.

MR. SAN MIGUEL compared mathematics standards at the state and national levels.

[9:58:48 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS asked what scaffolding means.

MR. SAN MIGUEL said he did not know.

CHAIR STEVENS asked if a parent would see this information.

MR. SAN MIGUEL said yes.

CHAIR STEVENS agreed that it was confusing.

MR. SAN MIGUEL reiterated the importance of parents' involvement in their children's education. He related that National PTA does provide a parent guide to student success.

[10:00:21 AM](#)

MS. BRACKEN showed the committee the "Parents Guide to Student Success." She spoke in favor of having clear standards that parents can understand.

MS. BRACKEN addressed how parents of 8th graders can support their children at home. She explained how military parents can support their children's learning. She maintained that standards will make transitions between schools easier.

[10:05:59 AM](#)

MR. SAN MIGUEL emphasized similar challenges for urban-to-rural and rural-to-urban families.

MS. BRACKEN noted Anchorage's plan to change to an open school policy, which will also benefit from set standards.

[10:07:01 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GATTIS commented on the difficulty transitioning between grades because of curricular differences.

MS. BRACKEN agreed that the curriculum and the standards are separate issues.

[10:08:54 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GATTIS said the Anchorage School District struggles with an inconsistent math curriculum, a separate issue from standards.

MS. BRACKEN noted that the math curriculum was not up to CCSS quality last year, but now it is. Students now know that division comes in fifth grade. How that is accomplished is still handled at the district level.

She referenced a 2002 research review that concluded that there is a positive correlation between family involvement and student success.

MR. SAN MIGUEL commented that his daughter participated in a science fair and received an honorable mention. Now, her son, as a second grader, is doing science experiments at the house.

[10:13:07 AM](#)

MS. BRACKEN said children with involved parents and advocates are more confident and achieve more. When the community gets involved, students feel a part of it. She suggested that families should become familiar with school policies and activities, join the PTA, and advocate for children.

CHAIR STEVENS noted, in response to Mr. Miguel's question as to how many in the room were PTA members, about twelve or so raised their hands.

[10:15:32 AM](#)

MS. BRACKEN summarized ways to become involved in students' education. She said community organizing gets results; getting businesses as partners helps.

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD questioned if "updated national standards" are Common Core State Standards.

MS. BRACKEN replied that the updated national standards are PTA national standards. She reviewed the six PTA standards.

[10:17:43 AM](#)

MR. SAN MIGUEL shared a personal story.

MS. BRACKEN repeated that family involvement promotes student success. Teachers appreciate family involvement.

SENATOR GARDNER pointed out that the teachers in the room agreed.

MS. BRACKEN described the National PTA School of Excellence where families feel welcome and empowered to support student success. In this program questionnaires are sent to parents at the beginning of school asking for their opinions on a variety of subjects. The school responds based on the responses, with help from the PTA. Another questionnaire at the end of the year measures the results, leading to a School of Excellence award if warranted.

MR. SAN MIGUEL related that the National PTA endorses the Common Core State Standards; however, the Alaska PTA has not done so due to the complexity and diversity of the state.

CHAIR STEVENS commented on the enormous number of people who want to make K-12 succeed.

[10:26:17 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS asked if PTA is only involved in public education.

MR. SAN MIGUEL replied that any school can participate in PTA.

SENATOR GARDNER asked if there is a process for the Alaska PTA to endorse the Alaska Academic Standards.

MR. SAN MIGUEL said the statewide PTA convention is in March in Anchorage. The Alaska PTA will discuss standards at the board level first, then with the members. There may be a vote at the convention level.

SENATOR GARDNER asked where the convention will be held.

MR. SAN MIGUEL replied that it will be at the BP Center in Anchorage on March 20-22. He said the National PTA president will be speaking.

SENATOR GARDNER voiced appreciation for the PTA. She emphasized that the PTA is not just a fundraising organization, but supports education broadly.

MS. BRACKEN commented that fundraising is more a part of the local PTA's function. State level PTA is more involved with advocacy.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTIS said she didn't see a PTA presence in rural communities. She asked if there is any movement to get rural areas involved.

MR. SAN MIGUEL answered that they are always welcome. He noted that Nome has a PTA.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTIS asked if there is a move afoot to get smaller communities involved.

MS. BRACKEN said the PTA is working with NEA to get the word out, but it is a slow process. There has been a gain of over 3,000 new members this year.

[10:30:35 AM](#)

At ease

[10:36:47 AM](#)

DANIEL G. THATCHER, JD-Senior Policy Specialist, Education Program, National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), Denver, Colorado, spoke on the "Legislative Role in Implementing College & Career Readiness Standards."

MR. THATCHER said NCSL is a bipartisan organization with members from all states, including U.S. territories. Their purpose is to lobby the federal government on behalf of state legislative interests in education.

MR. THATCHER related that he worked on education financing and now works on academic state standards. He noted that nearly all states have adopted or revised new standards, including states that did not adopt Common Core State Standards. He said that

"college and career readiness" is not the most perfect term to describe the purpose of the standards.

[10:39:29 AM](#)

MR. THATCHER clarified the definition of "academic standards" as he would be using it in the presentation. It means state academic content standards, not curriculum. He referenced a memorandum from the Wisconsin Legislative Fiscal Bureau to the Wisconsin Legislature's Joint Committee on Finance. It reads:

Academic standards are benchmark measures that define what all students should know and be able to do in a given academic subject at each grade level. Standards are intended to ensure educational quality as well as fairness in that all students are expected to achieve certain minimum levels of knowledge, content, and skill. Standards do not dictate curriculum or instruction, which is a prescribed learning plan including instructional content, resources, and materials, and how teachers teach that content. However, standards are the foundation driving curriculum design and concept.

MR. THATCHER shared another legislative document, a recent Michigan House Concurrent Resolution related to funding college and career readiness standards:

Education standards define minimum expectations of what students should know at the conclusion of a course of study, but not the methods, curriculum, nor the entirety of what students are taught.

MR. THATCHER discussed the reason why legislation is not being introduced on standards directly. He pointed out that the legislature's role is not to formulate academic content standards, but rather one of approval and oversight over agency or board actions. He noted that in Idaho and Maine, the legislatures approved the adoption of new content standards.

[10:43:33 AM](#)

MR. THATCHER shared a press release from the Idaho State Department of Education.

The Idaho State Board of Education approved the K-12 Common Core State Standards in November 2010. For approval, one body in the legislature had to approve the standards. The Education Committee voted

unanimously to approve those standards today, January 24, 2011.

He said Maine is similar to Idaho in that substantive board action requires legislature approval. In 2011, Maine's legislature also approved the adoption of state standards.

10:45:06 AM

MR. THATCHER turned attention to a map of states that have adopted state content standards. He noted that Kentucky's Common Core State Standards were not written until 2010.

MR. THATCHER discussed the legislature's role in implementing academic standards. Since 2011, NCSL has undertaken a large effort to identify those bills in all 50 states where legislation has been introduced to further implement the adopted statewide academic content standards, or career readiness standards, or legislation that would provide legislative redress for state boards of education's decisions to adopt those standards. He said in 2012, NCSL identified 39 states and 117 bills that in some way moved forward or backward with implementation of standards. Of those bills, 52 became state law.

CHAIR STEVENS asked if the numbers represent pieces of legislation, such as California with 14.

MR. THATCHER explained that the numbers are the number of bills introduced, not passed.

SENATOR DUNLEAVY asked Mr. Thatcher if he had a bill number or name for the legislation pending in Alaska.

MR. THATCHER recalled that it was legislation stating that any further adoption of academic content standards in Alaska must receive legislative approval.

SENATOR DUNLEAVY asked when the bill was introduced.

MR. THATCHER replied that he identified the legislation in 2012. He referred committee members to a website where the legislation could be researched: www.ccrslegislation.info

10:49:26 AM

MR. THATCHER continued to explain that in 2013 the volume of standards legislation more than doubled. Legislation in all but

two states introduced a total of 264 unique bills and 29 companion bills. Of those, 89 became state law in 2013.

MR. THATCHER addressed which "policy buckets" are impacted by the adoption of statewide academic content standards. He showed the policy areas most frequently addressed by legislation in 2013. The areas of assessment and appropriation were identified as needing the most legislative action.

[10:52:54 AM](#)

He pointed out that one in five bills was legislative redress of the decision to adopt college and career readiness standards. They were bills that would prohibit agencies from further implementing college and career readiness standards. He provided several examples of legislation to show different approaches in policy. In Florida, HB 7009 requires the full implementation of online assessments for the next generation of state standards.

[10:55:15 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS asked what the horizontal bar indicates.

MR. THATCHER replied that it represents the number of bills introduced on that topic. The colors indicate where in the process the bills ended up. He added there was a large volume of legislation that was focused on the work that is required to make the content standards come alive.

MR. THATCHER referred to yesterday's discussion about the role of the federal government in state decisions to adopt college and career readiness standards. He explained the criteria that the federal government used for grant applicants. It contained a 500 point system: 70 points were given for the adoption of standards and assessments. He explained the breakdown of the 70 points.

[10:58:43 AM](#)

MR. THATCHER concluded that some states were uncomfortable with the federal government's role in standards. He emphasized that career readiness standards are broader than Common Core State Standards. Alaska, Texas, and Virginia have been granted waivers to the requirements of No Child Left Behind.

[11:00:27 AM](#)

MICHELLE EXSTROM, Director, Education Program, National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), Denver, Colorado, spoke about "Teacher Impact & Data Collections." She related that she works on college and career standards assessments, educator

effectiveness, and student data. She emphasized that teachers matter most for academic excellence, especially in low performing schools. She encouraged legislators to look at the entire career continuum of teachers.

[11:02:22 AM](#)

MS. EXSTROM pointed out that the successful implementation of college and career standards requires examination of current teacher policy. She suggested that legislators need to work with state boards and departments to ensure teacher policies and practices are aligned. She said to include a thorough review of teacher policies and practices to ensure teachers are getting what they need to implement the standards.

[11:05:14 AM](#)

MS. EXSTROM noted that the timing of policy changes is extremely important. Most states require that 50 percent of evaluations be based on multiple measures of student achievement. At the same time teachers' effectiveness on student achievement is being measured, the standards and evaluations are changing. She suggested taking a close look at standard implementation timelines and how they intersect with teacher evaluations. In some cases, states have decided to halt full implementation for a year or two to ensure assessments are going smoothly, particularly high stakes evaluations.

[11:08:36 AM](#)

MS. EXSTROM turned to the topic of education data. Teachers and administrators can use real-time data to make immediate instructional changes. It is possible to tell if a teacher is successful with the new instructional process, given the data. Parents can use data to make school choices and data can be used for accountability. However, there is growing concern from teachers, administrators, students, and parents about whether data is protected. State legislators are looking at ways to protect the data that is collected.

MS. EXSTROM pointed out examples that were helpful to state legislators. In Maryland the legislature created a governance structure that is responsible for safeguarding student privacy, including student data.

[11:11:44 AM](#)

MS. EXSTROM related that in Oklahoma, last year, the legislature decided to create statutory privacy assurances in HB 1989. This legislation is being used as a model across the states. She

suggested if legislators are concerned about privacy, they should establish legislation to address it.

[11:14:14 AM](#)

LAUREN HEINTZ, Research Analyst, National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), Denver, Colorado, addressed "Common Core Assessments." She reported that in the Common Core State Standard Initiative there is a requirement that new tools and resources be developed to help participating states implement the new standards. This includes instructional materials, resources, and assessments.

SENATOR GARDNER asked what "required" means.

MS. HEINTZ answered that "requirement" means encouragement or suggestion.

[11:16:03 AM](#)

SENATOR DUNLEAVY asked if NCSL assumes there is a cost to implement CCSS.

MR. THATCHER said that question is answered differently in every state. He offered to send Senator Dunleavy a fiscal analysis conducted by the Wisconsin Fiscal Legislative Bureau which concludes that state monies are not necessarily required or needed. The analysis states that local monies are sufficient to enact the new standards in Wisconsin. Kansas has legislation that would have backed the state out of the adoption of the CCSS and would have cost the state \$7 million. The opinion on cost varies from state to state.

MR. THATCHER added that the big ticket item for most states would be lack of online assessment systems and the cost for purchasing the technological infrastructure for that. He offered that NCSL can help states in making those decisions and directing them to further information.

MS. EXSTROM agreed that the actual cost varies state by state. For example, some states require additional teacher professional development and some states need new textbooks.

CHAIR STEVENS pointed out that in Alaska, the state is the primary funder of education.

[11:20:24 AM](#)

SENATOR DUNLEAVY asked if all assessment must be computer based or if there are other options.

MS. HEINTZ replied that there are other options, but the trend is to move toward online assessment.

[11:21:20 AM](#)

MS. HEINTZ reported that in 2010 the U.S. Department of Education announced a "Race to the Top" competition to aid in developing new assessments. It was aimed toward consortia of fifteen or more states that would sign on to new college and career-ready standards. The money would go toward helping to develop new assessments. Each consortium that applied had to designate one state to be the primary fiscal agent and there were several assessment and data requirements.

[11:23:10 AM](#)

MS. HEINTZ showed a map of the current assessment consortia and described the changes to the membership. She said the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) was one of the two major consortia that received the grant. She described PARCC assessment requirements.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTIS asked for a definition of "summative" and "formative" assessments.

MS. HEINTZ replied that summative assessments are final exams and they are what states are currently implementing. They are a No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirement. Formative assessments can be administered any time during the year and are placement and diagnostic tests.

[11:26:44 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS said it's hard to tell which states are members of PARCC and Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (Smarter Balanced).

MS. HEINTZ replied that Pennsylvania is the only state that is a member of both consortia.

MS. HEINTZ explained that Smarter Balanced also received "Race to the Top" funding. Washington State acts as its primary fiscal agent. Smarter Balanced is comprised of summative and formative assessments.

MS. HEINTZ related that there are also three alternative assessment consortia that receive funding. The two groups that qualify for funding are English language learners and students with significant cognizant disabilities.

[11:29:32 AM](#)

MS. HEINTZ reported that five states have adopted Common Core State Standards and are not members of a consortium.

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD asked about the project management services provided for Smarter Balanced, WestEd, which is housed at the Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, & Student Testing (CRESST) at UCLA. She also wanted to know to whom checks would be written to pay for assessments in Alaska.

[11:30:36 AM](#)

MS. EXSTROM answered that WestEd is a nonprofit research organization often serving as the U.S. Department of Education Comprehensive Center for the Western Region. They also hold a number of major research contracts. Each of the two assessment consortium is required to be affiliated with an organization that would be the administrative arm of the initial work. As the contract ends, the consortia have to transition to more permanent organizations; PARCC is transitioning to a non-profit and Smarter Balanced is transitioning to CRESST, a research consortium based out of UCLA.

She continued to explain that Smarter Balanced states will continue to have the same governance structure, where state representatives will be sitting on the governing board. However, the actual administration of the assessments will be housed at CRESST.

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD requested more information on CRESST and WestEd.

MS. EXSTROM offered to provide that information. She said both entities have numerous research publications.

[11:32:56 AM](#)

MS. HEINTZ said there are five states that have adopted CCSS that are not members of a consortium. Utah and Minnesota have contracts with the American Institutes for Research to develop their assessments. Alabama will use ACT's new college and career readiness assessment system, ACT Aspire. Oklahoma and Georgia do not have a formal contract yet, but are working with several companies.

MS. HEINTZ explained that there are key differences in the new assessment systems. There is more focus on a balanced assessment

system, the structure of the assessment has changed, and there will be more integration of technology.

11:34:20 AM

MS. HEINTZ showed a graph of what the Smarter Balanced assessment system looks like. The balanced system was created to have more consistent feedback so that instruction can improve and student needs can be addressed early and often. It contains a mix of traditional end-of-the-year assessments, interim assessments, and formative assessments to keep students on track.

She continued to explain that the structure of the assessments is moving away from bubble tests and multiple choice tests towards performance-based tasks, open-ended questions, and real-world problem solving.

She said the integrating of technology and online assessment allows for faster results, feedback, and data to keep teachers up to date with student learning. Technology provides for larger banks of questions and interactive features so tests can be varied and tailored to student levels specifically.

11:37:33 AM

MS. HEINTZ noted that states will have to address technology requirements, costs, and bandwidth capabilities. Pencil and paper options will become more expensive.

MS. HEINTZ listed the major considerations from states in approaching implementation of assessments: costs of tests, time spent on testing - which varies school by school and district by district, professional development for teachers and administrators, technology needs, data and privacy concerns.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTIS thanked the presenters.

MS. EXSTROM said there would be on-going presentations and resources made available to assist the legislature.

CHAIR STEVENS related that he had heard concerns about teacher evaluations being based 50 percent on student achievement.

MS. EXSTROM replied that there is a lot of concern about the new evaluation system. States that have found success with the implementation process have worked hard to be open and include teachers in the process, and allow for flexibility to determine what assessments would be used.

[11:42:07 AM](#)

MS. EXSTROM noted there is some question of whether 50 percent is the appropriate amount to be placed on student achievement. When the U.S. Department of Education put out the call for Race to the Top, they said a significant portion of the evaluation needed to be based on multiple measures of student achievement. Most states interpreted that to mean 50 percent. The research is behind in this area and some do not agree with the number.

She pointed out that the Gates Foundation funded a significant effort called Measures of Effective Teaching (MET), which concluded that an effective evaluation system is based 30-to-50 percent on student achievement. They also found that a valid predictor of teacher effectiveness is a student survey.

[11:44:37 AM](#)

MS. EXSTROM continued to say that the MET study concluded that the effectiveness of teaching can be measured. She noted that many states need to make sure their teacher evaluations are valid and meaningful.

CHAIR STEVENS noted that there are a variety of opinions on the standards. He asked if NCSL has taken a position supporting the standards.

MR. THATCHER answered that NCSL does not take a position on what policy path a state decides to go down. He said NCSL does take a policy position regarding state legislatures' relationship with the federal government. In 2010 state legislators came together and decided to craft a policy position to direct NCSL's efforts in interactions with the federal government as they relate to the development and encouragement toward common standards across states. He said NCSL's policy statement is available on its web page.

[11:48:20 AM](#)

MR. THATCHER summarized the main points of NCSL's policy. He said that legislators supported the voluntary efforts among states to develop common standards so long as they remain voluntary, state-led, and state-administered, and the federal government does not overstep its role and the U.S. Department of Education does not direct state decisions one way or the other.

[11:49:17 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS inquired when the webinar on the Privacy of Student Data would occur.

MS. EXSTROM said it was scheduled for January 17 at 3:00 p.m. Eastern Time.

CHAIR STEVENS thanked the presenters.

[11:50:19 AM](#)

At ease from 11:50 a.m. to 1:03 p.m.

[1:03:47 PM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS called the meeting back to order and invited Commissioner Hanley to give an overview of Alaska's data collection and assessments.

MIKE HANLEY, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Education & Early Development (DEED), Juneau, Alaska, introduced himself and presented an "Overview of Alaska's Data Collection and Assessments."

[1:03:59 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER HANLEY said Alaska has opted to adopt Alaska Academic Standards which are comparable to those being taught around the country. The Alaska Department of Education (DEED) allows flexibility for local school districts to adopt local standards, but the state has the responsibility to assess based on Alaska Academic Standards. There is accountability, but it doesn't restrict other standards that districts can adopt and focus on to make their curriculum relevant and contextual to their students; the Chugach School District and the North Slope's Inupiat Learning Framework are examples.

CHAIR STEVENS asked if it was true that Commissioner Hanley didn't have "substantial heartburn" over the fact that some districts are following Alaska Academic Standards and others are following Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

COMMISSIONER HANLEY answered that he has thought about that extensively, and because both standards are so similar he does not have heartburn. He reported that he sent a letter to all superintendents saying that if they are using some other curriculum they still have an obligation and responsibility to address the Alaska Academic Standards, "so that no matter where our kids go, there's a common expectation around the state - whether they are moving from urban to rural or back and forth - that there are common expectations among all of our schools for achieving certain goals."

CHAIR STEVENS asked if the testing of different standards was going to be a problem between districts. He wondered if everyone would be taking the same federal test.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY answered yes, and added that it's the state's responsibility to provide those standards and the assessment tools to measure students on them.

[1:06:14 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER HANLEY stated that he recognized teachers' challenges with all the assessments because some come at the state level and some that are implemented at the local level - all designed to inform instruction - to provide feedback to educators, parents, and the state.

He shared state-required assessments: a developmental profile in kindergarten that is done through observation of a student on readiness for school; a literacy screening tool for grades K-3 to give teachers the tools they need to make sure kids have the skills they need and, if not, address those; statewide SBA (standards based assessment) for grades 3-10; the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam (HSGQE), which is tied into the 10th grade part of the SBA, but continues on into the 11th and 12th grades if a student doesn't pass in grade 10; WorkKeys in 11th grade; and the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) is required every other year in grades 4 and 8.

He continued to say that this testing is not particularly onerous for any student; in fourth grade a student could end up with the NAEP and the SBA, but most students have just one assessment per year. There are also local formative assessments that some district determined they wanted to use in order to guide instruction.

CHAIR STEVENS asked if CCSS leads to an additional test.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY answered no; the state will take away the SBA, which is aligned to old standards, and put in a new assessment aligned to the new standards.

[1:09:47 PM](#)

SENATOR DUNLEAVY reported that yesterday there was testimony from two individuals that were on the committee, one in Massachusetts and one from Stanford, and both indicated that CCSS are less than rigorous from their perspectives. At least one school district in Alaska has adopted CCSS and the state of Alaska has adopted Alaska Academic Standards. He asked, if there

is a 49 percent difference in math and language arts, how they could be "the same." He wondered how the assessment would work. He asked if, by state law, DEED has the authority to determine the standards.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY clarified that the department has the authority to develop the standards; the State Board of Education (SBOE) adopts the standards.

SENATOR DUNLEAVY said the legislature ceded that authority years ago. He asked if the department develops the assessments, too.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY replied that authority is in statute and a regulation clarifies how it is done.

SENATOR DUNLEAVY stated that the local district still has authority over the curriculum. He repeated Senator Huggins question about what happens if students are not achieving. He asked if there is a possibility for optional assessments, similar to having optional standards. He inquired if DEED would entertain the idea of a school district using the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), or ACT or SAT, which are now aligned with CCSS in order for schools to have some autonomy and some innovation at the local level.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY answered there will be a responsibility for schools to be assessed on the Alaska Academic Standards using common assessments, so that students can be compared across the state. It's the only way that a comparison can be made, and it doesn't restrict districts from also using any other assessments.

SENATOR DUNLEAVY asked if the only way the legislature could disagree with that would be to not fund it or to change the statute.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY answered that funding could be taken away, theoretically, but it would also take away the state's ability to meet its constitutional requirement to assess. In previous testimony, he said that Judge Gleason identified Alaska's constitutional requirement to establish and maintain a system of public education as being four-fold: to provide standards, to provide an assessment, to provide oversight and support, and to provide funding. If funding was removed, it would be difficult to meet the responsibility to provide an assessment and there would be problems with the Elementary and Secondary Education

Act (ESEA), federal requirements to do assessments in grades 3-8 and once in high school after grade 9.

SENATOR DUNLEAVY asked if the Gleason ruling is now a guiding factor for the department in those four areas.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY answered no; it just clarifies what is in statute and what the Alaska State Constitution says.

[1:14:14 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD asked what federal tests are used currently.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY answered that Alaska is federally required to provide an assessment in grades 3-8 and once in high school after grade 9.

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD asked how many federal tests have to be taken under current Alaska standards.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY answered that doesn't change. The department gets to choose the tests in regards to Alaska's standards, but the NAEP is one that is given, monitored, and implemented by contractors that DEED has nothing to do with except to provide access to the children. Schools will continue to give standards-based assessments

[1:15:29 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD asked how many tests are federally mandated.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY answered the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), and an assessment of Alaska's Academic Standards. There is also one in regards to English Language Learners, but it affects only a small portion of students.

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD asked if DEED is going to be assessing exactly the same as the SBA when testing the Alaska Academic Standards, adding that she is trying to get an estimate of cost to the state.

[1:16:49 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER HANLEY responded that there are no additional requirements in testing; it's just shifting from one assessment to a different one.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY continued to explain that standards are what set the bar, goals, and expectations for students and assessments are simply tools to measure student progress. They don't teach students; they are a scale to see how they are doing. They will measure reading, writing, math, and English Language Arts (ELA). They are designed to inform how Alaska is doing as a state and in districts, and how students and schools are doing. The department has a responsibility at the state and federal levels to implement those assessments.

He pointed out that in order to be valid and reliable, assessments have to be aligned to standards; they have to measure what is being taught. It's very different than teaching what is being tested. He maintained if standards are valuable and will raise the bar, and students should learn them, that information needs to be assessed. It would be hard to argue now that schools are teaching to the test.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY explained that in April Alaska joined Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) as an advisory state. Alaska did not pay or receive any money to join SBAC, but is simply at the table as a part of the conversation in the development of an assessment. At that time, only two consortia were being built for the new standards: PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness of College and Careers) and SBAC - or Alaska could build its own. Smarter Balanced was determined to be a better choice than PARCC. Since then, several vendors have developed assessments that DEED believes could work better for Alaska.

He stressed that it was important that a well-informed decision was made, so DEED put out an RFP (request for proposal) to vendors to: provide an assessment that will adequately measure students on Alaska Academic Standards, build a unique assessment for Alaska, provide wrap-around services for SBAC, and to provide a scoring system. He explained that to purchase SBAC, the state had to purchase the test, which will need to be scored, a cost that has always been recognized. A contractor will be needed to score the test.

He continued to explain that the RFP was modified and the wrap-around for services for SBAC was deleted. The RFP ended up being for an assessment and five proposals were submitted. The next step will be to have a procurement evaluation committee evaluate the proposals and submit a recommendation. Commissioner Hanley said he will make the final decision. He noted that the committee met yesterday and today, and he anticipated having

something on his desk by next week when he will determine which assessment to use.

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COMMISSIONER HANLEY explained the legal responsibilities for a final decision on procurement. The proposal will be chosen through a rating and scoring method.

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COMMISSIONER HANLEY related that the RFP includes a few components; one is an adaptive test that is technology based, simply meaning everybody gets the same questions. If the student gets all the questions right it is a relatively short test because it keeps moving in a particular direction. If the student misses a question, it asks another clarifying question to find out where the student's understanding of this concept lies.

He said the other component recognizes Alaska's challenges with broadband and access to the Internet. The assessment has to be able to be delivered securely online, to be locally cached to save bandwidth, and it must be doable with paper and pencil. He said a survey was done in his district to determine the level of technological ability to deliver the assessment. The goal is to provide assessments within today's context - the technological age - which gives feedback sooner and makes the data more relevant. Another goal is to locally cache wherever possible and use paper and pencil where necessary, because there is a responsibility to assess all students.

CHAIR STEVENS asked about the privacy of student data.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY said there are privacy concerns with CCSS, but not with Alaska Academic Standards. Alaska does not have a requirement to share data with everyone, but it's much more expensive to do all the services in-house. Only data that is fully aggregated is shared with the federal government. Data is disaggregated to districts and schools. Data that is personally identifiable to a student it is never shared, even with legislators. The Alaska Performance Scholarship is the best example of that.

1:28:46 PM

CHAIR STEVENS summarized that no data that could be misused is going to be sent to the federal government.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY agreed. He said there is no increased responsibility from what DEED currently does regarding student data.

CHAIR STEVENS noted a great deal of concern surrounding that issue.

SENATOR DUNLEAVY asked what occurs if a parent consistently refuses to send their child to school during test times.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY answered that there is no data on that student and there are no state repercussions if a parent chooses that course. The department has the goal of 95 percent of students taking the assessment in order to provide good numbers for feedback.

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SENATOR HUGGINS recalled that under No Child Left Behind performance of the site was degraded based on the percentile of students that took the test, versus who were enrolled. He asked if there was a correlation between Alaska Academic Standards and No Child Left Behind.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY stated that Senator Huggins was correct. A 95 percent participation rate was one of the 33 categories that one had to meet to make adequate yearly progress. If a site didn't meet that, it was deemed "not making adequate yearly progress." The department changed the accountability system through the waiver; the new model still shoots for full participation, but it doesn't have the same consequences.

SENATOR HUGGINS said he read about some of the aberrational things that have happened in school sites skewing test results. He commented on the need to be sensitive to having people show up for the evaluation rather than not showing up because of some factors that would skew the evaluation based on the capability of students. "Parental prerogative is one thing; just not showing up is a whole different critter."

COMMISSIONER HANLEY agreed wholeheartedly.

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD asked which other countries are using Common Core.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY said none that he was aware of.

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD asked if this is an experiment in America now.

[1:32:04 PM](#)

COMMISSIONER HANLEY replied that he didn't know and couldn't speak to the Common Core; he said he could speak to what Alaska uses.

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD suggested that Alaska could have maybe saved some time and money by using what another country had already proved worked.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY said testimony has indicated that Alaska Academic Standards are aligned with standards in Singapore, Japan, and Finland, and other states that are high performing. The standards are not the same, but are aligned to international benchmarks.

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD stated that Finland didn't believe in a nationalized system. She believed that schools, principles, and teachers need autonomy to be able to respond to the culture and the jobs available locally. She inquired if homeschoolers will be required to do federally required assessments.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY answered if the students are part of a public school, the department has the responsibility of having them take the same assessments.

CHAIR STEVENS pointed out that those students are currently taking the federally required tests.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY said they are, but some homeschooled students are intentionally separated from that, and DEED doesn't pursue testing.

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD asked if Commissioner Hanley had seen Smarter Balanced and PARCC exams or had an opportunity to take them.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY explained that they aren't totally complete, but he is aware of what they contain and how they are being developed. He noted he has gone through sample exercises, but nobody is taking them yet. Some field testing took place last year and more will take place in many states this year, both for PARCC and for Smarter Balance.

[1:34:04 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD asked if the tests have been used in another country. She said America is basically developing these tests that are not tried and true in other places, yet.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY answered that for an assessment to be valid and reliable it has to be aligned to the standards that are being taught. If a test is used elsewhere, where there are different standards, it would not be valid. The Smarter Balanced test is aligned to the Common Core State Standards.

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD said the reason for asking is that people want to invest in proven outcomes. She requested a binder of all the tests that the state gives right now and information whether the cost was going to go up with new tests.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY responded that DEED has not put forward a fiscal note because the costs are anticipated to be very similar. He explained that because Alaska has very few students, assessments cost more already.

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CHAIR STEVENS thanked Commissioner Hanley for his testimony. He said the committee has heard from federal and state perspectives, superintendents, teachers, and parents, and now three students will testify.

[1:38:17 PM](#)

CARLY WILLIAMS, Student Advisor, State Board of Education & Early Development, Palmer High School, Palmer, Alaska, said she is also with the Alaska Association of Student Government.

MS. WILLIAMS said the new Alaska Academic Standards are an improvement over the old ones; they are more rigorous and more in-depth. The old standards left much up to interpretation by districts and teachers, so even though Grade Level Standards (GLE) were meant to ensure that all students have the same education, they varied from district to district. Now, if a student moves, the knowledge and concepts they are supposed to acquire remains the same statewide.

She explained that not only will students be taught a basic concept, their understanding of it, how it is applied in different situations, how it can be manipulated, and how to draw conclusions from it will be added - all at an earlier age than was required before. This sets students up to be successful later in their education. Already, students struggle during their freshman year in high school because this type of thinking

and analysis has not ever been required before. This will now ensure that students are ready for that jump from middle school to high school.

Another jump that Alaskan students face is when they step off the stage on graduation day. Alaska's old standards were only written to the 10th grade. Now students will be provided with quality education for the last two years of their high school career. Unlike the old standards, the new ones are designed with life-after-high-school in mind. They prepare students who are embarking into all walks of life, whether they have college, technical training, or entering the workforce in mind.

MS. WILLIAMS said this is what students want; they want to know that what they are getting in school is going to help them and prepare them for their later life. The standards are designed to equip students with the skills they need to be successful and competitive nationally.

She said the new state standards are based off of, and are just as rigorous as, CCSS, which 45 other states have adopted; our students are on the same level.

MS. WILLIAMS said that Alaskan education is keeping up with the pace of today. She questioned how they know this. The department gathered 230 educators from around the state at all grade levels to tailor standards to Alaskan students - to ensure they are relevant to the life they live. This process involved professors from the university system and data on what students were lacking. Employers from around the state had discussions about what students need to know when they enter the workforce and what they don't have.

She said, as a student, she is confident that the standards will create a strong path for success for Alaskans and Alaskan students.

[1:41:34 PM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS thanked her and said one concern the committee had heard throughout the last two days of hearings was that Alaskans want to make sure their children can compete within the country and around the world. He said it sounds like Ms. Williams thinks new standards are taking students a step closer to that reality.

MS. WILLIAMS agreed. She said the Alaska Academic Standards are tailored to Alaskan students and their life situations, which are different than the majority of the United States'. This

correlation with the CCSS is beneficial, because Alaskan students will learn what the students down south are learning.

CHAIR STEVENS asked if her term on the board was about to expire.

MS. WILLIAMS answered yes; it would expire in June/July.

SENATOR HUGGINS asked if she attends Palmer High School.

MS. WILLIAMS said she is an International Baccalaureate student there.

SENATOR HUGGINS said some have said the International Baccalaureate (IB) program should have a different set of standards, and asked if she believed that.

MS. WILLIAMS said she grew up in the public school system under the old standards. She just had the ambition and drive to push herself to take higher level classes at younger ages. If students are encouraged to do that at an earlier age, more will go to that level. She didn't know that additional standards were needed, because students were successful at IB under the old standards, and under the new ones they would be even more successful.

SENATOR HUGGINS said Mat-Su District has a Middle College where high school students choose to take college courses. He asked if that program has different standards.

MS. WILLIAMS said she didn't participate in the Middle College, but she didn't think it had different standards. Those students have to take high school classes, but it's another way for students to have another outlet. She didn't think the standards would have to be different. The new standards are set up so that students can flow into programs like these.

CHAIR STEVENS asked what her plans were beyond graduation from high school.

MS. WILLIAMS said she had a few colleges in mind in the Pacific Northwest and couldn't decide between three different majors.

CHAIR STEVENS thanked her and invited Mr. Rizk to speak.

[1:46:26 PM](#)

KOBE RIZK, Student Advisor-elect, State Board of Education & Early Development, West Valley High School, Fairbanks, Alaska, said he is also with the Alaska Association of Student Government. He thanked Ms. Williams for her testimony and said she is his role model.

MR. RIZK thanked everyone for understanding that the student's perspective is probably the most unbiased of all and stakeholders should include students, as well, especially in the context of education. They have some very fresh ideas.

He said the last time the standards were revised, a new face was in the Murkowski administration; there is a need for ongoing policy revision. He noted a quotation from Ernest Hemingway that reflects his idea of the evolution of education: "We are all apprentices in the craft where no one ever becomes a master." He thought that meant that educational content, teaching methods, and learning are not timeless things.

He related, as a student, he values very strongly exactly what he is being taught by his teachers, and today it is a challenge not only to make standards more understandable to teachers, but to make them relevant to students. He said he needs relevance and context to truly appreciate and to retain what he is told in class.

[1:49:05 PM](#)

MR. RIZK said they were here to talk about support for the new standards, especially because they have been tailored so uniquely for Alaska's students. They are much like the Common Core, but changes were made by Alaskan educators to make sure they fit best, because we are a very diverse and unique state.

He said students are very observant of the world around them and cherish up-to-date information. In school, their number one role models are teachers. Standards do not teach students; in fact most students will never even have direct contact with these standards, but they do something very crucial. They focus in on what "the very root" of what kids should know, which makes it easy for teachers to correlate the standards with their lesson plans. Students are always looking at how what they learn in school will impact their adult life.

He said the new standards also cover K-12 instead of K-10. These standards raise the bar for every single student in the state, and that is important. It is beyond dispute that in previous tests, when compared to counterparts across the nation using

national assessments, Alaskan students can definitely do better. The key to the new standards is that they were made to best benefit Alaska students. The department enlisted other organizations besides themselves and Alaskan educators in designing the standards. For example, the University of Alaska was consulted and asked a very simple question once the standards were completed: "Will students that have graduated high school needing at least these check points have to take remedial math, science, English, or whatever else they are having trouble in?" Their answer was, "No; these standards are new, fresh, understandable, and most importantly, relevant, and they will make sure that students entering the real world will not have to relearn what they have already been taught in high school. They will be equipped, because we not only have taught them to these standards, but we have taught them how to learn and think for themselves."

He thanked the committee for encouraging the student voice today.

[1:51:40 PM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS congratulated him for being a student member of SBOE.

MR. RIZK said he would start in July of this year.

[1:52:39 PM](#)

ARIEL HASSE, President, Alaska Association of Student Governments (AASG), Mat-Su Career & Technical High School, Wasilla, Alaska, said in 2014, approximately 122 million people will be five years old and supposedly entering kindergarten; Alaska represents .00008 percent of this global graduating class. With that comes a special responsibility, because not only must Alaska do what the rest of the world has to do in making sure students are proficient in math, language arts, science, and social studies, and that when they graduate high school they are competent to go into the work field and or college, but Alaska must also to prepare students for a world in which millions of applicants apply for engineering jobs, where a tech job is open for people around the globe, where colleges get thousands of applications from people who had classes in schools and cities, and where their graduating class represented 1 percent of the global graduating class.

MS. HASSE said Alaska's students will only interact with 10,600 contemporaries statewide; many of them will only ever interact with 20-100 students in their entire school career. She

questioned how to guarantee, in a broad state like Alaska where funding must be heavily given to transportation and heating, and where every day language barriers must be overcome, that every kindergartener who enters public school this fall has an opportunity at success. She said it is difficult when at the national political level, education seems to be given makeovers with more tests, more lecturing, and "it was good enough for me so it's good enough for them."

She related that on a community level, the battle is even harder. She asked how educators can do their best job when they commonly hear that the teachers' union is bad, or that teachers get paid too much, or that teachers are glorified babysitters, all of which are frequent comments.

She said that falling behind the global graduating class seems inevitable, but Alaskan students have been promised that educators will do their best to give each and every one an opportunity to be successful. That is what these new standards are about.

[1:55:38 PM](#)

She continued:

While these standards are fairly comprehensive in English and math, Alaska has decided to take charge of its own students because we are inherently disadvantaged and they need to be started on the top. The new standards proposed by the department are designed to give them the cutting edge. Over 40 percent of both math and English standards have been revised and improved from the Common Core. In addition, the standards are geared more towards a conceptual approach. Those kindergarteners are probably more efficient with their iPads than anyone in this room and by the time they graduate, a world without the Internet will be inconceivable, implausible, and ridiculous. So, rote memorization is hardly worth their time. Instead application and concept learning are what they need to translate the largest database the human race has ever had access to.

And of course, these standards are meant for 2014, not for 2020, or at least they shouldn't be. By having control of our own education system, we are able to circumnavigate the national bureaucracy that comes

with the countrywide mandate because we live in an ever evolving world. So, for example, students in the 3rd grade must have a working knowledge of basic multiplication and division, according to the new standards, but who knows what these new kindergarteners will need to know in 3rd grade. So, instead of waiting for an inefficient entity to recognize far too late that our children also need to understand statistical connections in 3rd grade, Alaska will have control.

As president of the Alaska Association of Student Government, I represent all of the students in Alaska. It is a very serious responsibility. As I stand before you I come with much deliberation, much research, and a lot of opinions. I stand here to do the best for my peers and all the students in Alaska. And so, I must ask myself if these new standards will allow these kindergarteners their opportunity for success. No, they won't, but they are the best beginning for education that this state has seen in years, starting with standards that are conceptual, comprehensive, and technological. Also, being ultimately meant for the 21st Century child, our legislature will begin to fully acknowledge the importance of education [indisc.]. Our schools will harvest community; it will seek more than test scores. It will seek extra-curricular community involvement. And our teachers will look at these standards and say lecturing and rote tests isn't me doing my best to fulfill these standards for my students. And our communities will say, 'Wow, our public education system can produce promising citizens. Education is crucial.' And no, this is not done with standards alone, but with a push, with a change, and, in this case, I think standards are a good start.

We should be able to say in 13 years, when these kindergarteners graduate, that they were each given their opportunity at success, that they have a chance among the 99.9992 percent of the global graduating class. So, on behalf of those 10,600 kindergarteners, on behalf of all the students of Alaska, adopt these new standards, adopt conceptual thinking, adopt comprehensive learning, adopt local control, adopt the 21st Century Alaska. We need you to not lose focus of the goal. It's not about making money, it's not about

political agendas, it's not about advancing the world of school, it's not even about test scores; it's about what is best for students, what's best for their and our future. And I need something more, something new, something for my time; I need a new standard, I need a new education system, I need a supportive state community; and so does every student in Alaska and so does that five-year old who will be entering your school system this fall. Thank you.

CHAIR STEVENS thanked her for her presentation saying that he knew she would do well.

[2:00:03 PM](#)

SENATOR HUGGINS asked her to think of three additional things, not including money, from the student's perspective that would help to initiate the standards.

[2:01:33 PM](#)

SENATOR DUNLEAVY asked if any of students participated in the original development of the standards.

MS. WILLIAMS answered no; that happened in 2012 and none of the students were involved on the state level.

SENATOR DUNLEAVY asked when the students first saw the standards in preparation for today.

MS. WILLIAMS said about a month ago over Christmas break.

MS. HASSE said she looked at them about two weeks ago and she has been reviewing them since.

MR. RIZK replied that about two weeks ago he started reviewing the standards.

SENATOR DUNLEAVY pointed out that the standards were already developed by the time the students reviewed them.

MR. RIZK said correct.

CHAIR STEVENS asked what Ms. Hasse's plans were.

MS. HASSE answered that she should be graduating in 2015 and had a few colleges picked out, predominantly on the West Coast. She said she was hoping to pursue a degree in engineering, science and economics.

CHAIR STEVENS asked Mr. Rizk what his plans were.

MR. RIZK answered that he would like to go somewhere on the East Coast and get into the medical field and start his own practice. After that, he said he will definitely be involved in public service. He said he already considers himself a candidate for the 2044 presidential election.

CHAIR STEVENS thanked all the students again for their testimony.

[2:04:30 PM](#)

At ease from 2:04 p.m. to 2:13 p.m.

[2:13:49 PM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS called the committee back to order and opened public testimony.

[2:16:13 PM](#)

TODD POGUE, Superintendent, Alaska Gateway School District, Tok, Alaska, shared statistics about the Alaska Gateway School District. He said the district supports the new Alaska Academic Standards and has been developing and implementing them since 2012. The district's curriculum committee believes the standards are more rigorous, specific to focused areas, and further address technology integration than previous Alaska standards did. He recalled that one of the teachers on the committee commented that the new standards move many of the 1st grade standards into the kindergarten program. He suggested it would be beneficial to look at Head Start and other pre-school standards to ensure that students are prepared at a level to enter school.

He noted that the new Alaska Academic Standards are intertwined with the newly required teacher and administrator valuation model the district is in the process of also developing. The district has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars the past two years on summer curriculum committees, adopting text and online materials that are aligned in the new standards. They also held district-wide professional development conferences and staff time.

SUPERINTENDENT POGUE said the district received, and appreciated, \$138,000 from the additional \$25 million in energy funding provided by the legislature and \$116,000 from the \$21 million for a secured school. In conclusion, he said the new

Alaska Academic Standards have evolved through extensive committees and public comment, and if refinement is required, then his preference is for DEED to work within the current document. After two years of development and implementation at the district level, the district does not feel that beginning an entire standard process from initiation is in the best interest of their students; it is all about the students and their needs.

CHAIR STEVENS said one of the committee's major concerns has been how Alaskan citizens can become competitive in the world and in the country. He said another important issue is local control and he asked how the Alaska Academic Standards would impact local control.

[2:18:06 PM](#)

MR. POGUE replied that the new Alaska academic standards give the district a guideline and the district's schools figure out the curriculum.

[2:18:43 PM](#)

SCOTT MACMANUS, Assistant Superintendent, Alaska Gateway School District, Tok, Alaska, said he wanted to review his district's work on the implementation of Alaska Academic Standards and assessments. He encouraged the committee to continue to support district efforts to raise expectations for students throughout the reform effort. He said DEED had been in ongoing communications with district-level people throughout the development and implementation of this new system. The department has attended meetings and workshops and he commended them for keeping the district informed. He said the district has been working on making this transition for the past several years, and working very intensively over the past two years.

He related that over the past two years the Alaska Gateway District had been engaged in the development of curriculum that is aligned to the new standards, to the revision of curriculum material, and to selecting and purchasing new material that meet the standards and are aligned to the new curriculum. The district has had staff training in, not only the curriculum, but also in the use of the standards to develop tools that help track progress and the use of curriculum. The district has designed several Internet-based tools that have worked with outside developers. The district is also engaged in a complete overhaul of their certificated evaluation system.

MR. MACMANUS explained that in small districts like theirs they work hard every day on the day-to-day business of providing a

quality education, and finding the extra time it takes to develop and implement curriculum is hard to come by.

He said addressed the importance of keeping things local and the difficulty in finding curriculum to fit the local environment. He related that the solution is to hire district staff to work part time in the summer to develop curriculum. In the past several years teachers have been asked to work 2-4 weeks extra in developing pieces of curriculum that will meet the new standards. They have adapted a teacher evaluation system to fit their own needs.

MR. MACMANUS said over the past two years the district has invested a total of 15,000 hours toward working on the standards. In addition, training costs and curricular materials put the district's investment at close to \$1 million, a conservative estimate.

MR. MACMANUS said the district is not asking for more money; it is just asking to continue the work it has already invested in. He noted that one of the problems in education, as he sees it, is that districts are continually switching efforts, and they really need to stay the course on something that has value - standards needed to be competitive in a global market.

[2:23:49 PM](#)

BARBARA HANEY, representing herself, Fairbanks, Alaska, said she was a former UAF faculty member with a PhD. in Economics and had worked with the Hickel administration in 1991 on the "first generation standards" developed by DEED. She said when she left university service she was a homeschool mother and helped start the IDEA program. She worked diligently toward different education efforts including the fight to preserve correspondence education. Later, she worked for adult learning programs and interviewed every student referred by UAF for remediation.

She opined that the new math standards were just "good enough" and the students who had just testified were "nice and cute," but she would "give it to you straight." The rules of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium say that the members use the Common Core curriculum, but it doesn't matter. The whole notion that our standards are "nicer and fluffier" is "simply absurd."

She said she was upset when she heard one student say that memorization was not necessary in the future world, because when you go to a university campus the first thing that determines if

you even get there is mathematics. The reality is that foreign students who can't even order a burger at McDonald's seem to find a way onto American campuses and excel and end up teaching as faculty in mathematical positions that our students have no hope of ever getting. She maintained that this is because math education has not been taken seriously in this state and the standards do not address any of those issues; neither do the Common Core State Standards. For instance, the third grade standards include something called division, but there is no underlying standard in the first and second grade that requires competencies in the other operations that support division. The state needs to look at the developmental appropriateness for the standards it has set.

MS. HANEY said she has forwarded written testimony with substantial evidence from other states where standards are being implemented and that have serious clinical issues emerging that stem and flow from the developmentally inappropriate process by which they are written.

[2:28:29 PM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS thanked Ms. Haney.

MS. HANEY added that she has very clear ideas of what to do to make things right and summarized that Alaska needs to get out of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium and rewrite the standards, especially the math standards. Those determine where a person goes in life.

CHAIR STEVENS said her testimony would become part of the record.

[2:29:22 PM](#)

MARIA RENSEL, Founder, Interior Alaska Conservative Coalition, Fairbanks, Alaska, said she is a strict constitutionalist and stands up for individual liberty every chance she gets. She said she first became aware of CCSS as the implementation of U.N. Agenda 21. She said the "Race to the Top" grants were a way for the state of Alaska to get a waiver from No Child Left Behind. She said this effort is designed to get around our representative governments, and Alaska is receiving "Race to the Top" grants by joining SBAC. She was concerned that the state's advisory role in SBAC puts Alaska in a precarious position, should other states be unable to meet future funding obligations. She also believed that the state needs to get out of SBAC.

She related that she heard an opinion from Barbara Haney with Dr. Ostrosky a couple of months ago that Alaska's new standards are simply Common Core with a different label. Simply put, she said the Common Core curriculum was written with the intent of transforming future generations of America, and while dressed in a series of lofty goals and innocent sounding objectives, this curriculum is nothing more than an effort to take away local control of education and place it in the hands of the federal government and the United Nations. Schools that implement it are mandated to collect data to be included in a federal longitudinal data base designed to track students through their lives and it has 400 data points for each individual. She thought that was a dangerous place to go.

She maintained that the Common Core indoctrinates students with values that are distinctly different from what most Americans would consider "American values" and contrary to the American Constitution, particularly against the 1st and 2nd Amendments. She reported that she has heard the curriculum will teach pornography, global warming as a scientific fact, and that terrorists are freedom fighters.

She cautioned against adopting the Common Core curriculum and asked the committee to look at fiscal obligations relating to SBAC.

[2:33:39 PM](#)

SENATOR GARDNER asked if Ms. Rensel had read the Common Core State Standards and if she could indicate a specific element in them that she objected to because they indoctrinate children with values different from our constitution. Senator Gardner said she had read large parts of it dealing with language arts and mathematics and hadn't seen anything like that.

MS. RENSEL replied that she had not read any of them; she had listened to opinions.

SENATOR GARDNER noted if there was a website link to the Alaska Academic Standards, Ms. Rensel should look at them there, because the new standards are based on skills not values. It has no curriculum requirements; people can use the Bible or the constitution, literature, or whatever the district chooses to help kids build those skills.

CHAIR STEVENS asked Commissioner Hanley if they were available on the DEED website.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY replied yes; the standards, as well as parent guides, are all posted on the DEED website.

MS. RENSEL said it was unrealistic to expect everyone interested in this to read the standards, because it's not something she could interpret. She said not everyone is an educator and she thought that was an effort to discredit what she said. People need to be able to form an opinion based on secondary information. She said it's obvious that this is a top-down set of standards that came from the administration. She wanted to decentralize power rather than centralize it and have individuals doing effective teaching throughout the state.

[2:38:38 PM](#)

SENATOR GARDNER said her question was not an attempt to discredit anybody, but simply to understand their perspective, and she wanted to see, in the source document, where this objection is coming from.

[2:39:09 PM](#)

THERESA KEEL, Superintendent, Cordova School District, Cordova, Alaska, said she had been an educator for 25 years and is certified in curriculum management and audit. She stated that her objective today was to give the committee a look at what the new standards mean to a small district like Cordova. She related that, clearly, the new standards do hold higher expectations for students in both English language arts and math, much higher than the previous Alaska standards held. They are not the apex of what students should be expected to achieve. The standards are a new baseline; they are the minimum expected in order for students to be successful after graduation.

She continued to say that Cordova students typically perform at or above the state and national averages in K-12, with a gamut of assessments on how they perform after graduation. Their elementary teachers are already feeling the shift up with the new math standards. They purchased new instructional materials that are aligned with the new standards this year and provided professional development for them. Teachers are telling her they have spent a lot of instructional time filling in content gaps that are the direct result of the shift of the math standards, so much so that they are concerned that their students will not be able to meet all of the new standards this year. They are also concerned that for next year they will still be filling in gaps as the students will be assessed on those new standards. The implementation bid for the client assessment results based on the new initiative could be significant.

She related that Cordova's challenge is of time and money; the time that needs to be invested by a community to vet the new instructional materials that are aligned to the standards and that are acceptable to that community, the cost of purchasing new materials, and the time and cost of professional development to be able to shift instruction to master the art of teaching the new standards. Far more resources will be needed for the teachers across all the content areas in order to provide the rich literary and informational texts necessary to reach the expectation of the new standards.

MS. KEEL said the cost of the new English language arts and content materials for K-12 is daunting, regardless of the types of resources they use. With flat funding from the state and an increase in operating costs due to inflation, she asked where the funds will come from.

She summarized that as a curriculum specialist, she welcomed the increased expectations that the standards require, but she was concerned about the short timeline to make the shift in the classrooms before students will be assessed on them, and then to be graded by the new accountability system. She was even more concerned that there wasn't adequate funding to properly educate teachers or to purchase materials for that instructional shift.

[2:43:39 PM](#)

JAMES SQUYRES, representing himself, Delta Junction, Alaska, said he objected to federal government involvement in education. He objected to its heavily regulating and monitoring the states to ensure their compliance with federal dictates. He said teachers and legislators and teachers had either sworn an oath or affirmed in the employment contract the duty to defend the U.S. and Alaska Constitutions that don't limit individual rights. He said the 10th Amendment says powers not delegated to the U.S. by the Constitution are reserved for the states. Article 7, Section 1, of the Alaska Constitution deals with public education and by participating in the SBAC, Alaska is in consensus with other states. He maintained that Alaska has a higher standard for the right to privacy than other states. He stated opposition to some of the requirements of SBAC.

[2:46:42 PM](#)

PAMELA GOODE, representing herself, Delta Junction, Alaska, said she objects to the Alaska Academic Standards because they are based on CCSS, which she objects to, and because they will drive

the curriculum and the whole education system. She maintained that the standards go against the constitution.

[2:50:09 PM](#)

STACY BROWNE, representing herself, Delta Junction, Alaska, objected to the design of CCSS by a businessman who is into data collection. She labeled the donations by Bill Gates and the University of Alaska "pay to play." She termed CCSS "socialism" and "unconstitutional." She related that she has seen the results of CCSS in Nevada where there is no curriculum. She shared a personal story. She objected to tenure and the teachers union.

[2:52:24 PM](#)

MYRNA MCGHEE, representing herself, Fairbanks, Alaska, spoke in opposition to CCSS. She opined that they are indoctrination, not education. She said the program lacks curriculum. She said she agrees with the previous speakers.

[2:54:34 PM](#)

ROBERT THOMASON, PhD., Superintendent, Petersburg School District, Petersburg, Alaska, said he supports the Alaska Academic Standards. He voiced appreciation for the Department of Education and Early Development and said he anticipates their positive leadership and guidance as Alaska moves forward with the Alaska Standards. He noted that Chris Benschoof, an Alaska Teacher of the Year, defined the difference between curriculum and standards, an importance distinction to keep in mind. He maintained that the focus on aligning content and instruction and ensuring depth of study and rigor will be positive outcomes of the Alaska Academic Standards. He concluded that the Petersburg School District supports the Alaska Academic Standards and encourages the legislature to ensure appropriate implementation support via the Department of Education and Early Development.

[2:55:48 PM](#)

JEAN ELLIS, President, Petersburg School District, Petersburg, Alaska, spoke in support of the idea of Alaska Academic Standards. She opined that the legislature needs to provide the Department of Education and Early Development with additional resources and personnel to assist the district in implementing the new standards. She stated that she does not support increased testing or tying teacher and administrative evaluations to test scores.

MS. ELLIS spoke in support of having local school boards continue to choose the curriculum to meet the standards.

[2:56:44 PM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS commented that he believes local school districts and boards will be making all the important decisions regarding curriculum.

[2:57:04 PM](#)

AVA VENT, Education Director, Tanana Chiefs Conference, Fairbanks, Alaska, testified in support of Alaska Academic Standards. She described the population of the area she works in. She opined that the new state standards have a narrower and more focused approach to meeting educators' objectives and will raise the bar for students. The new assessments will help to identify at-risk schools and students that need support. The individualized tests will better meet the needs of rural students. She voiced appreciation for the inclusion of a cultural curriculum.

[3:00:22 PM](#)

BOB WILLIAMS, Teacher, Colony High School, Palmer, Alaska, shared his credentials, awards, and successes. He noted he was the Alaska Teacher of the Year in 2009. He spoke in support of academic standards and funding. He said he views standards as a tool to becoming a more effective teacher. He suggested looking at standards in context with the effectiveness of the teacher, and the interaction between the student, teachers and standards. He termed the new standards more rigorous than current standards.

He emphasized that funding does affect the effectiveness of an education system. Large classes make it difficult to effectively teach. Some teachers are leaving the profession due to the impacts of funding.

MR. WILLIAMS concluded that the process of adopting new standards will be difficult at first.

[3:04:14 PM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS asked what the ideal size is for a calculus class.

MR. WILLIAMS replied that class size in the 25 to 30 range is ideal.

CHAIR STEVENS asked if there are disadvantages to having too small of a class.

MR. WILLIAMS said there could be challenges with too small of a class, but small classes are not found any more.

SENATOR HUGGINS asked how many students Mr. Williams has in his class currently.

MR. WILLIAMS answered 35.

[3:05:51 PM](#)

EMILY FORSTNER, Teacher, Wasilla Middle School, Wasilla, Alaska, spoke in support of academic standards. She recalled in her thirty-year teaching career, there were no standards for the first ten year. The first standards that came out were not very demanding, but the new standards are very demanding by comparison, both for students and for teachers. She emphasized that the standards are not the curriculum, but are used to design the curriculum. She shared a personal story about one of her students. She stressed that the new standards are not a part of a conspiracy, but are needed to raise the education bar.

[3:10:21 PM](#)

SENATOR HUGGINS asked how many students are in Ms. Forstner's class.

MS. FORSTNER replied that there are 15 students in two intervention classes and 33 in all three other classes.

[3:11:09 PM](#)

SENATOR GARDNER recalled that yesterday the question about what happens to students that do not meet the standards was asked and there was mention of intervention.

MS. FORSTNER replied that her intervention classes address students who do not meet standards in the area of writing.

CHAIR STEVENS asked how many years she has been teaching.

MS. FORSTNER replied 32; the first years on a reservation not in Alaska.

[3:12:33 PM](#)

DR. STEVE ATWATER, Superintendent, Kenai Peninsula Borough School District, Soldotna, Alaska, testified in support the continued implementation of Alaska Academic Standards. He related that he is not troubled by federal support of CCSS. These standards, as well as the new state standards, are a much

needed improvement for Alaska's schools. He said he researched successful schools in the country and discovered that they have a curriculum based on CCSS. Administrators have reported that the move to a higher standard has been difficult, but beneficial, and better prepares students for life after high school.

DR. ATWATER noted that many variables affect student performance, one of which is teacher quality, and that the best and brightest need to be attracted to the teaching profession. He spoke of the progress the teachers in Kenai were making and was positive about the future of education there. He concluded that the standards raise the bar first, and then schools respond.

[3:16:10 PM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS asked about short-term problems from raising the academic bar, such as embarrassment about the current test results.

DR. ATWATER agreed that problems exist. Teachers in Kenai are experiencing frustration at the level of prior knowledge students are expected to have, which they now lack. There will be a dip in proficiency at first, but schools should "weather the storm."

SENATOR DUNLEAVY asked if Kenai has adequate funding to implement standards.

DR. ATWATER replied that funding will be a challenge. Some of the pieces that are missing are funding for training and technology.

[3:18:35 PM](#)

SENATOR GARDNER recalled the debate about "raising the bar" during the Alaska Performance Scholarship discussion regarding curriculum inequities between school districts. She asked if Dr. Atwater has experienced that problem.

MR. ATWATER replied that there have been problems. The Kenai School District did not offer four units of social studies, but does now. He was optimistic that Kenai has an enormous capacity to improve.

[3:20:01 PM](#)

CARA HEITZ, Instructor, King Career Center, Anchorage School District, Anchorage, Alaska, spoke in support of Alaska Academic

Standards. She noted she was the 2012 Alaska Teacher of the Year. She opined that the state is headed in the right direction by developing more rigorous and relevant standards. She spoke of the relevancy of the new standards to her Health Care curriculum and students. She gave examples of how standards apply to real-life situations. She spoke in favor of continued legislative support for the Alaska Academic Standards.

CHAIR STEVENS inquired how long Ms. Heitz has taught.

MS. HEITZ replied that she has taught for 13 years.

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD asked who developed the standards and who can change them.

MS. HEITZ explained that Anchorage has adopted CCSS, which are similar to the Alaska Academic Standards. She described how she creates curriculum based upon the standards. She compared the old and new standards.

[3:24:06 PM](#)

COLT FRANKLIN, Staff, Representative Lora Reinbold, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, questioned the adoption of CCSS saying his research revealed costs, federal involvement, and the use of data mining in the gathering of information about students.

He said the cost of implementing the Common Core on a national scale had been estimated to exceed \$16 billion over seven years for technology, assessments, professional instruction, and new curriculum. He noted several states that have opted out of CCSS.

He discussed data mining as a concern on the national level, and noted that Representative Reinbold has established an informal advisory panel on CCSS in order to more fully evaluate it. He questioned whether Alaska was taking the correct steps to update its standards.

[3:30:45 PM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS commented that the privacy of student data is extremely important to this legislature and to this committee.

SENATOR GARDNER asked about a statement regarding evaluating the curriculum of CCSS. She instructed that CCSS is standards and has nothing to do with the curriculum, which is adopted by school districts, schools, and classrooms.

MR. FRANKLIN agreed with Senator Gardner, but he said the standards drive the curriculum.

SENATOR GARDNER understood that in Alaska, districts set the direction of the curriculum, not the state or the federal government. She wanted evidence that CCSS requested personal information.

MR. FRANKLIN replied that there were isolated incidences in other states, not Alaska.

CHAIR STEVENS asked who Mr. Franklin worked for.

MR. FRANKLIN replied Representative Reinbold.

[3:33:52 PM](#)

JERRY COVEY, representing himself, Anchorage, Alaska, spoke in support of Alaska Academic Standards. He shared his experience as an educator, from being a teacher to the Commissioner of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. He said he was involved with the development of the first education standards in Alaska, which, at the time, were cutting edge. He said it is appropriate to upgrade the standards.

MR. COVEY addressed the concern that the adoption of new standards is part of some bigger plan. He questioned why Alaska's standards should not be similar to those in other states or other nations. He emphasized that Alaska is developing its own standards and they will be similar to other education standards. He stated that it involves a viable process and the standards do raise the bar. He also opined that the standards are the foundation and are linked to accountability, technology, professional development, and parent engagement in their children's education. There are more tools to work with that are built on the new standards which will result in greater success.

He suggested that it will be difficult at first and he cautioned against lowering the standards.

[3:39:04 PM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS asked if Mr. Covey had any concerns about the impact of CCSS on local control.

MR. COVEY said no. He asserted that Alaskans are fiercely independent.

[3:40:29 PM](#)

MICHAEL CHAMBERS, Chair, Alaska Libertarian Party, Anchorage, Alaska, said he opposed CCSS for Alaska. He said he used to be a school teacher in the Delta/Greely School District, and respectfully asked that legislators allow the citizens of Alaska to vote to amend the constitution to bring diversity to education. Using Hurricane Katrina as an example, he said, at that time, 75 percent of the school districts, through emergency order, went to charter schools and relaxed their standards of education; as a result their educational excellence went through the roof. He opined that in many cases when standards are set, they set limitations.

He believed in the free market and felt bringing those systems to bear within the educational system would truly elevate education and get away from compulsory education. He said many people believe the same. Parents' apathy has been caused by the system taking care of them and setting standards for education such that school just becomes a day care center. He suggested giving parents back the responsibility of making decisions for their children's education.

He pointed out that Governor Parnell passed Executive Order 261 on data mining and it released the P20 database to the University of California whose president is Janet Napolitano. Personal information from the Permanent Fund Dividend (with over 400 personal data points) is being shared with the national information database. When people say data is internal to Alaska, that is not true.

[3:45:32 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD confirmed that personal information is sent to UCLA.

[3:46:05 PM](#)

JUDY ELEDGE, representing herself, Anchorage, Alaska, said she is a retired educator in Alaska and has spent the last five years of her career in the Copper River School District which adopted CCSS five years ago. She said she was on the SBOE when the first standards were developed, and she was the only "no" vote on the language arts standards. The reason she voted that way is because the standards were so broad that she didn't see what they would do to better education at that time. All the standards were broad, in general.

MS. ELEDGE said the standards were improved over the years with performance standards and grade level expectations, which narrowed the focus. Now, 20 years later students didn't perform

as expected, so CCSS was adopted. She admitted that the new standards in K-5 are much better than the old standards - the K-3 standards are excellent. She said she can now align them and she could not before. She added that while she is retired, she still works with a couple of rural school district teachers in doing this.

She opined that the major problems people who spoke earlier have are really in understanding the difference between standards and curriculum. She spoke in favor of CCSS and thought concerns had more to do with the curriculum that is being used to teach it, the data mining and other things. She addressed local control in curriculum.

MS. ELEDGE said she works in very small rural schools where often there is only one K-12 teacher; she didn't see any of those represented here. She asked how one teacher can teach CCSS to grades K-12, as well as to two or three grades in elementary and target all of the reading and math standards. She noted that often those teachers are not qualified to teach all grades.

She emphasized that it takes resources to teach new standards. She wanted to have support from the department for implementing standards, noting schools are understaffed.

MS. ELEDGE summarized that regarding CCSS, she wanted assurance that there would be quality instruction in the classroom, good, consistent, and viable curriculum, and a two-tier diploma that emphasizes the trades.

[3:52:11 PM](#)

DEAN WILLIAMS, representing himself, Anchorage, Alaska, spoke in support of the use of academic standards. He shared his career history, including a job as Superintendent of the McLaughlin Youth Center. He addressed a concern about the ramifications of high stakes testing related to the new standards. He spoke of finding solutions to gang problems, one of which was to keep kids in school. He asked the committee to consider the consequence of when students fail the tests and remediation doesn't work. He cautioned to prevent the adoption of new standards' raising the dropout rate.

[3:58:03 PM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS asked if Mr. Williams is running for school board.

MR. WILLIAMS answered yes.

CHAIR STEVENS noted his background on a school board.

SENATOR HUGGINS said he also served on a school board.

SENATOR GARDNER asked what is being done to keep at-risk kids in school.

MR. WILLIAMS shared information about the "Step-up School" made up of expelled or suspended students, which is operating successfully and did not cost extra money.

[4:01:31 PM](#)

JAMES FIELDS, Board Member, Alaska Board of Education & Early Development, Glennallen, Alaska, testified as a parent in support of the use of academic standards. He described seeing how the new standards work effectively with his own kids by the inclusion of critical thinking skills. He spoke in support of local control of education and raising the bar for education.

[4:06:59 PM](#)

JACK WALSH, Superintendent, Craig School District, Craig, Alaska, spoke in support of raised academic standards. He thanked the committee, commissioner, and the department for working on the standards. He spoke of how the star rating affected his district.

[4:10:22 PM](#)

LISA SKILES PARADY, Assistant Superintendent, North Slope Borough School District, Barrow, Alaska, addressed the North Slope Borough's graduation rate which is the highest in the state for a large rural district at 70.37 percent. She said there has also been a downward trend in the dropout rate which is currently 6.7 percent. She emphasized that their curriculum is culturally relevant to the students, leading to student success.

CHAIR STEVENS read a list of people who support and oppose Common Core State Standards.

[4:13:05 PM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS explained the roundtable discussion format. He asked Commissioner Hanley how the Alaska Academic Standards would be posted and shared.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY answered that the document is available on the Department of Education and Early Development website and is

meant to guide educators, rather than the general public. Parent guides are also available on the website.

SENATOR GARDNER noted challenges with understanding standards and expressed appreciate for the parent guide. She suggested that all school districts and school boards become familiar with the guide and communicate its availability.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY agreed that the information could be promoted.

CHERYL ROMATZ, Representative, National Education Association (NEA); Teacher, Kalifornsky Beach Elementary School, suggested ways to communicate with parents.

SENATOR GARDNER questioned the best way to reach parents.

MS. ROMATZ agreed that communication with parents is sometimes a problem in the elementary schools. She suggested educating the students about what the parents need to know and sending information home with the students.

ANDY HOLLEMAN, President, Anchorage Education Association, reported on the availability of on-line information in the Anchorage School District regarding standards and other topics. He noted the diversity of families and its impact on graduation rate and the budget.

[4:21:19 PM](#)

SUNNI HILTS, President, Association of Alaska School Boards, commented on the number of parents who do not have technology available. She stressed the importance of learning styles as they relate to the standards. She noted the probability that adopting standards will cost money, but it is an important "investment in the future."

CHAIR STEVENS thanked the participants and his staff.

[4:25:15 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Stevens adjourned the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting at 4:25 p.m.