

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 4, 2015

8:03 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Wes Keller, Chair  
Representative Lora Reinbold, Vice Chair  
Representative Jim Colver  
Representative Paul Seaton  
Representative Harriet Drummond  
Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Representative Liz Vazquez

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

PRESENTATION FOLLOW-UP: DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT REGARDING RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS GENERATED FROM THE HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING OF 2/2/15

- HEARD

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 2  
Designating January 25 - 31, 2015, as Alaska School Choice Week.

- HEARD & HELD

PRESENTATION: STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION ANNUAL REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

- HEARD

HOUSE BILL NO. 30  
"An Act requiring school districts to develop and require completion of a history of American constitutionalism curriculum segment; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HCR 2  
SHORT TITLE: AK SCHOOL CHOICE WEEK  
SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) GATTIS

01/26/15 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
01/26/15 (H) EDC  
02/04/15 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106

BILL: HB 30

SHORT TITLE: CONSTITUTIONAL HISTORY CURRICULUM  
SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) KELLER, SADDLER, LYNN

01/21/15 (H) PREFILE RELEASED 1/9/15  
01/21/15 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS  
01/21/15 (H) EDC, FIN  
02/04/15 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106

**WITNESS REGISTER**

REPRESENTATIVE LYNN GATTIS  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Introduced HCR 2, as sponsor.

DREW FORD, Staff  
Representative Lynn Gattis  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented HCR 2, on behalf of Representative Gattis, sponsor.

MARK HANLEY, Commissioner  
Department of Education and Early Development (EED)  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Responded to committee questions generated at the 2/2/15 regular meeting of the House Education Standing Committee.

SUSAN MCCAULEY, PhD, Director  
Teaching and Learning Support  
Department of Education and Early Development (EED)  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Responded to committee questions generated at the 2/2/15 regular meeting of the House Education Standing Committee.

ESTHER COX, Chair  
Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided the annual Alaska State Board of Education presentation to the legislature.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

8:03:15 AM

**CHAIR WES KELLER** called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:03 a.m. Representatives Seaton, Colver, Drummond, Reinbold, and Keller were present at the call to order. Representative Kreiss-Tomkins arrived as the meeting was in progress.

**PRESENTATION FOLLOW-UP: DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT REGARDING RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS GENERATED FROM THE HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING OF 2/2/15**

8:04:19 AM

CHAIR KELLER announced that the first order of business would be completion of a presentation from the Department of Education and Early Development (EDC) to receive responses to member's questions subsequently provided, available in the committee packet as a memo dated 2/3/15 5:03 PM, from Marcy Herman, Special Assistant to the Commissioner, to Janet Ogan, Committee Aide, with the subject line, "(H)EDC Follow up Responses from 2.2.15 Hearing," and three attachments.

8:06:21 AM

CHAIR KELLER directed attention to the committee packet, and the department memo of 2/3/15 responding to member's previous queries, and asked the panel for follow-up questions.

8:06:34 AM

REPRESENTATIVE COLVER stated that the response to his questions were satisfactory. He expressed concerns regarding the requirement that applicant's for the Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS) must complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form. He reported that constituents consider the requirement a violation of privacy. Having to fill out a federal financial aid form to receive a state merit scholarship seems unnecessary. He opined that "it's all about

data mining," and suggested that it may require defending by the supporting authorities.

[8:08:17 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD referred to the memo, page 2, question 7, to note the employment information for FY 15-16 and to request the FY 14 data.

[Further discussion with EED follows the next order of business.]

**HCR 2-AK SCHOOL CHOICE WEEK**

[8:09:13 AM](#)

CHAIR KELLER announced that the next order of business would be HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 2, Designating January 25-31, 2015, as Alaska School Choice Week.

[8:09:29 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LYNN GATTIS, Alaska State Legislature, introduced HCR 2, and deferred to staff.

[8:10:21 AM](#)

DREW FORD, Staff, Representative Lynn Gattis, Alaska State Legislature, paraphrasing from the sponsor statement, which read [original punctuation provided]:

House Concurrent Resolution No. 2 designates January 25-31, 2015 as Alaska School Choice Week. As state leaders it is incumbent upon the legislature to prepare the youth of Alaska for the future. Recognizing these dates as school choice week simply acknowledges the importance of effective education options for students. Alaska has highly diverse education opportunities through public neighborhood schools, public charter schools, public home schools, independent home schools, as well private schools. School Choice Week is a national celebration recognized by millions of students, parents, educators, schools and community leaders for the purpose of raising public awareness to the importance of effective education options.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTIS explained that the resolution is a means to acknowledge the legislative embrace for parents to exercise school choice, without invoking statutory action. It is a show of collective, legislative importance being placed on the subject.

[8:12:18 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD stated support for school choice. She opined that, if nationalized standards and assessments are adopted, driving the curriculum, choice will be negated by a "one size fits all" approach to education. She asked where the resolution fits into that picture.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTIS responded that the resolution celebrates the opportunity for parental choice among educational options, which include: private school, public school, home school, and independent home school.

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD reiterated concern that one curriculum will be imposed regardless of where a student attends, and opined that true choice really needs to be parental choice of the curriculum.

[8:13:30 AM](#)

CHAIR KELLER questioned the January 25-31, 2015, effective date.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTIS answered that an amendment to the date would be welcomed.

[8:14:18 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON referred to page 1, line 7, to paraphrase the language, which read [original punctuation provided]:

WHEREAS the state recognizes the critical role that an effective and accountable system of education plays in preparing all children in the state to be successful adults; and

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON said that accountability has been a legislative concern and noted that some of the educational choices recognized have no means for accountability, such as independent homeschools where parents choose the curriculum. He asked how accountability is addressed in the resolution.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTIS acknowledged that when government money is not received the accountability rests with the parents; as in the case of independent homeschoolers.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON agreed with the sponsor and expressed support for the resolution.

CHAIR KELLER concurred.

REPRESENTATIVE COLVER agreed with the sponsor, and suggested the need to amend the resolution to reflect dates for 2016.

CHAIR KELLER closed public testimony.

[8:18:05 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE COLVER moved Conceptual Amendment 1, as follows:

Page 1, line 1:

Delete: "2015"

Insert: "2016"

Page 2, line 7:

Delete: "2015"

Insert: "2016"

CHAIR KELLER objected for discussion.

REPRESENTATIVE SEATON asked for and received affirmation that the sponsor agrees to the amendment.

CHAIR KELLER withdrew objection.

[8:19:54 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS questioned the specified dates, and suggested that it may be customary that a specific week of the month be designated.

MR. FORD stated his believe that it falls on the last week in January, beginning on a Sunday and ending on the following Saturday.

CHAIR KELLER suggested setting the bill aside in order to confirm the appropriate dates.

REPRESENTATIVE COLVER withdrew Conceptual Amendment 1.

CHAIR KELLER announced HCR 2 as held.

**PRESENTATION: STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION ANNUAL REPORT TO THE  
LEGISLATURE**

[Includes comments from the Department of Education and Early Development regarding responses to questions generated from the House Education Standing Committee meeting of 2/2/15.]

[8:23:38 AM](#)

CHAIR KELLER announced that the next order of business would be the Department of Education and Early Development (EDC) responding to committee questions from the 2/2/15 meeting, immediately followed by the annual presentation from the State Board of Education.

[8:24:00 AM](#)

MIKE HANLEY, Commissioner, Department of Education and Early Development, referred to the memo dated 2/3/15 5:03 PM, from Marcy Herman, Special Assistant to the Commissioner, to Janet Ogan, Committee Aide, with the subject line, "(H) EDC Follow up Responses from 2.2.15 Hearing," and three attachments. He said the department presentation was completed on the hearing date.

[8:24:39 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD inquired as to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) [1965], [reauthorized in 2001 as] No Child Left Behind (NCLB) waiver, what the intent behind it was, and where the department now stands in relation to this federal requirement.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY said that it was anticipated that NCLB would be reauthorized in 2007; however, lacking that action, NCLB remains on the books. The U.S. Department of Education (DOE) Secretary, Ed Duncan, recognized that, as the educational bar approached the 100 percent proficiency mark requirement, all schools would fail and not meet the adequate yearly progress (AYP) standards. To handle this oversight, waivers were offered and a state holding a waiver would need to implement its own rigorous standards. Alaska created standards which were vetted by the University of Alaska (UA) to ensure compliance levels. The waiver also had the requirement that an accountability measure had to be embedded in the system and teacher evaluations were to be tied to student learning. The department made the decision to comply with the waiver requirements and, he opined, changing the accountability standards has proven to be valuable.

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD asked if the state standards had to be approved by the federal government.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY responded, "No." He pointed out that the Alaskan standards were adopted in June of 2012, and the waiver application was made later. Thus, the requirement to have rigorous standards was preemptively satisfied.

[8:28:13 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE COLVER said districts appear to be grappling with having the teacher evaluations tied to student performance, and reported that there is not a template in place. He asked what guidance and recommendations are being provided to districts.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY answered that the department has offered extensive support to districts and teachers and deferred for further comment.

[8:29:40 AM](#)

SUSAN MCCAULEY, PhD, Director, Teaching and Learning Support, Department of Education and Early Development (EED), said the department has offered assistance to help districts understand what must be done under statute and regulation, as well as to

identify the opportunities each district is allowed to determine how it will implement the requirements locally. Further, the technical model option, that districts may choose to adopt, is the student learning objective (SLO) method; which integrates student learning data as part of an educator's evaluation. If a district chooses to use this straightforward approach, the department provides the template, with overlays for implementation in stand-a-lone grade facilities, versus a combined grades classroom in rural Alaska.

[8:31:39 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE COLVER noted how many variables are at play. He expressed concern for maintaining consistency across districts and asked if a pilot project was considered prior to entering into what could be a difficult process for teachers. Further, he stressed the need to empower school districts and teachers, and cautioned that this requirement could have a negative effect on morale.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY said the program rollout was extensively discussed. He corrected his earlier statement to be that teacher evaluation requirements are not in statute, but reside in regulation. Prior to the NCLB waiver, there were eight evaluation measures in regulation and one was replaced with student learning data. He clarified that student learning was used, as opposed to student achievement in order to show growth versus just proficiency. Even in the midst of all the work that the department has done, it is recognized that tying the student learning component to a teachers evaluation does cause stress on the system. Honest expectations for testing of students, without the perception of punishing teachers is important, he stressed. With that in mind, the department has allowed districts flexibility on this component. A district may determine what SLO to use in order to measure student growth. He said that schools have chosen a variety of methods to meet the requirement; a charter school employing a particular curriculum may adopt a different approach from a public school. The scheduled implementation was for the 2015-2016 school year; however the renewal for waiver is coming up in March and EDC has had conversations with the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE)

requesting a delay. The goal for delaying the waiver is to allow districts to use the pilot program this year with no impact, or repercussions, and work out the kinks prior to full implementation, which is set to occur over a period of two to three years.

[8:36:17 AM](#)

CHAIR KELLER asked about the timing requirement.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY answered that EDC created the plan and put it forward to the USDOE, as a part of the waiver. If the department changes the plan it must be cleared through the federal agency.

[8:36:58 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE COLVER noted the sensitivity that the department has brought to the subject. He expounded on the need to establish the ground truth via feedback from the teachers and districts and to focus on fine tuning the process prior to a formal rollout.

[8:37:46 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD, seeking clarification, asked:

Is this a requirement - did the standards, accountability system, and ... data system, was that required or completely voluntary [for the waiver].

COMMISSIONER HANLEY said the department adopted state standards with no input from the federal government, in 2012. It was then decided that a waiver should be pursued, to avoid problematic aspects of NCLB compliance. The waiver required the following components be implemented: rigorous standards, teacher evaluations, and an accountability system.

CHAIR KELLER surmised that approval of the waiver does not equal approval of the standards.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY concurred, and said that the USDOE was concerned that the standards be rigorous, thus the department had the UA vet the standards with that in mind.

[8:39:35 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD asked whether the Alaskan standards were based on the federal Common Core Standards, and if so, to what percentage.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY answered that over 200 Alaskans worked to craft the Alaskan standards and heavily referenced the Common Core Standards in the process. Changes were made to over 40 percent of the English language arts (ELA) and mathematics standards. Thus, over 50 percent of the Alaskan standards are the same as the Common Core. He said it has been maintained that these standards are substantially similar. The changes that were made affected the input, however, without changing the outcome or expectations of the students.

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD stated her understanding that 95 percent of Alaska's standards track closely or are identical to the Common Core Standards and inquired as to who owns that copyright.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY responded that, if the standards are copy written, the rights would be held by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), comprised of education commissioners from across the nation. He pointed out that Alaskan Standards aren't significantly different in order to ensure a comparable education for students who will ultimately be competitive in the workplace or for college entrance. He agreed to provide copyright information to the committee.

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD expressed belief that the Common Core standards are copyrighted to the CCSSO, and Alaskan standards are basically identical. Further, she opined that the NCLB waiver was a federal waiver to close the achievement gap, and asked if the measure has worked, or has it resulted in an additional layer of bureaucracy and tied the hands of local schools through federal overreach.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY responded that the NCLB waiver was not mandatory and Alaska sought the waiver voluntarily. He pointed out that several states did not request a waiver, and Washington State lost its waiver. The department determined that holding a waiver would be more effective than having schools become non-compliant or identified as failing, under the NCLB requirements. The waiver also allows flexibility in using Title I funds. He pointed out that the legislature could direct the department to return to the AYP model.

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD restated the previous question of whether NCLB was working to close the achievement gap, and surmised that the waiver was sought because NCLB was not working. She also asked what the penalties are for noncompliance under the waiver.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY answered that the consequence for non-compliance would be a return to AYP requirements; no financial ties exist. He offered to provide a walk through presentation of the standards, for the committee's edification, as was presented in 2011 to the House Education Standing Committee.

[8:49:09 AM](#)

ESTHER COX, Chair, Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development, said that the board promulgates the regulations for legislation, when it is passed. She opined that everyone would prefer fewer regulations; however, with the adoption of a bill such as the Alaska Educational Opportunity Act, House Bill 278, a plethora of changes require regulations to be eliminated/replaced. Directing attention to the committee packet and the 21 page report, labeled "State Board of Education & Early Development Report to the Alaska Legislature, January 2015," she began her comments on actions associated with House Bill 278, addressing the repeal of the High School Graduation Qualification Exit exam (HSGQE). This measure had been anticipated and the affected students, who had previously received Certificates of Attendance, have been notified that they may now pick-up their diplomas. Additionally, the mandated, eleventh grade assessment, WorkKeys, was repealed and

replaced by a single assessment of the student's choice, with the cost being covered by the state: WorkKeys, ACT, Inc. (ACT), or Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT). Of course, she pointed out, a student may elect to take all three placement assessments, but the state sponsors only one. Improved student assessment participation is anticipated. The act also provided a teacher exemption from jury duty, during the school year, for staff at the one and two star schools. Further, allowance was made for students to challenge courses, as provided under the purview of the local district. The district is allowed to charge a nominal fee to cover administrative oversight costs, such as writing and proctoring the test. In response to public comment, the decision for issuing a grade is made at the district level, but the student does receive a credit for inclusion on their transcript. She reported that the board adopted regulations to implement the provision in HB 278 addressing district-operated residential schools. The regulations provide an annual period for districts to apply to operate a residential school. Residential schools that have variable terms now have flexibility in submitting enrollment figures for foundation funding purposes. Regarding charter schools, HB 278 addressed two aspects: busing and charter applications. She said the bill did not require student busing, but the protocol, which has been in practice for some time, is now officially recognized: if an existing bus route approximates in a way that is helpful in transporting the student to or from the charter school, the student is allowed to ride. Charter school applications are submitted to local school boards to approve/disapprove. House Bill 278 provides for an appeal to the commissioner, and, if the commissioner concurs with the local district, it's routed to the state board for final consideration. A one-time, charter school, start-up grant has also been offered. Two Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) grants were included in HB 178. One benefits the Alaska Native Science & Engineering Program (ANSEP), which has plans to expand the Middle School Academy over the next two years. The second grant was directed to the Southeast Regional Resource Center (SERRC) which also offers STEM academies. Last year also saw the enactment of House Bill 210, which required the state board to write regulations regarding restraint and seclusion of students. Finally,

regulations were written to require three mathematics credits for graduation. She pointed out that 47 of the 54 districts had already been requiring more than the two math credits that were in regulation. She said this sends a clear signal regarding the importance of math and is in keeping with the Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS) requirements.

[8:58:36 AM](#)

MS. COX introduced the Alaska Measures of Progress (AMP) program, which is the assessment model for the newly adopted Alaska Academic Standards; page 6 of the committee handout. Highlights of the assessment include: English language arts and math assessments in grades 3-10; two tests will be given, for a total of 140 questions; tests remain untimed but are expected to take about two hours; it is not required that the tests be given on consecutive days, which provides flexibility in the administration; students may be assessed on as few as 15-25 questions per sitting; the test is computer based but can be completed on paper; and the testing window is March 30 through May 1. The new standards are more rigorous and the scores are expected to be a bit low; however the 2015 scores will serve as a baseline and will highlight areas where the curriculum needs revision. Ms. Cox referred to Madeline Hunter [Madeline Cheek Hunter, 1916-1994], an influential, American, educator whose practices continue to be in wide used. She recounted a particularly helpful Hunter method known as dip-sticking, where a teacher continually checks a student's progress throughout a term to ensure academic progress. The ability to check progression of students is included in the new testing process. Short classroom tests on specific learning goals, comprised of eight to ten questions can be given throughout year, on an optional basis. The learning data will be sent to teachers, parents, and students, she said, and assured that no individual student information is available to the federal government. Ten aggregated reports will be made public, she pointed out. Specific accommodations, for assessment purposes, will be made available to students who qualify.

[9:01:41 AM](#)

MS. COX directed attention to the committee handout, [page 17], to address the Alaska School Performance Index (ASPI), the newly implemented, five star, school rating system, that replaces the AYP approach. She reported that 501 schools are rated, and the commendable result is that 93 percent of Alaskan students attend a school with a three star, or better, rating. The rating system is based on: student achievements in reading, writing and math; attendance; graduation rates; and, in high school facilities, student performance on college-ready and career ready assessments such as the SAT, ACT and WorkKeys. By the nature of the beast, she said, students who attend alternative schools have not had great success in education; the scoring system has worked against this population. Additionally, small schools which might only have two students eligible to graduate, and have only one qualify, thus showing a 50 percent graduation rate for the school, also skews the system. Adjustments have been made for both of these cohorts to appropriately reflect the effort that is being made in these settings. Reward schools are also being recognized, she said, and deferred to the department to explain the matrix for determining a reward school. The schools are provided public recognition for the achievement, which includes a display banner. She espoused that the standout aspect of the star system is that it is a positive rating system, where AYP was punitive and schools were easily identified as failing; one student's poor attendance record could result as failure for the school to meet AYP.

[9:05:08 AM](#)

MS. COX moved to the State System of Support (SSOS), which was implemented as a result of the five star rating system in keeping with the NCLB waiver requirements. The lower rated schools develop an improvement plan with the assistance of coaches who do monthly, on-site, five-day, visits along with the ongoing contact. The plan facilitates collaboration of school leadership, coaches, and the community. Schools are designated as priority or focus schools, as identified by need, but all are Title I identified facilities. The coaches are hired on a contract basis, and average more than two decades of experience in education. All have some experience in rural Alaska, and some coaches have been principals.

[9:07:27 AM](#)

MS. COX turned to the Alaska Learning Network (AKLN), pages 12-13, to state that the 376 online courses are managed by the University of Alaska Southeast's School of Education. Partnerships exist with 54 school districts. The districts pay the enrollment fees and grant the students course credit. Curricula offerings include: APS requirements; advanced placement; credit recovery; dual credit; and CTE. She opined that AKLN is a life saver for rural schools that don't otherwise have access to certain course work. Additionally, it is an invaluable outreach for professional development. The program operates on an \$850,000 allocation from state general funds.

[9:09:16 AM](#)

MS. COX said the successful, teacher mentoring began during the 2004/2005 school year and has 36 mentors focused on the important practice of teachers talking to teachers. She stressed that this is especially important for new teachers in rural schools where mentors can provide an experiential understanding of the isolation and broad subject matter required. Mentorship has also improved rural teacher retention, which has risen from an average of 68 percent to 79 percent. Half of the new teachers in the US quit prior to attaining five years of service, but Alaska has bragging rights to state that 94 percent of the mentored teachers have remained in the profession. The teachers have gained professional commitment and the results are greater gains in student achievement.

[9:11:34 AM](#)

MS. COX expressed excitement for the state-operated, residential, Mt. Edgecumbe High School, which she termed a wildly successful program offered in an encapsulated environment; a four star school. The campus includes: students from 107 villages; a student body comprised 84 percent of Alaska Native; 62 percent female; a 95 percent attendance record; and a 98.5 percent graduation rate. Finally, she said, through the current commissioner's efforts, K-16 education programs are

finally being addressed as a whole. Meetings have been held, and further collaboration planned, with the Board of Regents to bolster offerings of dual credits, address early childhood needs, and bring other collaborative efforts to the table. Foremost, the Career and Technical Education (CTE) program is being clearly defined and the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DLWD) also has a seat at the joint meeting to strategize implementation of the CTE plans. She encouraged members to review the statistics included in the committee handout, and pointed out the student data included in the report. The four year student graduation rate is 71 percent, the five year rate is 76 percent, and the dropout rate now down from six to four percent.

[9:16:22 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD asked if the state board adopted the Alaska Academic Standards.

MS. COX replied, "Yes."

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD questioned if it is correct to say that standards and assessments drive curriculum.

MS. COX answered, "Yes."

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD qualified her interest in the Common Core standards by paraphrasing from the book, Pathways to the Common Core: Accelerating Achievement by Lucy Calkins, Mary Ehrenworth, Christopher Lehman, published by Heinemann, 2012, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

The Common Core State Standards are a big deal. ... The standards are the most sweeping reform of the K-12 curriculum that has ever occurred in this country. It is safe to say that across the entire history of American education, no single document will have played a more influential role over what is taught in our schools.

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD expressed interest in understanding the boards input for the state's curriculum, as well as the possibility for local control. She paraphrased from the EDC regulations, 4 AAC 06.737, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

The commissioner shall select a standards-based test to estimate the degree to which students have mastered the state's ... standards for reading, writing, mathematics, and science. For school years 2012 - 2015, the standards-based test must test for mastery of the reading, writing, mathematics, and science standards described in the department's publication Alaska Standards: Content and Performance Standards for Alaska Students, as revised as of March 2006, and adopted by reference for purposes of administering a standards-based test through school year 2014-2015.

MS. COX explained that the board's job by statute is to select a commissioner and effect the regulations that the legislature puts into law, thus acting as a policy board with the commissioner as the administrator. She equated this to the way in which a local school board works with a superintendent. In further response, she said the board adopted the current standards, as designed by over 200 Alaskans. The board members had the opportunity to read, comment and make suggestions, prior to adoption.

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD opined on the unlikeliness that 200 Alaskans would come up with standards that are nearly identical to the Common Core. She asked whether the standards benchmarked internationally. Further, she asked for a comprehensive accounting of the costs for implementation of the standards spanning a ten year time frame.

MS. COX deferred.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY responded that the legislature has oversight of the EDC budget and offered to provide a ten year summary. However, he pointed out, no additional increments were necessary for adoption of the standards or assessments. The budget has historically contained an assessment line item. A procurement was managed via a request for proposal (RFP) and the new assessment contracts were obtained within the existing budget parameters. In regards to the cost for providing professional development and training, associated with the standards, he said these teacher support programs are part of the ongoing work of

the department and include a variety of topics including curriculum.

[9:24:49 AM](#)

CHAIR KELLER inquired about the technological evolution of the tests that students may choose: WorkKeys, SAT, and ACT.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY said that SAT and ACT are becoming computer-based tests, but are not attached to the standards. He pointed out that inclusion of these tests occurred in 2014, with the passage of House Bill 278, as an option to the required WorkKeys. A review would be necessary to ascertain whether the two assessments have been aligned to the Common Core standards.

CHAIR KELLER expressed interest in knowing what institution controls the assessments as well as those administered in grades 3-10, and how a vendor is selected.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY answered that, when a vendor is needed, the state procurement protocol is followed and an RFP is issued. He reported that five responses were received for the RFP to develop an assessment based on the Alaskan standards. The winning proposal was the Assessment Achievement Institute (AAI) based out of the University of Kansas.

CHAIR KELLER asked for the data points that are tested. Additionally, he queried about the distribution and security of data, acknowledging that it is not released to the federal government and assuming that onus is placed on the state and administering agency for data maintenance. He stressed the need to be proactive regarding protection of the constitutional rights to privacy.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY agreed to provide further information and pointed out that the contract with AAI is specifically to measure that the state is meeting, or moving towards, proficiency on the standards.

[9:28:27 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD recalled that House Bill 257 [28th Alaska State Legislature] was proposed to ensure the protection of student information, and continued in the current legislature in [HB 85]. She referenced an interim meeting on the subject where the department was encouraged to take measures against unnecessary data collecting and guard student privacy. She asked for clarification of how data is entered; in the aggregate or individualized. Referring to the ACT/SAT assessments, she confirmed that both have been aligned with the Common Core Standards, as indicated on the respective websites. The Alaska standards were initiated in 2010 and the member requested a full accounting of the costs for the implementation, teacher training, and other associated expenditures from that time to the projected year 2020.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY offered to provide a copy of the RFP, and explained that it is directly designed to measure how students are moving toward proficiency on the Alaska Standards.

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD requested an explanation of the components of the NCLB waiver.

CHAIR KELLER returned committee focus to questions directed to the board report.

[9:32:21 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE COLVER asked for the policy changes regarding teachers serving on jury duty.

MS. COX responded that House Bill 278 allows a teacher to defer jury duty from a time related to the school year to a period during the summer, if the school is rated as a one or two star facility. She said children who have difficulty with academia struggle even more so under substitute teachers.

REPRESENTATIVE COLVER clarified that the exception applies to teachers serving Title I schools.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY offered that some measures were already in place; however, under HB 278, the accountability system was

altered, and schools recognized for this exception are now rated as one and two star schools.

REPRESENTATIVE COLVER asked whether statutory authority would allow expansion to include other than low performing schools.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY said that statute provides for the exception and the department was charged with criteria to identify a low performing school.

[9:35:05 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND agreed with the previous member's comments that all teachers should be exempted from jury duty until summer.

CHAIR KELLER noted the sentiment and said the committee could consider changing the statute.

[9:36:48 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE COLVER referred to the board report, page 12, and the Alaska Learning Network (AKLN) that provides distance delivery, and asked about whether consolidation of online service providers has occurred, to avoid duplication of effort.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY explained that the intent behind AKLN is to provide a one-stop shop, partly attributable to the APS course requirements. The idea is to ensure that districts have options and can provide on-line courses to schools. However, the answer to the member's question is no, as some districts provide on-line courses through vendors that are locally chosen.

[9:38:18 AM](#)

CHAIR KELLER noted that the Board of Regents is meeting with the Alaska State School Board and asked for an understanding of the joint goals. The reportedly high number of students entering the UA system who require remedial courses has generating disparaging remarks from constituents. He asked what is

occurring to alleviate the situation, and pondered whether legislative oversight should be considered.

MS. COX explained that for years the state schools have functioned in two different boats: K-12 and postsecondary. As chair, she said one of her goals has been to unite state education onto one path. For instance, a student taking a dual credit course causes immediate questions to arise regarding which agency will teach the course, issue the credit, create the student record, and assume purview for the course. A subcommittee hashes out these types of issues prior to presentation before the full body, and she said the board would welcome legislative attendance. Although this could be considered grunt work, it is also an opportunity for university people to become involved with those whom it serves. A conversation addressing the needs of K-12 and university expectations has begun. For example, she pointed out how the new Alaska K-12 standards were vetted by the university system with the understanding that, by meeting the standards, students will be ready for college. This addresses the chair's concern that, currently, 50 percent of the students are taking [remediation] courses on arrival to the university. Also, on the agenda is a counseling component to assist the entering freshman. The Board of Regents generally works with the budget and building concerns, but working on the K-12 issues is a worthwhile expansion for serving the clientele.

[9:43:34 AM](#)

CHAIR KELLER stated that this is a critical area, and a crucial means for locating economic efficiencies in the education budget. He encouraged the board to continue exploring and broadening the pursuit.

[9:44:16 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE COLVER commented on the hard work required by district schools to meet educational standards. He opined, that rather than casting blame, it is time to roll up the sleeves and work, and said he is encouraged by the approach outlined in the report. The UA is an open enrollment facility and, as such, it

is necessary to assess and identify specific issues of entrant level students. He indicated a need for specificity regarding the remedial students in order to identify the problem rather than cast blame and try to refocus and retool the system. It would be productive to receive a spreadsheet from the university, with data to review, he said, in order to form worthwhile conclusions.

[9:47:36 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD requested permission to distribute three documents to the committee. She then addressed the topic of the statewide assessments to note that the original plan was for testing during the 2015-2016 school year, and asked why it was fast forwarded to 2014-2015.

MS. COX opined that the term fast forwarded is not necessarily applicable. She recalled that a baseline year was in question, and deferred.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY explained that, when the regulation was initially put forward several years ago, a tentative goal was to begin the assessments in the 2015-2016 school year. However, since that time, the waiver has moved forward. The department now anticipates putting this assessment in place in 2015, with no consequences, or harm, and the benefit of effectively establishing a baseline.

REPRESENTATIVE REINBOLD asked if the action had to do with any of the NCLB requirements or strictly a voluntarily action.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY clarified that the USDOE requires the assessment as part of the waiver to NCLB. When the waiver application was put forward the hope was to assess in 2014-2015, thus, when the opportunity arose, it was determined that the cost and benefit was worth moving the initial date forward, as part of getting out from under AYP.

[9:52:13 AM](#)

CHAIR KELLER inquired as to whether Zelman v. Simmons-Harris, 536 U.S. 639 (2002), had any impact on where the state went with the standards. He stated his belief that an element of NCLB relates to a comparison between the states regarding proficiency. Additionally, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test is imposed by the federal government and used for national level proficiency comparisons, and he expressed interest in knowing how all of these elements fit into NCLB.

### **HB 30-CONSTITUTIONAL HISTORY CURRICULUM**

[9:54:43 AM](#)

CHAIR KELLER announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 30, "An Act requiring school districts to develop and require completion of a history of American constitutionalism curriculum segment; and providing for an effective date."

CHAIR KELLER, speaking as sponsor of HB 30, called attention to the legislative findings and said the bill is a mandate on districts to provide a history segment in the curriculum that focuses on American constitutionalism. He stressed the use of the suffix "ism", which allows latitude for personal evaluation of the values that were fundamental in the founding of this country as recorded in the historical documents, namely: the Declaration of Independence, the first state's constitutions, the Articles of Confederation, the Constitution of the United States, the Federalists Papers, and the Bill of Rights. At a time when other countries are grappling to devise a constitution, America's documents remain an example for establishing national freedom, which is unparalleled in the world, he opined. The bill represents a soft mandate for schools to adopt and implement curriculum teaching the values of this country, and that a passing grade be a requirement for receiving a diploma. He was quick to add that schools are already offering civic and history classes, and this legislation would envision the addition of this component to existing course work. He asked members to review the bill, specifically the details set out in Section 3.

CHAIR KELLER announced HB 30 as held.

9:59:54 AM

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:59 a.m.