

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 10, 2015

3:30 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

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

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

PRESENTATION: SCHOOL RATING SYSTEM - ALASKA SCHOOL PERFORMANCE INDEX (ASPI); ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY ACT (ESEA)

- HEARD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

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

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented information on the School Rating System - the Alaska School Performance Index (ASPI), and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

SUSAN MCCAULEY, Director  
Teacher and Learning Support  
Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented information on the School Rating System - the Alaska School Performance Index (ASPI), and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

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**CHAIR MIKE DUNLEAVY** called the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Huggins, Giessel, Gardner, Stevens, and Chair Dunleavy.

**Presentation: School Rating System - Alaska School Performance Index (ASPI); Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)**

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**CHAIR DUNLEAVY** announced a presentation by the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) regarding the Alaska School Performance Index (ASPI), and the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA).

**MIKE HANLEY**, Commissioner, Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), introduced himself.

**SUSAN MCCAULEY**, Director, Teacher and Learning Support, Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), introduced herself.

**COMMISSIONER HANLEY** noted the Senate Education Committee requested information on two federal programs. He said two weeks ago the department extensively covered the Title I grant programs originally under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

**COMMISSIONER HANLEY** began by dispelling the misconception that DEED is a federal entity or is driven by federal programs. He related that he was going to begin the presentation by explaining the drivers of the department's work. He stated that the Alaska Constitution drives the department's work. It states that the department must establish and maintain a system of public education and ensure that students are successful in school and work. The department does that through four key functions: to fund schools (the legislative branch and the department), provide oversight and support, set standards, and assess the standards towards proficiency. Currently, the legislature provides \$1.5 billion in funding in order to provide those services to schools.

He described the state's partnership with the federal government to provide additional services and supplement the work of the department in order to expand opportunities for students. Some

of the federal programs provide help for students with disabilities, students who live in poverty, are homeless, or English language learners. Some programs have an academic focus and some focus on needs of the children so that the state can meet their academic needs. He said, overall, the state receives about \$232 million in federal funds, compared to the \$1.5 billion the state contributes. All of the federal programs combined require a 1.4 percent state match for federal dollars. He termed it a pretty good investment when considering how many needs of children are being met. He noted the department is authorized to keep 2 percent to 3 percentage of federal funds for administrative purposes. He noted that a part of the position of personnel shown in the presentation are federally funded. He emphasized that DEED does not benefit from federal funding, the students do.

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COMMISSIONER HANLEY showed a diagram that depicts the federal government's contribution to the department's budget at 15 percent. He stated that federal funding does not drive the department's work, how the department is organized, nor its infrastructure. He concluded, "It simply supplements the work that we do to allow us to better meet the needs of our kids."

CHAIR DUNLEAVY interjected that many do not agree that the federal government is not "the tail that wags the dog." He said if that was the case, federal money could be considered a block grant and the state could use it as it wished to. He noted other states are trying to get out of Common Core, such as Illinois and Texas. He opined that the federal government is taking a very active role in state education right down to the local level. He maintained that there are differing opinions, rather than misconceptions, and many opinions are rooted in fact. He said that many believe the federal government has too much of a hand in education. He argued that it is a perception, not a misperception and he remained unconvinced.

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COMMISSIONER HANLEY responded that his comments spoke to the department's role and what drives its effort. He suggested having a discussion on the work the department does with general funds to support and empower school districts that are not driven by federal money.

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DR. MCCAULEY briefly reviewed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which was passed in 1965 to provide

supplementary funding for elementary and secondary education, with an emphasis of fair and equal opportunities for students. The most recent reauthorization of ESEA was in 2001 as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). She noted the list of Title programs for groups of students who may not have equal access to education.

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DR. MCCAULEY began an overview of the differences between NCLB and the No Child Left Behind Waiver (Waiver). First of all, under NCLB accountability was measured by Annual Yearly Progress (AYP), whereas the Waiver uses the Alaska School Performance Index (ASPI). The objective when AYP was initiated was that 100 percent of students would be proficient by 2014. The standards for reading, writing, and math were standardized for every school and had no consideration for growth. Under Alaska's Waiver program, ASPI was designed and is in its second school year.

She related that NCLB used the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO), which are standardized yearly proficiency targets set nationwide. Under the Waiver, the state set the AMO's school-by-school based on the expectation that over a six-year period of time schools would reduce by half the percent of non-proficient students.

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She said that under NCLB there was increasingly little differentiation in the school accountability system since no school would make AYP. If a school did not make it in one area, they did make AYP. The vast majority of schools were not making AYP. There is much greater differentiation with the star rating system in the Waiver.

CHAIR DUNLEAVY said, "So what," and "Who cares?"

DR. MCCAULEY listed those who care when their school fails and targets are unachievable: parents, teachers, schools, and districts.

CHAIR DUNLEAVY said the "federal aspect" kicks in.

DR. MCCAULEY replied that it also does under the Waiver, which provides flexibility from some of the elements under NCLB. The greater differentiation with the star rating is painting a much different picture of how schools are doing. The most recent ratings consist of 75 five-star schools, 198 four-star schools,

149 three-star schools, 52 two-star schools, and 27 one-star schools - a very different picture than 98-100 percent of schools did not meet AYP. The Waiver allows the department to be more deliberate, focused, and informed about how schools are doing.

SENATOR GARDNER noted that parents could not determine the reason for failure of their school under the old system. She gave two examples of failed schools.

DR. MCCAULEY said that was correct.

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SENATOR HUGGINS asked which year the 27 one-star schools were rated.

DR. MCCAULEY said the 2013-2014 school year.

SENATOR HUGGINS asked for descriptors of those schools.

DR. MCCAULEY explained that the ASPI matrix would clarify that question. She briefly describe that a typical one-star school has a low number of proficient students, with low growth.

SENATOR HUGGINS restated his question to ask about the commonality of school traits.

DR. MCCAULEY said there are both commonalities and differences. In some schools there is large turnover of staff and leadership. Some schools are rural and some are urban.

SENATOR HUGGINS asked if there is size differential.

DR. MCCAULEY said yes.

SENATOR GARDNER asked if they tend to be in low income neighborhoods.

DR. MCCAULEY did not want to generalize without having the data.

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She related that under NCLB, school performance was based solely on proficiency, a pass/fail model, with a target score of 300. There was no recognition for student growth. Under the Waiver, school performance is based on proficiency and growth. Growth is 40 percent of the metric, as compared to zero previously, and is

measured in seven levels. Teachers say it makes much more sense to have expectations regarding growth and proficiency.

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She said under NCLB, there was no recognition for schools showing excellent growth. Under the Waiver, schools are rewarded for high rates of proficiency and growth.

The AYP process required DEED to identify schools for school improvement, corrective action, and restructuring and it no longer has to do this. The old system also required school improvement plans for all schools. The new system has a differentiated school improvement plan structure. One-star and two-star schools have different requirements for their plans than three-star schools have, for example. Four-star and five-star schools only have to create a plan if they are not meeting an AMO.

DR. MCCAULEY said there was an increased federal directing of Title I funds under NCLB, but no additional requirements for use of Title I funds under the Waiver. Finally, the funding structure under NCLB was not based on school performance. Under the Waiver, funding is provided to focus on lowest performing Title I schools. They are called "1003A Funds" and are used by one-star and two-star Title I schools for school improvement.

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SENATOR GARDNER inquired if Title I schools are one-star and two-star schools.

DR. MCCAULEY said no. A Title I school has a certain percentage of students living in poverty. The connection between Title I status and star rating is that when a Title I school is a one-star or two-star school, federal funds can be allocated through DEED to those schools for school improvement.

SENATOR GARDNER requested information on how many one-star and two-star schools are not also Title I schools.

SENATOR HUGGINS asked what Mt. Edgecumbe's star rating is.

DR. MCCAULEY said it's a four-star school.

SENATOR HUGGINS asked if it was a Title I school.

DR. MCCAULEY said she did not know. [It was determined that it is.]

SENATOR HUGGINS noted that low income is a factor than can be overcome. He expressed pride for Mt. Edgecumbe.

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CHAIR DUNLEAVY asked how much time the department spent on NCLB issues.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY asked if he wanted to know the number of staff.

DR. MCCAULEY explained why she does not have those numbers. She explained that she and her staff do not think in terms of that perspective - time spent within a specific federal or state program. She said her message to her staff of 70 is that they are there to support districts and schools.

CHAIR DUNLEAVY asked what percentage of staff is federally funded and what percent is funded by general funds.

DR. MCCAULEY referred to a document in members' packets entitled "Personal Services Position Funding Detail" which shows staff positions and their funding. She said on the third page it shows that 53.4 percent of those staff are funded through federal receipts.

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COMMISSIONER HANLEY pointed out that some positions are not connected to NCLB, but rather to Title programs, Child Nutrition Services programs, and others.

CHAIR DUNLEAVY assumed that half of their work is related to federal dollars.

DR. MCCAULEY clarified by example of a staff who does 17 percent federal work, 83 percent non-federal.

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DR. MCCAULEY turned to the ASPI Elementary/Middle School Indicator weighting for students in grades K-8. Attendance rates makes up 25 percent, academic achievement or proficiency makes up 35 percent, and school progress makes up 40 percent of the metric.

CHAIR DUNLEAVY asked about home-schooled correspondence programs.

DR. MCCAULEY said the metric for them is the same. She did not know how parents took attendance.

She continued to explain that academic achievement is based on the average of the percent of students proficient or above in reading, writing, and math. School progress is the progress from the previous year's standards-based assessments. Attendance rate is the average attendance of all students.

CHAIR DUNLEAVY said it was attendance, not enrollment.

DR. MCCAULEY said correct.

She explained the star ratings points. For example, 94-100 ASPI points equals a five-star rating.

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SENATOR GARDNER asked about the provision in HB 278 where teachers were exempt from jury duty. She asked what types of schools that applied to.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY said one-star and two-star schools.

DR. MCCAULEY showed the ASPI metric for high school students. The requirement for attendance drops to 10 percent, graduation rate is added at 20 percent, as is college and career ready at 10 percent.

CHAIR DUNLEAVY inquired if graduation rate is based on a four-year progression.

DR. MCCAULEY replied that it is based on a four-year or five-year cohort, whichever is higher.

CHAIR DUNLEAVY asked if six-year schools have been considered.

DR. MCCAULEY explained that there is a new metric for alternative schools which would reduce the amount of ASPI metric that is attributed to graduation rate. The metric has the same components but different percentages of emphasis. Growth is greater; proficiency, and graduation rate are less.

CHAIR DUNLEAVY stated that state law allows for two extra grades. He asked if there would be problems if a school wanted to add extra grades.

DR. MCCAULEY responded that for purposes of APSI a six-year rate would not be recognized.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY spoke of the department's work with alternative schools on the change, which better reflects the progress of their schools.

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CHAIR DUNLEAVY said there was no percentage that accounts for student or parent satisfaction.

DR. MCCAULEY said correct.

CHAIR DUNLEAVY said parents and kids could love a one-star school.

DR. MCCAULEY said yes.

She reviewed the 9-12 ASPI components and star ratings for high school.

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SENATOR GIESSEL said that the star rating has been in place for a couple years. She asked if it was successful and how it is measured.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY spoke from his experience as a school administrator and teacher in the past who saw no way to change AYP scores. He said the difference today is the level of engagement and empowerment schools feel under the new system. He said he sees engagement as an improvement.

SENATOR GIESSEL requested evidence of the difference it made to students and parents.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY reported that students are excited and proud of their schools.

SENATOR STEVENS asked if the College- and Career-Ready Indicator is based on the three scores - WorkKeys, SAT, and ACT. He inquired if dual classes enter into the picture.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY said before HB 278, WorkKeys scores were used, but now SAT and ACT are included, as well. It is based only on those scores.

SENATOR GARDNER commented that there is value in having a third party ranking Alaska students.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY emphasized that the goal is to ensure that students are successful in work and school. He clarified that WorkKeys provides career readiness information and the ACT and SAT provide college readiness information.

SENATOR DUNLEAVY asked if the department would be doing ASPI work regardless of federal funds.

COMMISSIONER HANLEY said if the department was incentivized to create its own system it would look like the Waiver. However, the department was incentivized to get out from under some of the NCLB components to create its own system. The Waiver is the result of flexibility given to the state from NCLB.

CHAIR DUNLEAVY reiterated that conversations with people indicate that the federal government is in charge of state education. He questioned whether it is the federal government that controls the larger proportion of funding and local control or not. He pointed out that grants require certain actions. He wondered why there is confusion over this issue.

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COMMISSIONER HANLEY said the department has mandates and accountability measures related to state funding. He maintained that even if there were no NCLB or Waiver, the department would still measure and support schools. There is a constitutional mandate to do so as part of maintaining public education. He said the state's education system probably is as it is due to the Waiver. He said when he was a teacher he was certain his source of ills came from the administration in the Anchorage School District. Then, as an administrator, he said he was confident that all troubles came from the state. He believes now, as the commissioner, that it must be the federal government.

He stressed that he is doing things because he is mandated to do them by statute, such as providing assessments. Some mandates are from the federal government, but they don't drive the core work the department does. He concluded that he does not wake up every day thinking about accountability assessments.

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There being nothing further to come before the committee, Chair Dunleavy adjourned the Senate Education Standing Committee at 4:26 p.m.