

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 10, 2015

3:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Gary Stevens

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATIONS: ALASKA'S UNIVERSITY FOR ALASKA'S SCHOOLS 2015;
EDUCATOR QUALITY AND QUANTITY; TARGETING STUDENT SUCCESS THROUGH
UNIVERSITY COLLABORATION AND TUTORING INTERVENTION

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

JO HECKMAN, Chair
University of Alaska Board of Regents
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented information on the University of Alaska's Schools 2015 related to teacher education.

MICHAEL POWERS, Chair
Academic and Student Affairs Committee
University of Alaska Board of Regents
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented information on the University of Alaska's Schools 2015 related to teacher education.

STEVE ATWATER, Associate Vice President for K-12 Outreach
University of Alaska - Fairbanks
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented information on the training and retention of teachers.

JERRY COVEY, Consultant

JSC Consulting on behalf of Citizens for the Educational Advancement of Alaska's Children (CEAAC)

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented information on Educator Quality and Quantity.

BARBARA ADAMS, Ph.D.

Consultant

Adams Analytic Solutions

Nenana, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented information on Educator Quality and Quantity.

TY MASE, Superintendent

Lake & Peninsula School District (LPSD)

King Salmon, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented information on Targeting Student Success through University Collaboration and Tutoring Intervention.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[3:30:35 PM](#)

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 Giessel, Gardner, and Chair Dunleavy.

Presentations: Alaska's University for Alaska's Schools 2015; Educator Quality and Quantity; Targeting Student Success through University Collaboration and Tutoring Intervention

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CHAIR DUNLEAVY announced that there would be three presentations related to the topic of recruiting and training teachers.

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JO HECKMAN, Chair, University of Alaska Board of Regents, presented information on the University of Alaska's Schools 2015 related to teacher education. She introduced Mr. Powers and Mr. Atwater and others in the audience from the university. She pointed out that AS 14.40.190(b) was signed into law in 2008 and requires the University Board of Regents to present biannually to the Alaska State Legislature a report that describes the

efforts of the university to attract, train, and retain qualified public school teachers. She said the report will provide data on teacher education programs and graduates, and will discuss initiatives across the system to encourage students to enter teaching.

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MICHAEL POWERS, Chair, Academic and Student Affairs Committee, University of Alaska Board of Regents, presented information on the University of Alaska's Schools 2015 related to teacher education. He discussed "Shaping Alaska's Future," the university's strategic plan with a focus on quality of life and economic potential. In 2011, under the direction of Pat Gamble, the university embarked on the strategic plan. Many meetings and a broad survey showed the need for accountability and measurement within education, the likelihood of continuing budget restraints, and the growing choices students have due to mobility and distance delivery.

He related that the two-year effort led to five themes: student achievement, productive partnerships with Alaska schools, productive partnerships with public and private industries, research and development to enhance economic growth, and accountability to Alaskans relative to partnerships with Alaska schools. The focus is on three key outcomes: high school graduation requirements are clearly aligned and communicated, teacher retention in rural Alaska will equal that of urban Alaska, and strategic planning will focus on partnerships to improve the college-going rate.

He said the plan would encompass the three major campuses, UAA, UAF and UAS, who will collaborate on targeting and training teachers.

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STEVE ATWATER, Associate Vice President for K-12 Outreach, University of Alaska - Fairbanks, presented information on the training and retention of teachers. He said the university's two schools of education and one college of education prepare about a third of the number of teachers needed for Alaska. The university is working to increase its number of education graduates to about 50 percent. He referred to table 1 on page 2 of a handout to show how many education program graduates there were from 2007 to 2014. In 2014 there were 237 graduates, the second highest number. Chart 1 on the same page shows the level of endorsement during the same period of time.

He related that chart 2 on page 3 shows a declining number of special education graduates, overall, but the initial number of certificates for special education remains flat. He speculated that the cause for the decline was heavier caseloads and more students with severe disabilities.

He drew attention to chart 3 and tables 2-5, which show where 2013-14 new graduates are going for employment. Shown are various careers and wages and disparity in wages five years after employment, depending on the field.

He spoke of Alaska Native Educators and the successes they have as teachers who understand the culture of their students. There is a positive effect for students who have a teacher who shares their culture. There is a need for the state to prepare more Alaska Native teachers. He reported that last year the university prepared the highest number of Alaska Native teachers in the past eight years. Chart 4 on page 6 shows a positive trend in an increase of Alaska Native teachers. He described some of the efforts to attract and retain Native teachers: federal grant funding to UAF for Native teacher education, strengthening teacher preparation, and UAA partnerships with rural school districts. There is also outreach from each of the universities.

SENATOR GIESSEL noted similar programs in nursing and engineering. She asked how many Native students return to rural areas to teach. She noted in her experience, teachers in rural areas come from other states. She asked if the university tracks the number of Native teachers who go to rural communities.

MR. ATWATER said he would provide that information shortly in the presentation. He pointed out that the overall number of Native teachers is miniscule compared to the total number of teachers, however, the trend to employ Native teachers in rural schools is positive.

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MS. HECKMAN discussed the employer ratings of UA program graduates in the classroom and how the graduates view themselves. She provided survey data in table 5 on page 7. The vast majority of teachers are doing very well in their new positions. Table 6 on page 8 shows UA program graduates' self-assessment of skills. The information is used to make improvements in the teacher preparation program.

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MR. POWERS addressed the university's partnership with schools - theme two of the strategic plan. He shared a survey the board did with 54 school districts regarding teacher preparation. The key issue that came up was the new teacher's relationship with a senior teacher or mentor.

CHAIR DUNLEAVY noted the arrival of Senator Huggins.

MR. ATWATER continued with the discussion of the importance of Alaska-prepared educators in remote schools. Teachers trained in Alaska tend to stay longer in rural sites, which helps the schools have better success. He referred to table 7 on page 9 that shows the importance of teacher stability. As a result, the university is sending more pre-service teachers to rural Alaska schools for practicums and student teaching.

He discussed the challenge of staffing schools with the best and brightest teachers. Across the country there is a dwindling supply of teachers, which is not good news for Alaska because about 2/3 of teachers hired come from out of state. Therefore, the university is spending more time recruiting teachers from the Lower 48 and is revitalizing teacher education. Teacher placement outreach has expanded its function by increasing job fairs from 9 to 16 and making recruiting presentations to 13 Lower 48 teacher preparation programs. The university is also doing more outreach to high schools, using a grant program to reach rural Native students, and updating FEA.

CHAIR DUNLEAVY asked what FEA is.

MR. ATWATER clarified that it means Future Educators of Alaska. He shared an example of a student from St. Paul, Alaska, who returned there to teach after hearing about FEA. The university's colleges of education are expanding efforts to train teachers in a variety of ways. The Alaska Rural Paraprofessional Program is training classroom aides with a lot of experience to become teachers. The university is reaching out to similar schools in the Lower 48 to target pre-service juniors. The university is also offering mentoring to new hires through the Alaska State Mentoring Program. He assured that state money used for the program is making a difference.

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He addressed additional ways of meeting the needs of Alaska's schools through the Revitalizing Teacher Education in Alaska plan. It will more closely align courses in the colleges of education at all campuses. He noted the plan will also improve

the rigor and selectivity of university teacher certification, graduate 50 percent more teachers who have certifications, partner with the state and with districts to reduce teacher turnover, and collaborate to eliminate barriers and duplication.

SENATOR GARDNER asked for ways of improving the rigor of teacher certification.

MR. ATWATER replied that they are driven by accreditation standards that the university must comply with regarding raising the bar as to who gets into the program.

SENATOR GIESSEL discussed the transfer of credits within the university system.

MR. ATWATER said that 95 percent of credits can now transfer between sites.

MR. POWERS added that transfer of credit has been an active topic on the regent's agenda.

CHAIR DUNLEAVY asked if it is one university system.

MR. POWERS said it is three campuses within one university. UAF is the research college; UAA is the business and nursing college; and UAS has an emphasis on mines and education.

MS. HECKMAN said that question has been around a long time. She stated that there is one university system with three separate accredited universities with separate missions. The system encompasses a commonality of all the policies and procedures. She agreed that the problem of transferring credits has been solved.

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CHAIR DUNLEAVY said the responses to the question differed.

MR. POWERS agreed with Ms. Heckman - one system, three universities.

CHAIR DUNLEAVY said it has always been confusing. He shared a past experience with credits.

MS. HECKMAN reported that the regents feel that they have encouraged collaboration amongst the three university campuses. The focus is now on collaboration and student success.

SENATOR GARDNER asked why the campuses are separately accredited.

MR. POWERS said due to the different focuses at each campus, accreditation varies. The research focus at UAF makes for a different accreditation process than UAS, which has a local focus.

SENATOR GARDNER summarized that the accreditation process differs because each campus has its own focus.

MR. POWERS agreed. He stressed the importance of keeping the strategic plan alive and said the regents are taking that on and promoting it. He noted that employer and graduate ratings are high, as are other areas, due to the focus on the strategic plan. He talked about learning about the crushing regulatory burden on teachers and problems with classroom management from calls the regents made to school districts. He emphasized the involvement of the regents in promoting the strategic plan.

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MR. ATWATER asked whether Alaska's University for Alaska's Schools should be a bi-annual report or a yearly report.

CHAIR DUNLEAVY asked what the purpose was behind SB 241.

MR. ATWOOD replied that Alaska was not producing enough teachers for Alaska.

CHAIR DUNLEAVY maintained that teacher turnover numbers are not significantly higher today than they were in 1983. Most are in rural Alaska. He said the university can't force a person into a major. He suggested the issue of retention should be revisited in light of today's financial climate. He agreed that the regulatory burden on teachers is an issue. He also said retirement benefits and salaries have changed. He suggested that the research has been done on the mentor project and it would be valuable to use it for future discussions.

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MR. ATWATER said recently Senator Bishop brought up how Finland views their teacher profession. He commented that teacher growth is not a university issue, but society's issue.

CHAIR DUNLEAVY commented on the fact that freshmen are coming to the university unprepared. He said K-12 was not designed to be a feeder program to the university, but that has changed. He said

that the University of Alaska has one of the best university systems in the world. He said he was opposed to standardization in the university system. He maintained that lack of revenue will deepen the discussion. He concluded that some of these issues are not new.

He thanked the presenters.

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At ease

[4:11:49 PM](#)

CHAIR DUNLEAVY noted the next presentation would be on Citizens for the Educational Advancement of Alaska's Children (CEAAC).

JERRY COVEY, Consultant, JSC Consulting on behalf of Citizens for the Educational Advancement of Alaska's Children, presented information on Educator Quality and Quantity. He introduced himself.

BARBARA ADAMS, Ph.D., Consultant, Adams Analytic Solutions, presented information on Educator Quality and Quantity. She introduced herself.

CHAIR DUNLEAVY asked if CEAAC hired Mr. Covey and Ms. Adams to do research on teacher quality and quantity.

MR. COVEY said yes. He explained that CEAAC is a non-profit organization comprised of urban and rural school districts that advocate for educational issues. One of their goals was to look into and address issues related to educator quality and quantity in Alaska. He related that the state turns over about 1,000 teachers annually and about 65 percent of teachers come from outside of the state. That has a detrimental impact to the state's educational system and to students.

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MS. ADAMS turned to some of the issues facing Alaska's education workforce. She said, on average, 64 percent of teachers in the last five years were hired from outside Alaska. District teacher turnover ranged from 7 percent to 52 percent in 2012. Turnover rate for teachers prepared outside Alaska is double that of teachers prepared in Alaska. Half of Alaska's K-12 are minority, but over 90 percent of teachers are white. Currently, 85 percent of all applicants to the UA teacher training program fall short of minimum qualification contained in the new accreditation standards planned for implementation in 2020.

CHAIR DUNLEAVY asked for clarification of the qualifications required.

MS. ADAMS said they are based on SAT scores, test scores, or GPA.

CHAIR DUNLEAVY asked if it is assumed that the candidates will not be able to deal with the rigor of the program.

MS. ADAMS countered that the candidates may not be at the level of the starting point of the program; not that they couldn't deal with it.

MR. COVEY spoke of a model they developed based on their research, with goals for a systemic change. He said they interviewed various groups and gathered data to create a model. The research resulted in 16 recommendations. He said their work had a systemic approach. He recalled the lack of collaboration and cooperation between various educational entities in the past, but that now there are joint efforts with an issue whose time has come. He said the model is a systems approach and contains measurable outcomes and cultural relevance. Teachers must be prepared to adapt to the culture they are teaching in.

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He addressed the overriding goal of strengthening the K-12 certificated workforce by training 60 percent of Alaska's new hires by 2025. He recommended an assessment of the university system to determine how many new teachers they are capable of turning out. Another goal is to develop and keep the workforce Alaska has, with a goal of a 90 percent proficiency level by 2025.

MS. ADAMS related that the model came from common thinking from various educational leaders and the recommendations have different backing at different levels. She reiterated that the ensuing goals are part of a systemic approach. Under the goal to expand the Alaska-grown workforce, there are several commitments needed. The first is to raise standards for entry into, and exit from, Alaska's educator programs. Another commitment is to increase and strengthen bridge programs to attract minority groups into education careers, by looking at models that have worked.

MR. COVEY pointed out that in rural areas 95 percent of students are Alaska Native and about 4 percent to 5 percent of all teachers are Native.

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MS. ADAMS said that another commitment would be to increase the university's capacity for educator preparation in order to produce 60 percent of Alaska educators hired annually. University leaders say they might be able to increase the capacity by 25 percent by structures that are already in place.

She said the fourth commitment is to increase and strengthen pre-service field experience.

SENATOR GARDNER asked for the dropout rate from pre-service training. She assumed that those who completed the pre-service requirements might stay in the field long term.

MR. COVEY said he didn't know. The pre-service has been identified as inadequate systemically. The plan is to get the students into the field much earlier and provide more opportunities to learn about the teaching profession. School districts do have some data on the impact of pre-service on hire and on retention.

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MS. ADAMS related that a fifth commitment is to establish laboratory schools in urban and rural hub communities. They can be used for teacher training and for pre-service experience. A sixth commitment is to provide a systematic process for improving educator preparation using stakeholder and outcome feedback. This involves building partnerships.

CHAIR DUNLEAVY asked what a laboratory school looks like.

MS. ADAMS explained that it is usually a partnership between a university and a K-12 system in a district. Often there is a mission and built-in research with fluidity and interaction. They usually target different ideas.

CHAIR DUNLEAVY said lab schools partner with the university and often have practice teachers, counselors, and research curriculum.

MS. ADAMS said Hawaii has model lab schools.

MR. COVEY added that lab schools also address pre-service education and professional development.

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CHAIR DUNLEAVY asked if they have presented their report to the university.

MR. COVEY said they are scheduled to present to the university and to the State Board of Education.

SENATOR GARDNER asked if student teaching is pre-service field experience and whether the plan is to increase and strengthen it by extending the duration of student teaching.

MR. COVEY said it may include that and it may include having university students in schools with K-12 students prior to student teaching.

SENATOR GARDNER asked if there has been discussion of having longer student teaching requirements.

MS. ADAMS said yes, and also discussion about more frequent student contact early on.

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SENATOR HUGGINS recalled a goal in Texas to have student teachers spend more time in the school instead of in a classroom. He asked if there is data on that.

MR. COVEY said no.

SENATOR HUGGINS gave an example of a teacher that does not look like the students. He wondered if education standards are lowered by using teachers that look like the students.

MR. COVEY said the opposite is happening and there is value and documentation regarding placing Alaska Native teachers in Alaska schools. The goal is to have teachers be of high caliber.

SENATOR HUGGINS talked about role models.

[4:35:20 PM](#)

CHAIR DUNLEAVY noted that the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program (ANSEP) is a good example of Native teachers and Native students in a rigorous program.

MR. COVEY addressed the goal of recruitment. He spoke of the commitment to expand the FEA program into every school district, which has been underutilized in the past. The plan is to work with the university to increase the program so it is available to students throughout the state. It is a low-cost way to increase the number of teachers.

He said another commitment is to revisit the salary and benefits package for teachers. He referenced HB 278 and a study that is reviewing the impact of salary and benefits on the teacher workforce. He mentioned alternative certification programs and loan forgiveness as strategies.

MS. ADAMS turned to recommendations under professional development. The first is to increase the time of the school year by 10 days for the purpose of professional development.

MR. COVEY noted the cost to upgrade the K-12 program and said it may not be feasible in the foreseeable future, but said it is a good idea.

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MS. ADAMS related the commitment to implement voluntary statewide curricula in order to pull together resources, such as with the core content areas. Training and support for this would come out of the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) and relieve the districts from those responsibilities.

SENATOR GARDNER asked if curricula is recommended now.

MR. COVEY said each school district develops its own curricula. There are state standards, but the curricula is developed by the district. Not all small districts have the ability and resources to do this. He suggested that professional development would be more focused with a unified curriculum, there would be a positive impact on the workforce, and it would be easier for students who move between districts.

SENATOR GARDNER assumed that districts talk with each other. She questioned if there is really that much variety in curricula.

MR. COVEY said they do talk to each other, but there is quite a variety. He noted a survey being conducted to determine what that variety is.

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CHAIR DUNLEAVY said it is law that districts select their own curriculum, but there are probably similarities.

MS. ADAMS talked about expanding the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project. She said they are in the middle of research to determine its impact on teacher retention, quality, and student achievement. Another recommendation is to develop UA curricula to address Alaska's unique needs.

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MR. COVEY said the final item is on teacher retention. There is a commitment to continue district teacher retention grants, which started through the Moore settlement.

CHAIR DUNLEAVY asked about the retiree hire concept for teachers and administrators. He suggested advantages of the program.

MR. COVEY said that strategy is included under the recruitment section. There is a plan to bring retirees back into the system to work in hard-to-fill jobs, especially in low-performing schools.

CHAIR DUNLEAVY brought up ANSEP program expansion and suggested it should be part of teacher training. He pointed out it is often hard to take a look at what is good for children and he hoped that would happen now.

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SENATOR HUGGINS asked about professional development for administrators and targeting professional development for gifted educators.

MR. COVEY related his meeting with the Alaska Superintendents Association where they all reported having a mentor. He said there was a high turnover of superintendents who were not mentored. He suggested a need to move forward with mentoring programs.

SENATOR HUGGINS used a football analogy to describe how good schools attract good teachers.

CHAIR DUNLEAVY announced that the next presentation would be from the Lake and Peninsula School District.

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At ease

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TY MASE, Superintendent, Lake & Peninsula School District (LPSD), presented information on Targeting Student Success through University Collaboration and Tutoring Intervention. He said he would share innovative practices in the Lake & Peninsula School District. He described his collaborative work with Bill Hill from the Bristol Bay School District (BBSD) regarding a science camp, professional development, career and technical education, short-term residential programs, federal programs, student activities and travel, staff, grants, instructional leadership, and facilities.

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MR. MASE discussed the grant funded tutoring program at LPSD that is shared with BBSD. He showed a video about the tutoring program. He provided a story about how the first tutor was hired and said there are currently nine tutors. There is also an on-line tutoring program.

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He talked about the on-site tutoring program which costs about \$10,000 per tutor and how nine tutors equals the cost of one full-time teacher. He emphasized the impact nine tutors have on their districts.

CHAIR DUNLEAVY asked how much they work.

MR. MASE said they work January through May and some come back to work in the classroom the following year.

CHAIR DUNLEAVY asked if tutors are under a classified contract and if they work out, can be hired to stay on as teachers.

MR. MASE said it is a three-month-long interview. Right now, one-third of the staff has come from this program. He said academic achievement has increased due to the program. He spoke of the advantage of recruiting and training an "academic SWAT team". Staff retention has increased; eight tutors have been with the school for five years. The tutoring program also brings wonderful energy to the schools.

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MR. MASE described the on-line tutoring program which is lower cost, but labor intensive. There is a .5 FTE position in charge of the program and the subscription is about \$15,000 per year. He said 54 students from LPSD and 10 students from BBSC have distance-delivered individual tutors from the University of

Alaska - Anchorage, Kutztown University of PA, Centenary College in New Jersey, and Western Oregon University. Students are identified by diagnostic assessment and tutors are juniors and seniors in university education. He gave an example of an on-line tutor who was recently hired by LPSD as an on-site tutor and then as a teacher.

He noted university professors do a great job with the tutors. He listed the advantages of the on-line tutoring program; academics have increased, it is a live learning lab for college students, and the tutors are like "Big Brothers/Big Sisters." The program works great for advanced academic work and for providing role models.

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SENATOR GARDNER noted that the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program has a difficult time finding volunteers. She asked how the university students are recruited and vetted, especially those from out of state.

MR. MASE said it is different at every university. UAA is struggling to recruit tutors and is looking at embedding the program in methods courses. In Pennsylvania the program serves as exciting reality TV and tutors have to apply and interview for the job. Students there are turned away every year.

SENATOR GARDNER asked about classroom "flipping" where the instructor records a lesson and students do the lesson at home; students do homework in the classroom.

MR. MASE said that idea could work in several sites. In some sites it would be difficult with a lack of bandwidth and support at home.

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SENATOR GARDNER noted the advantages of working with other districts and suggested that there might be some benefit in reducing the number of districts.

MR. MASE opined that the model LPSD and BBSD have can work without the consolidation of districts. Most districts would like to have their own identity, so the collaboration model is trying to bring districts as close together as possible, be as fiscally responsible as possible, and provide a better education for students.

CHAIR DUNLEAVY thanked Mr. Mase. He said more discussion is needed about the future of education.

[5:17:58 PM](#)

There being nothing further to come before the committee, Chair Dunleavy adjourned the Senate Education Standing Committee at 5:17 p.m.