

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
JOINT MEETING
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 8, 2017

8:00 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Representative Harriet Drummond, Chair
Representative Justin Parish, Vice Chair
Representative Zach Fansler
Representative Ivy Spohnholz
Representative Jennifer Johnston
Representative Chuck Kopp
Representative David Talerico

SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Senator Shelley Hughes, Chair
Senator Cathy Giessel
Senator John Coghill
Senator Tom Begich

MEMBERS ABSENT

HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Representative Lora Reinbold, Alternate
Representative Geran Tarr, Alternate

SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Senator Gary Stevens

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION: MICROSOFT IMAGINE ACADEMY

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

JOEL LATHROP, Strategic Alliance Manager
Microsoft US Education
Austin, Texas

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented an overview of the Microsoft Imagine Academy.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:00:35 AM](#)

CHAIR HARRIET DRUMMOND called the joint meeting of the House and Senate Education Standing Committees to order at 8:00 a.m. Representatives Drummond, Kopp, Parish, Fansler, Johnston, and Talerico; and Senators Giessel, Begich, and Hughes were present at the call to order. Representative Spohnholz and Senator Coghill arrived as the meeting was in progress. Also present was Representative Ortiz.

PRESENTATION: Microsoft Imagine Academy

[8:01:36 AM](#)

CHAIR DRUMMOND announced that the only order of business would be a presentation from the Microsoft Imagine Academy.

[8:02:11 AM](#)

JOEL LATHROP, Strategic Alliance Manager, Microsoft US Education, directed attention to the committee handout titled, "COMPUTER SCIENCE, EMPLOYABILITY & THE STEM AGENDA, 'SKILLS ARE KEY TO THE PROSPERITY OF NATIONS AND TO BETTER LIVES FOR INDIVIDUALS IN THE 21ST CENTURY;' OECD GLOBAL SKILLS REPORT," and began the presentation with a brief video to illustrate the Imagine Academy and how it works, as modeled in West Virginia.

[8:12:04 AM](#)

MR. LATHROP said the program strategy is to move the education of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) forward using the Imagine Academy. He said representatives, such as himself, are in very state, on a weekly basis to present the program. The first key pillar focuses on policy, advocacy, access, and diversity. The second pillar is to initiate a student's journey into building technical skills, gaining knowledge in computer science (CS), and establishing a STEM

portfolio. The third pillar is to develop great educators through community and professional development. He described the computer programs that have been designed to fulfill the goals of these pillars, which include: DigiGirlz, code.org, YouthSpark, MINECRAFT Education Edition, Microsoft Imagine, Certified MIE, and Microsoft Certified Educator.

[8:14:56 AM](#)

MR. LATHROP explained that, in the last week, a search for vendor-specific skills and certification jobs listed in Alaska showed that employers are seeking to hire 705 individuals with experience and abilities related to Microsoft products. He attributed the high number to the fact that most business use Microsoft systems. Directing attention to the handout, page 10, he reviewed the job demands for CS in Alaska as gathered via the not-for-profit code.org site in March 2017, which listed the following: 607 open computing jobs, 18 computer science graduates, 60 high school students having completed the advance placement (AP) CS exam, and \$82,758 as the average salary being paid for computing jobs. Twenty-two states have contracts with Microsoft for the Imagine Academy, with each taking a unique approach on the application. He said that some states may only offer it in the high school setting, while others provide it to a selected group of schools. He directed attention to the handout, page 11, illustrating the states that hold agreements with the Imagine Academy, and said each has a customized program to serve its populace.

[8:17:31 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES asked about the fractional numbers listed on the map in conjunction with each state.

MR. LATHROP offered to provide further information.

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSTON surmised from information on the page that the first number represents the certified academies in the state, and the second represents the number of licenses issued.

MR. LATHROP concurred.

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND noted that Hawaii is the one state where the Imagination Academy is located in its libraries.

[8:19:42 AM](#)

MR. LATHROP said that Imagine Academy supplies the curriculum for the computer science tracks, and certification is issued by a contracted company, Certiport, which provides schools with many types of certifications for internet/computer related courses. He directed attention to the handout, page 12, and the color-coded world map to illustrate the Imagine Academy activity on a global basis, to wit: 8.5 million students and educators served annually, over 16,000 certified educators, 2 million academic certification exams proctored in 2015-16, 15,000 Microsoft Imagine Academy member schools located in 135 countries, and over 1 million online learning users. He then reviewed the programs and benefits provided in the Microsoft Imagine Academy contract, which includes: the official academic courseware (MOAC), online learning access, customizable lesson plans, study guides, and no cost exam vouchers for educators.

8:20:59 AM

MR. LATHROP said the academy provides all software and necessary support for the program. He reviewed a list of institutions that are benefiting from licensure of the Imagine Academy, which include: K-12 schools; universities, colleges and junior colleges; skills centers; military academies; vocational, workforce development, and trade schools; scientific or technical schools; and libraries and health academies. Corporate companies may choose to buy into the program, however, it has been discounted 70 percent to make it accessible to educational facilities. The intent is to for students to study and gain an understanding of the CS field, achieve productivity, hone data science and IT infrastructure skills, and earn an industry-recognized certification, which will result in their being employable, becoming involved in economic development, and possible lead them to entrepreneurship. He elaborated on the industry certifications that can be earned, which are: Digital Literacy Certificate (DLC), Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS), Microsoft Technology Associate (MTA), and Microsoft Certified Professional (MCP).

MR. LATHROP provided a second, brief video.

8:26:40 AM

MR. LATHROP directed attention to the handout, page 18, and stepped through of the online website choices, which offer tab selections for the curriculum overview, an online learning dashboard, accessing additional resources, the classroom setup, and student recognition.

[8:27:43 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSTON asked if online learning is required to be done in real-time.

MR. LATHROP answered no, the programs can be downloaded and completed offline as well. Situations occur where Wi-Fi and broadband are not readily available. The programs aren't available on CD, but the full curriculum, exams, and other information, can be downloaded at an initial access point and completed offline.

[8:29:12 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES asked whether the curriculum is delivered in schools via asynchronous student driven means, or in a synchronous classroom format.

MR. LATHROP answered that it can be presented in a variety of ways, as it's designed to be flexible.

[8:30:15 AM](#)

MR. LATHROP said that, from the educator's standpoint, which is equally as important as the student's, a cadre of online, community support is offered, which include educational experts, authorized trainers, specialists, and technology associates. The MCE future teacher is provided with a self-assessment and individual learning plan based on six core focus courses, which are: curriculum and assessment, education policy, technology and pedagogy, ICT classroom tools, organization and administration, and professional development.

[8:31:35 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES noted that credit can be earned through Lamar University, and asked whether that's included in the program.

MR. LATHROP responded that colleges as well as K-12 facilities can be licensed. He directed attention to the handout, page 23, to note the list of Microsoft Certification Pathway options that can be pursued, and said, "It's endless." The curriculum used in the schools are the same as what is offered in adult training centers.

[8:34:03 AM](#)

CHAIR DRUMMOND asked about training the teachers to administer the academies courses.

MR. LATHROP answered that the instructors have a specific set of courses to become certified, which are independently accessed online. He explained that when a school contracts with the Imagine Academy information/training is provided for teachers, parents, and students.

[8:35:44 AM](#)

MR. LATHROP described how North Carolina initiated its program and successfully expanded it over a five-year period. Examples of how the program has been implemented in Florida and Kentucky were also offered.

[8:38:31 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES asked whether any schools in Alaska are using the program.

MR. LATHROP replied yes, independent of the state agency, and recalled that one is located in the Matanuska-Susitna school district. He offered to provide further details.

[8:39:12 AM](#)

MR. LATHROP provided a third, another brief video.

[8:42:35 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSTON queried whether the OneDrive [demonstrated in the video] is a basic package provided in the program.

MR. LATHROP responded yes, OneDrive is included, and students save their work in the cloud. To a follow-up question regarding capacity, he offered to provide further information.

[8:43:20 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PARISH asked if Chromebook devices are compatible with the Imagine Academy programing.

MR. LATHROP replied yes, the program has been designed to be compatible with every available device.

REPRESENTATIVE PARISH asked who was involved in the development of the curriculum.

MR. LATHROP answered that educators from around the world contributed.

[8:46:05 AM](#)

MR. LATHROP provided a fourth, brief video.

[8:49:02 AM](#)

MR. LATHROP reviewed a number of free applications that are available to augment Office 365 [described in the video], which include: OneNote, School Data Sync, and Docs.com.

[8:50:55 AM](#)

CHAIR DRUMMOND asked if contact has been through direct communication with school districts or if there has been a connection made with the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (EED).

MR. LATHROP answered that EED has not been contacted.

[8:51:24 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES questioned whether there has been noticeable change in the areas where the academy has been implemented over a period of time; has the technology sector been drawn to the area, and are students obtaining local CS related jobs.

MR. LATHROP answered that the states implementing the program advertise its use to effectively attract industry based on the workforce that's being created.

[8:52:11 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PARISH asked what the price tag for the state would be to contract for the program.

MR. LATHROP estimated an annual cost of about \$400,000, depending on the actual number of students and teachers that would be served.

REPRESENTATIVE PARISH said it would be good to know how that compares with what is being spent on the existing, similar educational approaches.

REPRESENTATIVE PARISH noted how there could be a range of outcomes for the different schools implementing the program. Some may have been more successful than others and it would be interesting to hear the reports from the less successful ones.

MR. LATHROP acknowledged that the academy is most successful when there is a local who understands and champions the program.

[8:55:06 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES referred to the committee packet and a page labeled TEALS [(Technology Education and Literacy in Schools)] to inquire about the program.

MR. LATHROP answered that it is a grassroots group, formed to help high schools throughout the US build and grow sustainable computer science programs and act as mentors for the teachers.

[8:56:05 AM](#)

CHAIR DRUMMOND pondered where the Imagine Academy curriculum could be fit into an already busy school schedule.

MR. LATHROP explained that many schools build it into their STEM programs and existing computer science periods, while others offer it as an afterschool lab.

[8:57:07 AM](#)

CHAIR DRUMMOND thanked the presenter.

SENATOR HUGHES announced the next meeting of the Senate Education Standing Committee

CHAIR DRUMMOND announced the next meeting of House Education Standing Committee.

[8:57:56 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committees, the joint meeting of the House Education Standing Committee and Senate Education Standing Committee was adjourned at 8:58 a.m.