

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

April 10, 2017

8:01 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
Representative Lora Reinbold (alternate)

SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Representative Geran Tarr

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION: ALASKA COUNCIL OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS (ACSA)

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

LISA SKILES PARADY, PhD

Executive Director
Alaska Council of School Administrators
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented the overview of the Alaska Council of School Administrators.

BOBBI JO ERB, Math Instructor
Alaska Staff Development Network
Alaska Council of School Administrators; Executive Director
Curriculum Instruction
Anchorage School District
Chugiak, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented the overview of the Alaska Council of School Administrators.

MARY MCMAHON, Principal
Colony Middle School; President
Alaska Council of School Administrators; President
Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented the overview of the Alaska Council of School Administrators.

SEAN DUSEK, Superintendent
Kenai Peninsula Borough School District; President
Alaska Superintendents Association
Soldotna, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented the overview of the Alaska Council of School Administrators.

DEANNA BECK, Principal
Northwood ABC Elementary School; President
Alaska Association of Elementary School Principals
North Pole, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented the overview of the Alaska Council of School Administrators.

HOLLY HOLMAN, Business Manager
Unalaska City School District; President
Alaska Association of School Business Officials (ALASBO)
Unalaska, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented the overview of the Alaska Council of School Administrators.

DR. DEENA BISHOP, PhD
Superintendent
Anchorage School District

Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented the overview of the Alaska Council of School Administrators.

KERSTEN JOHNSON-STRUEMPLER, Principal
South Anchorage High School; President
Anchorage Principals Association
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented the overview of the Alaska Council of School Administrators.

DAVID STEVENS, PhD
Research Manager
Regional Educational Laboratory at Education Northwest
Portland, Oregon

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented the overview of the Alaska Council of School Administrators.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:01:25 AM](#)

CHAIR SHELLEY HUGHES called the joint meeting of the Senate and House Education Standing Committees to order at 8:01 a.m. Present at the call to order from the Senate Education Standing Committee were Senators Hughes, Giessel, Stevens, and Begich. Senator Coghill arrived as the meeting was in progress. Present at the call to order from the House Education Standing Committee were Representatives Drummond, Parish, Talerico, Kopp, Johnston, Spohnholz, and Fansler. Representative Reinbold (alternate) arrived as the meeting was in progress.

[8:02:11 AM](#)

CHAIR HUGHES announced that the only order of business would be a presentation from the Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA).

[8:02:46 AM](#)

LISA SKILES PARADY, PhD, Executive Director, Alaska Council of School Administrators, directed attention to a PowerPoint presentation entitled, "ACSA" [undated], and informed the committees ACSA is the umbrella organization representing the Alaska Association of Elementary School Principals, the Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals, the Alaska

Superintendents Association, and the Alaska Association of School Business Officials. Dr. Parady stated ACSA is a nonprofit, tax exempt corporation established in 1973 for two purposes: Organized advocacy working to support students and families in Alaska, and to provide professional learning (slides 1-2). Professional learning is through the Alaska Staff Development Network (ASDN) which is a nonprofit administered by ACSA that has been providing quality professional development for Alaska educators with face-to-face and distance learning programs for almost 35 years (slide 3). The focus of ACSA's presentation will be on professional learning and she said the network supports approximately 30 percent of the state's professional staff of educators - mostly in rural Alaska - with 5,000-6,000 classes, and over 60 online and blended courses each year. Dr. Parady described the network's well-utilized partnerships with entities such as NEA-Alaska and the University of Alaska (UA) (slide 4). [ASDN's] partnership with the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) includes outreach efforts such as an upcoming statewide meeting in Anchorage regarding the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) state plan. Today's presentation will highlight the Alaska Professional Learning Network (AkPLN), which is a virtual learning effort open to all K-12 educators at no cost (slide 5).

[8:08:10 AM](#)

BOBBI JO ERB, Math Instructor, Alaska Staff Development Network, Alaska Council of School Administrators, and Executive Director, Curriculum Instruction, Anchorage School District, provided brief background information and noted her recent work with rural schools. Ms. Erb began her presentation by stressing teachers who are working in small, rural, school sites need to collaborate with other teachers, principals, district personnel, and educational organizations. She said this need is addressed by the Ak Professional Learning Network (AkPLN), an online professional collaboration space and a statewide partnership between DEED, ACSA, and the TeachingChannel (Tch), that is funded by ACSA and federal funds at no cost to Alaska educators (slides 6 and 7). Currently, AkPLN provides resources to over 750 educators across the state; the resources are available only to Alaska educators and relate only to education in Alaska and its students. Ms. Erb stated the AkPLN web site provides videos of effective K-12 teaching practices, in many subject areas, presented by educators in Alaska and elsewhere. Further, the web site provides teachers ideas for lessons, instructional strategies, and opportunities to join groups in order to benefit from the experiences of other Alaska educators. She restated

the importance of collaboration for teachers who otherwise would be isolated. Finally, AkPLN allows modern, personalized, and professional learning that can be accessed online utilizing existing technological tools (slide 8). Ms. Erb listed some of the existing groups available to teachers: text structures; in-depth study of content and instructional strategies; extension of face-to-face learning; learning with webinars; collaboration and professional learning for certain districts (slide 9).

[8:13:08 AM](#)

MS. ERB directed attention to the "Deep Dives" feature on the AkPLN web site which provides a series of videos on a specific topic. Another feature is Learning Pathways, which contains over 60 videos designed specifically for Alaska educators, and that contain learning plans mostly related to language arts and math (slide 10). Returning to the Groups feature of the web site, she further described four steps of a learning plan: Welcome; WHY: Gather and Focus; TRY: Watch and Analyze; APPLY: Receive and provide feedback (slide 11). She related Alaska teachers have asked for professional learning that is relevant, hands-on, sustained, collaborative, and job-imbedded, and explained how successfully AkPLN has responded (slide 12). To maintain a high level of learning, AkPLN holds the Alaska Effective Instruction Conference in January which gathers educators in Anchorage for three days of intensive learning about best practices for instruction (slide 13). Another way to extend learning is through the use of webinars, and she described a webinar series that provides a blended learning experience by incorporating relevant responses from participants to guide the webinar content through the AkPLN web site (slide 14). Rural and urban districts and schools are also using AkPLN as a communication device to share resources, methods of classroom management, and other information.

[8:20:11 AM](#)

MS. ERB turned attention to a graph of AkPLN usage data that indicated between 9/1/16 and 3/15/17, there were 7,771 visits to the web site (slide 16). Slide 17 indicated between 9/1/16 and 3/15/17, there were 2,201 video plays, and she said feedback from educators around the state has been positive as to the content and format of the web site (slide 18).

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSTON asked whether there is a cap on the number of participants in a Learning Pathway.

MS. ERB said there is no cap, but groups generally pursue a learning plan together to encourage collaboration.

SENATOR BEGICH returned attention to slide 17, and asked for the cause of the increase in video play during February [2017].

MS. ERB stated the increase occurred due to the conference in January and the webinars that were active on the web site.

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND questioned whether the web site is proprietary to educators or if committee members could gain access.

MS. ERB said committee members would be provided access.

8:24:01 AM

MARY MCMAHON, Principal, Colony Middle School, President, Alaska Council of School Administrators and President, Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals, provided brief background information and noted her long career in education in Alaska began when she received one of the teacher scholarship loans that were previously available. She directed attention to the document entitled, "ACSA 2017 Joint Position Statements," and said all of Alaska's leaders in education form a team to develop the joint position statements and to determine what is most important to public education in Alaska. The team's mission statement is: Leadership, unity, and advocacy for public education. Ms. McMahon pointed out the first joint position statement is in support of adequate and sustainable funding. Speaking as the president of AASSP, and personally, she said [leaders in the educational system] must serve and support excellence in schools - and in educational leadership at all levels - due to the importance of education to the future of the state. She provided a brief anecdote of how a group of 8th grade students were affected by current events and came to conclusions about what is necessary to have great leadership in government. [Document provided in the committee packet entitled, "Light & Lead the Way"].

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSTON asked how the mission statements of ACSA and its core groups differ.

MS. MCMAHON said the mission statements to provide excellence at all levels is a common statement, but the organizations have separate goals and priorities. She referred to the joint

position statements that indicate educators are united in doing what is best for students, including [public education] business officials. In further response to Representative Johnston, she said she would provide a description of each organization's goals.

[8:32:08 AM](#)

SEAN DUSEK, Superintendent, Kenai Peninsula Borough School District (KBPSD), and President, Alaska Superintendents Association, said his school district serves almost 9,000 students and he provided a graph of the KPBSD graduation rate (slide 25). Mr. Dusek expressed pride in the district and its increasing graduation rate that is due to innovations such as "Classroom without Walls." Innovations are happening in his and other districts across the state, but educational leaders remain committed to making additional improvements. He said a high school diploma is meaningful and pointed out that the increased KPBSD graduation rate in fiscal year 2012 (FY 12), coincided with the first year of full implementation of the current funding formula. He observed for several years KPBSD was at the base cost differential - even though the district has schools with a higher cost of education due to their location - and is not a road system district, but is a microcosm of the state. However, KPBSD is an example of success following the years of appropriate and adequate funding. For example, professional development has helped move teachers beyond textbooks to online programs; in fact, professional development is a priority for teachers, and is an investment in better teaching methods. Slide 16 was a list of the number of KPBSD students who are earning industry certifications and he said this program places students in future highly-paid and high-demand jobs; the program is offered through the district's partnership with Kenai Peninsula College. In addition, the Kenai Peninsula Borough helps fund the Jumpstart program so that students can earn college credits. He said KPBSD's graduates are ready for college, and spoke of a future partnership with UA that warrants state support. Mr. Dusek concluded partnerships between districts will result in further exciting growth, adding his strong support for the Alaska Challenge process that will drive improvement across the state.

[8:38:31 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH referred to a proposal that would reduce over 5 percent from the base student allocation and asked what the impact of a 5 percent reduction would be.

MR. DUSEK said the proposed "cut" has been explained as one nickel from one dollar; however, the cut would create a dollar's worth of loss to students because a loss of \$5 million equals the loss of 50 teachers. For school districts that are also funded by boroughs, the reduction is a double cut as boroughs would also reduce funding. Further, with the loss of 50 teaching positions, teachers and their families would leave districts. He pledged KPBSD will do its best using technology, but programs such as the industry certification program would be jeopardized by the loss of teachers.

CHAIR HUGHES asked whether KPBSD is interested in receiving support from the state to relieve school districts from the rising cost of healthcare.

MR. DUSEK said yes, and urged the committees to address this issue so funds for healthcare are not diverted from classrooms.

[8:42:26 AM](#)

DEANNA BECK, Principal, Northwood ABC Elementary School, and President, Alaska Association of Elementary School Principals (AAESP), provided brief background information and informed the committee of the challenges to preparing students in a competitive and changing world in which the pace of technological advancement is unprecedented, and discovery of new information may double every two years. To keep pace with this advancement, students need skills to prepare them for an unknown future and to facilitate lifelong learning. She said schools focus on challenging all students to meet their full potential by teaching rigor, perseverance, grit, and resiliency. Instead of memorization, students need to learn how to question, think deeply, and solve problems. Furthermore, the school community serves learners with a wide variety of needs; for example, Anchorage provides choice in its schools ranging from a focus on back to basics or open optional, immersion options, STEM-based schools, and resources for home-schooling. Ms. Beck closed, advising today's schools respond to the needs of students and families, implement a variety of programs, and enable students to be lifelong learners, as envisioned in the ACSA joint position statements.

CHAIR HUGHES asked how testing for a certain character set could identify and foster students who may become future entrepreneurs.

MS. BECK said employability skills that are necessary today include the use of devices - such as computers and calculators - project-based learning, working collaboratively, problems with multiple solutions, and how to consider, achieve, and justify solutions.

8:49:31 AM

HOLLY HOLMAN, Business Manager, Unalaska City School District, and President, Alaska Association of School Business Officials (ALASBO), informed the committees the members of ALASBO are those who work in K-12 school district business offices on budgets, financial reporting, grant administration, payroll, purchasing, e-rate, bus contracts, and other financial operations. For 45 years ALASBO's mission has been to promote the highest standards in school business practices and its vision is educating stakeholders in the effective use of resources for the benefit of Alaska's children by sharing knowledge and expertise, and providing information, efficiency, and collaboration. Ms. Holman gave a personal story of the support she received from ALASBO members 26 years ago. She pointed out the Unalaska City School District has a nearly 100 percent graduation rate and credited its success with the money the district directs to classrooms; however, this means administrative services have a very small staff and benefit from the network provided by ALASBO. [ALASBO] members appreciate the priority given to education funding and have advocated for a fiscal plan in the state for ten years; such a plan would mean school districts would operate most efficiently. In addition, ALASBO members collaborate with ACSA in their joint position statements and its top priority positions on funding for education and a revenue-enhanced fiscal plan. She explained ALASBO builds relationships with policymakers in order to provide information on school funding issues and to answer questions on school funding proposals. Ms. Holman described work done in regard to the upcoming 2017 ALASBO annual conference, and on training programs such as the School Business Academy, the ALASBO Improvement Model, and mentoring School Business Academy attendees.

8:56:03 AM

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSTON asked whether ALASBO has considered grouping all its school district membership in a bid for healthcare.

MS. HOLMAN said yes, and reported healthcare represents 20-25 percent of the Unalaska City School District budget; however, her district is already in a self-insured pool, and ALASBO will continue to consider alternatives to address the healthcare cost crisis.

REPRESENTATIVE FANSLER asked what happens when predictable funding is not available.

MS. HOLMAN related the Unalaska City School District must delay hiring teachers for critical and specialized vacant positions due to the uncertainty of funding. Further, renewals of contracts, planning student travel, fuel budgeting, and many other situations are negatively affected.

[9:00:23 AM](#)

DR. DEENA BISHOP, PhD, Superintendent, Anchorage School District, provided a PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Data Dashboard Anchorage School District," [undated] and said the Anchorage School District (ASD) sought to change and be more accountable to the state, its residents, and its students, and thus created a data dashboard. Previously, ASD collected data on student learning, climate connectiveness, and other types of data that "has just been numbers"; however, she said data is information that must become wisdom that can be used to redirect [educational] resources. The data dashboard is not specific to individual students and classrooms, but is a portal of information on the ASD web site to which the public and stakeholders have access that shows the value of the state's investment in education and in students. She provided a series of computer screen prints [slides 33-37] which illustrated the type of data that can be accessed, such as attendance - the data can be very specific as to school sites and by gender, race, or ethnicity - overall academic status for reading levels in elementary schools, and students with at least one "F" mark, which can lead to non-graduation from high school. Slide 36 showed percent on-track students, and she restated data can be available by school or location. Further, measures of academic performance (MAP) data reveals students' growth by school. Dr. Bishop concluded the data dashboard provides a means to answer the What, So What, and Now What questions about schools and how to improve them; schools are successful only when students find success after high school [slide 38].

[9:08:19 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH questioned the impact of the proposed \$22 million cut to ASD's budget on the district's ability to continue to show improvement, and to provide alternative programs to students.

DR. BISHOP advised ASD is a large organization with over 6,000 employees who have an impact of \$750 million on the Anchorage economy. The governor's budget provided flat funding for Anchorage, based on adjusted average daily membership (ADM), and with that budget ASD would gain a slight increase in revenue; however, with increases in the cost of living, the district would have a \$15 million shortfall. The previous reduction to ASD was balanced by \$5 million from other sources and a loss of 100 positions. Dr. Bishop observed an additional reduction of \$22 million would be significant, not only to education but to the economy of the state.

REPRESENTATIVE PARISH asked what the impact of the proposed cuts would be on class sizes and graduation rates.

DR. BISHOP estimated a cut of \$22 million would result in a loss of 200 fulltime employees; currently, ASD has a 21:1 student/teacher ratio in kindergarten, and a 29:1 ratio in grade 12. However, the ratios are not a cap, but a mean ratio applied throughout a school. With a \$22 million reduction, class sizes would increase astronomically; in fact, at this time 5th and 6th grade classes are at 30-32 kids - which is about what the classrooms can hold - and the proposed cut would add 1-5 more students to each classroom.

[9:13:59 AM](#)

CHAIR HUGHES asked if teacher aides are counted as administrative employees.

DR. BISHOP explained teacher aides and tutors are included in the chart of accounts as a cost of instruction because they work with students in the classroom. In further response to Chair Hughes regarding aspects of virtual education, she said ASD is currently exploring creative instruction, such as virtual instruction and blended learning, in partnership with other school districts. Students are great consumers of technology and also have the ability to produce and design technology, which has led to partnerships with other districts. She stressed that coding classes are important to future entrepreneurs and problem-solvers. Although innovation is not mandated, ASD needs to offer the latest courses to students.

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSTON asked whether using municipal shared services would affect the local education tax cap.

DR. BISHOP related ASD shared services with the city related to risk management, some plowing services, and some maintenance; she stated the city and ASD saved \$3 million by their joint efforts. Furthermore, ways to save on student transportation are being sought.

9:19:55 AM

KERSTEN JOHNSON-STRUEMLER, Principal, South Anchorage High School and President, Anchorage Principals Association, returned attention to an earlier question about how the aforementioned organizations work together, and advised APA, and the other state organizations under the ACSA umbrella, all have voting members working to develop the joint positions statements in order to have a unified voice in public education matters in the state. She said the scope of the work done by a principal is challenging, rewarding, and complex, especially when compounded by budgetary issues. A principal views his/her school through the following lenses each day:

- Instructional: how to provide rigorous curriculum
- Safety/Facility: is the school building safe
- School Climate: are students happy and healthy
- Staffing/Evaluation: hire highly-qualified staff and properly evaluate staff
- Resources: utilize existing resources and meet high standards
- Other aspects: employability, career and technical training, business partnerships, student nutrition, technology, athletics, and a variety of mental health issues
- Innovation: continuing

MS. JOHNSON-STRUEMLER, expanding on looking through the lens of innovation, gave examples of highly successful courses offered at her school, one of which is an unmanned aerial course that is the first of its kind, and that will be modeled by the Federal Aviation Administration to high schools throughout the nation. Other examples of innovative practices are: South Anchorage High School and Eagle River High School students are in support of volunteerism; Service High School students are competing at the national level in the healthcare field; at South High School

students are successfully supporting literacy and business activities; Service High School students are supporting inclusive activities.

DR. SKILES PARADY concluded the presentation, directing attention to slides 40 and 41, which related to turnover rates at teacher, principal, and superintendent levels.

[9:28:27 AM](#)

DAVID STEVENS, PhD, Research Manager, Regional Educational Laboratory at Education Northwest, recalled Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Northwest's prior presentation to the committees in February [2017] and referred to data provided by the Alaska State Policy Research Alliance (ASPRA). In February, the report stated district turnover rates for teachers, principals, and superintendents in Alaska. Although the percentage of teachers and principals new to a district is relatively stable over time, superintendent turnover rates are higher, and vary dramatically from year to year. For example, the superintendent turnover rate ranged from 4 percent in 2013, to 43 percent in 2015, and to 24 percent in 2017. In addition, 72 percent of districts had a change in superintendents at least once; elsewhere in the nation superintendents stay at a position on the average of 3-4 years (slide 40). Dr. Stevens advised principal and superintendent turnover has a substantial impact on schools and districts because the longer a superintendent stays in one district - beginning at two years - positive effects are seen, including improvements in student achievement and a greater likelihood for the success of new initiatives. For a principal to positively influence student achievement, he/she must remain at a school for several years, which also reduces teacher turnover. He concluded that the best outcomes are found in schools and districts with stable leadership (slide 41).

[9:33:39 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committees, the joint meeting of the House Education Standing Committee and the Senate Education Standing Committee was adjourned at 9:33 a.m.