

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

March 25, 2019

7:59 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Representative Harriet Drummond, Co-Chair
Representative Andi Story, Co-Chair
Representative Grier Hopkins
Representative Tiffany Zulkosky
Representative DeLena Johnson

SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Senator Gary Stevens, Chair
Senator Shelley Hughes, Vice Chair
Senator Chris Birch
Senator Mia Costello
Senator Tom Begich

MEMBERS ABSENT

HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Representative Chris Tuck
Representative Josh Revak

SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

All Senate Members Present

OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT

Representative Dan Ortiz

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION: ALASKA COUNCIL OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

LISA SKILES PARADY, Ph.D., Executive Director
Alaska Council of School Administrators
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Participated in the presentation by the Alaska Council of School Administrators.

PATRICK MAYER, President
Alaska Council of School Administrators and Alaska
Superintendents Association
Superintendent
Yakutat School District
Yakutat, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented on the work of the Alaska Superintendents Association.

ERIC PEDERSON, President
Alaska Association of Elementary School Principals
Principal
Paul Banks Elementary School
Homer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented on the work of the Alaska Association of Elementary School Principals.

DAN CARSTENS, President
Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals
Principal
Nikiski Middle/High School
Nikiski, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented on the work of the Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals.

CARL HORN, President
Alaska Association of School Business Officials (ALASBO)
Nenana, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented on the work of ALASBO.

SAM JORDAN, Grants Administrator
Alaska Staff Development Network (ASDN)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented on the work of the ASDN.

MONICA GOYETTE, Superintendent
Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on Mat-Su college entrance exam rates.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[7:59:46 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS called the joint meeting of the House and Senate Education Standing Committees to order at 7:59 a.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Birch, Costello, Hughes and Chair Stevens and Representatives Hopkins, Co-chair Story, and Co-Chair Drummond. Senator Begich and Representatives Johnson and Zulkosky arrived shortly thereafter.

Presentation: Alaska Council of School Administrators

[8:00:29 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS announced the presentation of the Alaska Council of School Administrators. He noted that the committee had been asked to hold their questions until the end of the presentation.

[8:00:43 AM](#)

LISA SKILES PARADY, Ph.D., Executive Director, Alaska Council of School Administrators, Juneau, Alaska, thanked the committee for the opportunity to share the great things happening in public education. The organization is celebrating its 40th year and wants to share and celebrate their mission: leadership, unity, and advocacy for public education. They strive to create a common voice, advocating for public education by shaping policy and growing leadership capacity across the state. This morning they will hear from the presidents of each of the affiliate organizations that the council represents: Alaska Superintendents Association, Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals, Alaska Association of Elementary School Principals, and Alaska Association of School Business Officials (ALASBO).

DR. PARADY said they have a bifurcated purpose, policy and advocacy along with professional development, which is carried through the Alaska Staff Development Network (ASDN), which is

the largest provider of professional learning in Alaska outside of individual school districts.

8:03:46 AM

PATRICK MAYER, President, Alaska Council of School Administrators and Alaska Superintendents Association, Superintendent, Yakutat School District, Yakutat, Alaska, said the organizations under the umbrella of the Alaska Council of School Administrations (ACSA) function in unison with the intent of doing what is best for students and sending young people out into the world college and career ready.

MR. MAYER said that Yakutat is a tightknit community, where the city, the school district, and tribe, along with other organizations, function well together. Likewise they want to be in synchronization with state government to continue to provide quality and adequately funded educational opportunities for students. He made the analogy of a Tlingit canoe working with a unified and synchronized approach to operate efficiently and effectively. He is proud to be superintendent of Yakutat for many reasons. One is to be associated with a district that directs 72 percent of its operating budget to instruction, thereby directly benefitting students.

MR. MAYER pointed out that the committee had the joint ACSA position statements that are collaboratively developed each year through an extensive process. The number one statement for 2019 is priority funding for education, "The State of Alaska must provide timely, reliable, and predictable revenue for schools." This is not surprising because the base student allocation (BSA) has had no substantial increase for well over ten years. They understand the current fiscal realities, which is why they want to stress that their members ask the legislature to prioritize timely, reliable, and predictable funding as the legislature did last year.

MR. MAYER said that instability is not good for the kids of Alaska. There has been roughly a 61 percent turnover in superintendents since 2014. Superintendent, plus principal turnover, plus teacher turnover, equals instability. They hear a lot about student performance as a standalone topic, and this is not a singular issue. Education turnover at all levels creates instability in the state's education system. It is often suggested that the business model should be applied to education. If they apply the business model in this particular scenario, with this excessive turnover, in such a business, institutional knowledge is lost, employee and customer

confidence is eroded, and the business is in a constant of state of rebuilding, which creates instability.

MR. MAYER moved on to a discussion of metrics and data and displayed a slide of ACT and SAT scores. He said often they focus only on one metric, the PEAKS. The slide shows that Alaska performance on the ACT and SAT is at or above national performance. Also, they are seeing increases in graduation rates across the state. In 2005, Alaska's statewide graduation rate was 61.4 percent. in 2017, it increased to 78.2 percent. Yesterday, the commissioner stressed this to the ACSA membership.

MR. MAYER displayed slide "FY 19 Total Expenditures by Type." He said the root of the slide originates from David Teal [Legislative Fiscal Analyst]. They added it to the presentation in order to show that their instructional expenditures are, on average, at 76 percent, in contrast to the 54 percent figure that has been recently circulating. The 76 percent figure is derived from the Department of Education and Early Development's (DEED) own processes and procedures that were previously used under the 70/30 rule which was repealed in 2016. Alaska's school districts continue to meet or exceed the 70 percent threshold. Their ALASBO colleagues will flesh this out further in the presentation.

[8:08:49 AM](#)

MR. MAYER said the survey "The Great Work of Alaska Public Schools" was commissioned in January of 2019 by a coalition of Alaskan public education advocates, including ACSA, Alaska Association of Secondary Principals, and the Coalition for Education Equity. The survey was conducted by Zogby Analytics, a highly respected international polling and research firm. He presented the following results of the survey:

Question: When it comes to how state government spends your public dollars, which of the following areas do you think should be the highest priority?

Result: 44.5 percent of Alaskans believe that K-12 education is the priority expenditure for public dollars.

Question: Do you support or oppose state-funded public pre-school?

Result: 73.5 percent of Alaskans support state-funded pre-school

MR. MAYER said the result to the following question shows the public desire for a well-rounded, public education.

Question: In your opinion, should public schools provide a well-rounded education to all children, including items such as all-day kindergarten, gifted and talented, music, art and physical education, technology, advanced placements courses or should public schools provide only core curriculum (math, English, science, social studies)?

Result: 79.7 percent of Alaskans support public dollars being directed to a well-rounded education.

Question: Please tell us which type of elected official you most support?

Result: 72.1 of Alaskans desire elected officials who support increased funding for K-12 public education. 67.3 percent of Alaskans desire elected officials who support improvement and innovation in public education.

Alaskans support elected officials who will invest in education and work to make it better for all children.

MR. MAYER said the results of this survey are a reflection of the Senate's own online survey that clearly demonstrates that a majority of Alaskans support either sustained or increased funding for K-12 public education.

MR. MAYER said the Alaska Council of School Administrators is private and the Alaska Superintendents Association, as part of NCSA, continues to support its members as they have over the last two years with a new and incoming superintendents academy. Mentors are provided to all new superintendents for at least two years and multiple training opportunities are available throughout the year.

[8:11:46 AM](#)

ERIC PEDERSON, President, Alaska Association of Elementary School Principals, Principal, Paul Banks Elementary School, Homer, Alaska, said he has been the principal of Paul Banks for six years and before that was in the villages of Quinhagak and Nunapitchuk for 12 years. As the committee knows, there is a lot of uncertainty now. Last week he testified for timely and reliable funding for education. This is the most important topic in the budget discussion. He has three teachers with no

contracts for the next school year. These teachers need to be in front of students. As a principal, he invests a lot in teachers. He and his veteran staff work to develop teachers who are better at their craft. Without predictable funding, teachers might move to a different state for the next school year. If funding comes late, more than likely he will be forced to hire in the summer months. At that time of the year, the hiring pool of quality teachers is shallow. This is a common scenario throughout the state.

MR. PEDERSON said that some of his students have challenging needs. When they know their funding in a timely manner, they can staff their school. That allows them to build classes in the spring. Best practices in school is being intentional about building relationships between teachers and students who need more support or enrichment. These relationships are started with the classroom teacher before the school year is out. When funding comes late, they are unable to build these explicit relationships. He also fortunate enough to have an intensive needs preschool in his building. These are some of his most fragile students. Every spring they have a transition meeting made up of an IEP [Individualized Educational Plan] team. They do a lot of relationship building with these students and their parents and the teacher for the next school year. Without timely funding, these teams cannot execute their purpose. It also creates an uneasy feeling for his community members as they are unable to answer specific questions about the future of the community's most precious resource, their children. Everyone thinks school starts in the fall, but in reality, it starts in the spring.

MR. PEDERSON reviewed two ACSA joint position statements:

Early Childhood Education

"ACSA believes equitable access to fully funded, sustainable preschool programs provide a foundation of excellent social, emotional and cognitive instruction to students."

Social, Emotional and Mental Health

"The State must provide financial support so schools can partner with local communities to implement comprehensive, culturally appropriate school-based mental health programs that support and foster the health and development of students."

MR. PEDERSON said that many Alaskan students attend an early education program, which leads to greater achievement in school. Paul Banks also has a Title I preschool program. Students qualify for this program by showing they have preacademic, social, or behavioral needs that require more support than their peers do. Year after year, these 20 students in his program are consistently the kindergarteners who are leaders both academically and socially. This goes along with the research that demonstrates that early intervention and instruction is one of the best ways to increase student achievement, thus leading to a greater chance of students reading proficiently by third grade. All Alaskan children deserve the opportunity to attend preschool. In his 18 years of education in the state of Alaska, there is a disturbing trend--the increase in students who have adverse childhood experiences (ACES). By age six, one quarter of Alaskan students have at least two adverse childhood experience. The state's opioid crisis plays a large role in this data. The schools are serving the children of this drug epidemic. Many of their schools do not have counselors, and it falls upon the teacher to provide the much-needed support. The rates of homeless and Office of Children's Services [reports] are increasing from prior years. Funding for school counselors is one way to support students who experience ACEs. The most important factor contributing to student success is a quality teacher. The second more important factor is a quality principal.

MR. PEDERSON said that they, as an organization, invest in the professional learning of their members every October with the Alaska Principals' Conference that provides national caliber professional development. They discuss the issues he spoke about today. Through these conversations they are working on ways to support all Alaska's students, parents, and teachers.

[8:16:58 AM](#)

DAN CARSTENS, President, Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals, Principal, Nikiski Middle/High School, Nikiski, Alaska, said he and his wife were both born and raised in Alaska. Three of their children graduated from Nikiski. All three attend or graduated from the University of Alaska system. He has two children still at Nikiski. As Mr. Pederson said, the most important factor contributing to student achievement is quality teachers. The second most important factor is a quality principal. Each year one in four principals is replaced at an average of cost of \$75,000. That number is further compounded the further one goes from urban areas. He presented a slide showing that rural remote schools had the highest turnover among

principals and teachers in 2018/19. The \$75,000 number is from the National Association of Secondary School Principals in conjunction with the Learning Policy Institute. Many things contribute to the principal turnover, but the bottom line is that it is a difficult job with high demand and high stress.

MR. CARSTENS said that as mentioned before, 26 percent of Alaska principals turn over every school year. It is difficult for schools to provide the needed stability with that turnover rate. ACSA and the elementary and secondary principals' associations have taken it upon themselves to reduce this rate. The state used to offer the Alaska administrator coaching project. It was instrumental for many principals' growth and development, including his own. The program was cut a few years ago due to funding. This year ACSA has developed a similar program to support new principals in the state. He foresees the Principal Academy growing and improving every year. The Principal Academy is based on three components. First of all is professional development away from the principal's school because the place of work has many distractions. They hold three professional development conferences: the Principals' Conference in October, the Response to Instruction conference in January or February, and the Alaska School Leadership Institute in late May. The second component is online professional support and development through ASDN's Professional Learning Network and the Anchorage School District's ECHO project. The third component is mentoring with practicing principals.

MR. CARSTENS said that many of the ASCA and the principal associations board members have assumed these leadership and mentoring roles. He is mentoring a new principal and talked with her during the state basketball tournament about many aspects of the job. Sometimes the new principals simply need to sit down without distractions to discuss their successes, challenges, goals, and futures.

8:21:59 AM

CARL HORN, President, Alaska Association of School Business Officials (ALASBO), Nenana, Alaska, said he has been a licensed CPA in Alaska for 37 years. After graduating from Haines High School, he went to the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) and is proud to report that his son will graduate from UAF this May. He started his career in Fairbanks as a CPA auditing school districts and small cities and has been with Nenana for the past 16 years.

MR. HORN presented the ALASBO mission, "To promote the highest standards in school business practices," and vision, "educating stakeholders in the effective use of resources for the benefit of Alaska's children." He said the ALASBO membership is a broad rainbow of school business officials, accountants, business managers, bookkeepers and everything done behind the scenes to support instructors on the front line. The first theme of their strategic plan is professional development. They offer one-hour power lunches teleconferences for training, School Business Academy, which is an intensive one-day training, annual conferences, summer leadership training, and the New Business Manager Institute. The second theme is best practices. They have an informal and formal mentoring program. They have standard operating procedures available to any district and many other resources on their web site.

MR. HORN said he wanted to discuss the cost of Alaska's public education system. He asked how much is spent on instruction, how does Alaska compare to other states, and what unique costs do they incur in Alaska. Using DEED's methodology, which has been used for many years, Alaska spends an average of 76 percent on instructional costs. Alaska defines instruction as the classroom teacher all the way to the principals. Those are all costs incurred within the school building.

MR. HORN presented the slide, "2016 Public School Spending per Student by State." Many states, mostly in the Northeast, spend more nominal dollars than Alaska on a per student basis. Alaska is among the top states, but that is not surprising as Alaska is in a high-cost area. But there is nothing out of line. Alaska's numbers are not way over the top or so unusual.

MR. HORN presented the slide, "Combined All School Districts State of Alaska." He said the chart takes DEED data for the school districts in Alaska and shows the entire Fiscal Year 19 budget for the total education system of Alaska. To frame this, Alaska's classroom teacher count has dropped over the years. Currently, there are 7,889 teachers. In 2011, that was 8,468. That number is trending down. Classroom size, students per classroom, is trending up. Now it is 16.35. In 2011 it was 15.6. The student count over the last year dropped 949. The total number of students funded by DEED was 129,005. As he said, that dropped by almost a thousand students from the prior year.

MR. HORN said the total is \$2 billion for the general fund (school operating fund) K-12 budget. To provide a sense of scale, the third column shows the per pupil costs. The first

line is for regular education instruction. That is 43 percent of the total. The second line is special education. The other lines for instruction show the detailed support functions in the building, which includes things like student evaluation services, Internet, and school principals. That is how they came up with the 75.8 percent figure for instruction. That is everything happening in the school. Then there are lines for what he calls supportive instruction functions, such as school administration support services. That includes the front office, like the school secretary, who are vitally important to schools. The next two lines are district administration and district administration support services. Those two combined are just 6 percent of the total. That includes school boards, the superintendents, and businesspeople like him who support functions like payroll. Six percent is an extremely reasonable number. Any business would be challenged to do all those functions and funnel all the rest of the resources to the other 94 percent. The other lines are operations and maintenance of plant, student activities, and community services.

MR. HORN presented the slide on DEED's uniform chart of accounts by function.

[8:31:14 AM](#)

MR. HORN said some unique costs are higher in Alaska. The cost of health care is high. They are amortizing the unfunded liability of the pension plan. They are required to report that costs on their financial statements. Utility costs are very high in the remote areas. Workers' compensation is very high. Alaska pays their teachers a fair salary, but Alaska's competitive compensation is eroding. Teacher salaries and benefits are rising nationwide. Alaska has the unique cost of housing teachers in remote areas.

MR. HORN presented a slide showing the composite cost of living index. Like the Northeast and the West Coast, Alaska is in the in red zone, which indicates the highest cost of living.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND noted that Representative Dan Ortiz was present and that he was the Finance chair for the education budget subcommittee that met over the last several weeks. He is also a former teacher.

[8:33:49 AM](#)

SAM JORDAN, Grants Administrator, Alaska Staff Development Network (ASDN), Juneau, Alaska, said he has been a public educator for 18 years and has two daughters in the Juneau School

District. ASDN is a private, nonprofit organization in existence for 25 years. ASDN is the largest provider of professional development to educators in Alaska outside of school districts. ASDN brings world-class professional development to educators so they can finetune their instructional practices. As budgets have tightened and travel for professional development opportunities have become complicated, they have responded by designing courses using distance technology, so educators can have professional development delivered onsite, wherever they are in the state. They ensure they anticipate new trends in education and bring those to Alaska so educators can have opportunities to be on the cutting edge of innovative practices.

MR. JORDAN said they are providing multiple pathways for general professional development. They serve over 2,000 educators annually using online courses. They offer 50 self-paced professional development courses. They serve over 700 educators annually with webinars. Currently they have eight webinar series focused on a variety of topics. They also have a network for educators to connect and discuss best practices and challenges through the Alaska Professional Learning Network (AKPLN). AKPLN currently serves over 1,500 educators.

MR. JORDAN said that for in-person professional development opportunities, they hold the annual RTI [response to intervention] or Effective Instruction Conference. In January of this year, they served 1,151 educators. It is the largest in-person educator conference in Alaska. That 1,151 educators represent 14 percent of all educators in Alaska. Registration was from 49 of 54 school districts. They sponsor the Alaska School Leadership Institute that happens in late May. The conference focuses on building leadership capacity for school leaders and their teams from small and rural communities, but it is open to all.

MR. JORDAN said that ASDN is the lead professional learning partner for four Alaska Native Education Grant Projects in the Bering Strait, North Slope, and Lower Kuskokwim School Districts and the lead partner for two large federal grants for Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEARUp) in the Lower Kuskokwim and Bering Strait School Districts. GEARUp is hyper-focused on college and career readiness activities.

MR. JORDAN said ASDN identified computer science and computational thinking as the largest job market right now for young people moving into the workforce. They sought out and

partnered with Code.org, an international nonprofit that focuses on computer science and computer science professional development. Their partnership provides teacher training in computer science. It is a relatively new field, so it is training that many teachers have not had. They have held 13 workshops since the beginning of the school year. They have professionally developed 207 educators representing 111 schools and 30 out of 54 Alaska school districts. That shows a lot of interest from the educational community. Fifty-six percent of the 207 educators work in high-needs schools and 80 percent are in rural or remote areas. They are estimating that those teachers will impact 1,341 students. Alaskan labor statistics shows there are 764 open computing jobs right now. That is 2.8 times the national average. The average salary for those jobs is \$72,000. They are laser focused on that. He thanked their industry partners who are helping to provide that training.

MR. JORDAN said that a passion project for ASDN is the Our Alaskan Schools blog. As practitioners in educator, they see amazing things happening in classrooms around the state. Those stories don't always make it into the public discourse. In January they created Our Alaskan Schools blog to highlight the positive things that are happening in public schools. Their goal is to share stories from all 54 school districts. Today they have 22 blog posts up since the end of January. They are written by Alaskan educators on a wide range of topics. They are excited about this work because it brings the magic happening in classrooms into the public sphere.

DR. PARADY said that was the end of the official presentation and her members were prepared to answer questions.

[8:44:47 AM](#)

At ease

[8:44:58 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS suggested taking questions in order, beginning with Mr. Mayer's presentation.

[8:45:37 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS said many of the presenters spoke about the turnover in superintendents, principals, and teachers. He agrees that stability is critical. He asked what are the drivers that make people leave a district or profession and how does the defined contributions retirement system affect that turnover.

MR. MAYER replied that the retirement system is partly an issue because people are able to extract their contribution after five years and move out of the state. That is a factor, among others. They often see movement from rural to more urban districts. That revolving door from rural to urban creates challenges. The same is true of superintendents. The national average for superintendents is three years in a position. That is true in Alaska as well.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked what some of the local drivers are that might drive someone out in three years or less.

MR. MAYER responded that Alaska salaries are not as competitive as they used to be. In uncertain budgetary times like this, his fear is that people will leave proactively rather than reactively. That is speculation on his part.

DR. PARADY said that there is a national shortage and the pools are very thin. When they are not able to sign contracts, teachers can go elsewhere to get a contract. When they provide instability when they are trying to plan for their families and their futures, they do what any normal human being would do, which is to secure their situation. Alaska is losing a lot of quality educators because of the inability to rely on funding. She wanted to compliment the legislature for their effort to provide predictable, reliable funding for education last year so they could secure those contracts and give assurance to educators. Timely, reliable, and predictable funding is a high priority for their organization. Another reason is working conditions in many situations. Research out of Penn shows that of 3.6 million teachers in 2015, over 500,000 teachers left because of working conditions. The job has become harder. In the same year they replenished that number with 200,000. This trajectory of deficit continues to grow. And Alaska is reliant on recruiting from the lower 48.

MR. MAYER said that this year, 80 teachers were at the job fair. Ten or 15 years ago there were 250 or 300. They had to give prospective teacher candidates instructions not to rush the door for interviews. He read that enrollment in teacher education programs nationally is down 35 percent.

[8:50:42 AM](#)

DR. PARADY said that to give a sense of scale of how many teachers can't be offered contracts, 30 percent of their teachers are nontenured.

[8:51:07 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES said they have the most important job and mission in the state. One thing that is concerning all of them is how students score in reading and math. They have room for improvement. She is thrilled to see the bright spot with ACT and SAT scores, but that is not the full cohort that starts in kindergarten. She asked if they know what percentage of the cohort that would start in kindergarten take the ACT or SATS. She thinks of those students as more the high achievers. It's a great bright spot, but it doesn't alleviate the problem overall with improving learning K-12.

MR. MAYER deferred to Dr. Goyette.

[8:52:22 AM](#)

MONICA GOYETTE, Superintendent, Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District, Palmer, Alaska, said she can only speak for her district. Last year her district partnered with the University of Alaska and they paid for their juniors to take the ACT. They had 850 juniors take it. They were 63 percent in the nation. They have about 1,500 per grade level, so it was probably about 55 percent of their students. Usually she would say 20 to 25 percent of their kids take a college entrance exam. In Mat-Su they could do a better job with preparation for college entrance exams. In the lower 48, it is very common to pay for ACT or SAT prep. Schools offer courses or classes. Many of their kids had no preparation, so they are very proud of the 63 percent.

MR. MAYER said there is an increased use of assessment data, like MAP [Measures of Academic Progress], to look at subskill deficiency. They are doing a much better job tracking students' areas of need.

DR. PARADY said sometimes they fixate on one metric or measure. As educators, they look at everything, ACT, SAT, PEAKS, graduation rate, and everything in between.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND said that Senator Hughes asked about the percentage of the cohort from kindergarten who takes the ACT or SAT. At the rate the legislature keeps changing the testing structure, she understands why they are sticking to the ACT or SAT because that seems to be the most consistent testing regime that they have. On the other hand, the outcomes database that the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE) maintains for pre-K to postsecondary and workforce development is the place where this data may be collected, but if they do

not continue funding the ACPE, they may never know the answer to Senator Hughes' question.

MR. MAYER said they will try to mine that data and get back to the committee.

8:56:23 AM

SENATOR BIRCH said that the turnover rate for teachers and principals for remote schools is very troubling. He asked if there are exit interviews or other ways to find out what the issues are. He asked, for example, whether it is unfamiliarity with the community. He asked what is driving those decisions with people who have had spent a lot of time to make education a career. He asked how many left of their own choice or were asked to move on. He has slept on many gymnasium floors in a lot of rural schools and recognizes how vital they are across the state.

MR. MAYER replied that they do not have that data yet.

DR. PARADY answered that they are in the process of collecting that exact data. They have the same questions and worked with the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, which has a contract with the federal government to do research for Alaska, to answer that question. They should have that data soon.

SENATOR BIRCH said that as a former employer, he knows that exit interviews would function as an assessment about what caused someone to transition somewhere else.

DR. PARADY said that the jobs have become much more difficult. Layers of requirements have been added to the normal teaching day over the last several years. Working conditions is a simplified way to say that. But going under the skin of that, in many cases educators are receiving students who are not ready to learn, thus their laser-like focus on the importance of early childhood education for every student. They take every student. That is the beauty of public education. It is all children and bringing them forward, addressing every need. That personalized learning takes a level of commitment and energy like never seen before. They are committed to providing every student the best learning opportunities available, but with reduced resources and additional pressures and requirements, unfunded mandates are a real consideration. Every time legislators ask teachers and educators to add one more thing to their load, their educators say there is a breaking point. They must provide stability to the education system. It is funding, but it is also relief from

regulation and support in terms of addressing mental health issues that they are seeing every day with students who have high Adverse Childhood Experiences scores. There is such a culmination of issues and Alaska has become far less competitive than it used to be. It is a culmination of many of those things.

[9:01:24 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY clarified that the superintendent turnover rate has been 61 percent since 2016.

MR. MAYER answered since 2014 and that it actually is higher than that. They had five retirements or folks moving on with their lives last night. It is an issue at the superintendent, principal, and teacher level. He comes back to the 35 percent reduction in enrollment in schools of education, plus the additional expectations at all levels. It is a challenging job.

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY said that Dr. Parady said that the legislature's decision to forward fund assisted with stabilizing retention through school districts in the state and that Alaska competes nationally to hire educators. She asked Dr. Parady how other states are dealing with education funding and if she had any recommendations for best practices

DR. PARADY replied that Alaska needs to remain competitive in salary and retirement benefits. That is really key. They need need to forward fund reliable funding every year and not put them in a position every year of fighting to be able to sign contracts in a timely way, which is required by statute and ordinance. More importantly, their neighboring states who are experiencing a shortage as well are being proactive. The legislature last year passed retiree rehire. That is one sliver of a tool to open the door for folks to hire professionals who may be living in the community. Expanding bandwidth and broadband to enhance virtual education delivery is another recommendation. From her six years in the North Slope, she knows that connectivity is often a retention issue as well. It is an educator's link to family who may live across the country. It is the link to buy groceries. Most importantly it is a teacher tool, it is also a retention tool.

DR. PARADY said that they need to continue to invest in Education Rising so they can grow their own teachers. They know through research that those who are raised in the state who choose to become educators stay longer. They need do the kinds of support her organization has put in place for the first years, which are the most difficult. Mentoring programs through

DEED have been cut and are being picked up in the private sector because the need is so great, to wrap arms around those professionals to help them succeed. The answer is going to be in looking at alternative pathways or at least streamlining certification to make it as easy as possible to work in education and not compromise the quality of educators. There is that important balance. She knows that DEED and Commissioner Johnson are interested in working on that with them. The state Department of Education said they are going to review the regulations to make sure they have what they really need on the books.

DR. PARADY said the list goes on and on. At the end of the day, it is about stabilizing the environment. There will be natural retirements, but they are seeing people leave because the environment in which they are trying to teacher students is not stable. They need to stabilize the environment and send the message to educators at every level that what they do is important, that teaching their students, their future, is the highest priority.

[9:07:09 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked that the slide showing the K-12 instability equation, superintendent, plus principal turnover, plus teacher turnover, equals instability, be displayed because it was an important graphic to show as the conversation continues.

[9:07:25 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY noted that superintendents are the one employee that school boards hire, and school board members are a reflection of their communities and the hopes and dreams they have for their students. The state adopted higher standards for math and language arts. She wondered how teaching to those higher standards is going. They spoke about professional development several times during the presentation. Embedded professional development is what increases student learning. She asked if they could share a few things about what is supporting teaching to those higher standards.

[9:08:54 AM](#)

MR. MAYER answered they are mapping the K-12 curriculum to make sure standards are being taught in the classroom and providing professional development to do so and looking at the state assessment as it changes. This year text-dependent analysis was a new component of PEAKS. They use assessment data of different sorts in order to target subskills areas. They provide

opportunities for students to be career and college ready. It becomes a more personalized approach than they saw ten or 15 years ago to prepare students to exit into the workforce. He looks at the book ends. The secondary teachers have a vested interest in seeing who is coming their way and kindergarten teachers have a vested interest in seeing where their students went. How they meet those standards in the middle is important. Districts have their eyes on the ball on that.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked someone to talk more about the slide "FY 19 Total Expenditures by Type."

MR. HORN said that the chart shows the instructional costs for the entire state. The largest cost is for direct instruction and then there is the support functions that directly affect instruction, including Internet and any of the people who do assessments on students. The last category, the light blue, is the school principal. This is based on DEED's classification system, the uniform chart of accounts. It is a methodology they have used for years and years.

SENATOR HUGHES said she was concerned when she heard the Office of Management and Budget figure of 54 percent based on census data. She went through the spreadsheets and divided the overall spending by the per pupil spending. She did not do all 50 states, but from what she could tell, Alaska was the lowest. New York was 70 percent for classroom instruction. She understands how they made adjustments, but if they made adjustments for the other states the same way they did for Alaska, it would shoot their percentages up. She is still concerned because as much as she loves them as administrators, she loves the kids. Spending in the classroom does correlate with academic achievement. She appreciates the adjustment compared with the census data figure. Perhaps they left some things out, but when compared across the states, Alaska is still at the bottom. She asked what the census data from ten or 20 years ago would show for Alaska. She had four kids who went through the public education system in Alaska and it served them well. When she sees that based on the census data that New York is putting 70 percent into their classrooms and their achievement is excellent and Alaska is at 54 percent based on census data and Alaska is struggling, she wonders if the state can make some adjustments. She wonders what looking at the historic census data would reveal.

[9:15:44 AM](#)

MR. HORN replied that one thing about the census data is that each state has a unique way of defining the data. He referred to

the slide "2016 Public School Spending by State." That slide shows the per student cost with the narrowest definition of instructional costs. In Alaska that is called Function 100 [Instruction] and Function 200, which is special education instruction. This is nominal dollars. Every state has a different cost of living. It is useful information, but more of an analytic. It is not comparing apples and oranges. Each state has different nuances. In Nenana, for operations and maintenance, the boilers at 50 below zero burn a lot of expensive fuel, and they are on the highway system. Compare that to the North Slope or other areas of the state. He has not done an historical analysis. They could try to pull that data. He thought district budgets were available on DEED for the past decade. Even in Alaska there is tremendous variation due to different costs, but that's why the formula has a cost differential to equalize the fact that a district in a remote area has very high costs. The 75.8 percent represents all the expenses happening directly in the school building that support instruction. The telecom costs to get Internet into schools are high. Many schools do get E-rate, but it is still a cost they report. The census bureau definition, probably from 30 years ago, does not include that in the 100 Function. Alaska correctly has shown that.

SENATOR HUGHES said that had the other states listed in the census done these same kinds of adjustment, New York's would have shot up. The census is trying to compare apples to apples, even though every state is unique. Her point is that if they were to make readjustments like this, all states would bump up. That is her concern. She wants as many dollars as possible to get into the classrooms. Teacher salaries are probably on the low end and that is concerning. If they could become more efficient with administration, that is important.

DR. PARADY said they will do the research on the census piece that she requested. That is apples to oranges, but they can account for some of that in getting that information to her. What is critical to understand today, this is the current year from the Department of Education and Early Development. The department, from forever, has defined this as instruction and based on definitions that Alaska uses, they are at 75.8 percent statewide going into instruction. She appreciates the census data, but at the end to the day, it is not the number they use in Alaska to define instruction. This is the formula by the charter of accounts that they are required to report and have historically. It is unfortunate that they have been using a number that does not reflect practice in Alaska with regard to

instruction. Their effort was to lay it out for the legislature, to be very transparent and show exactly what those numbers are. She is so happy that ALASBO is part of their team. She would volunteer them for anyone who would like to talk further. She would like the legislators' real concerns answered. They have the experts who are prepared to do it. She wants everyone at the committee to leave with the confidence that they are putting the vast majority of dollars into instruction and that 76 percent number is way closer to any mark that has been shared.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked if that 76 percent is linked to the 7[0] percent rule that required waivers from small rural school districts because they couldn't meet that.

MR. HORN replied that this was the definition used in that statute, which was repealed because rural Alaska school districts' high cost of operations and maintenance and no economies of scale. They would get waivers from the rule, which was a long process. For the most part, that waiver was for districts with small budgets in the scheme of the \$2 billion budget. Most of that goes to large urban areas in Alaska. It is good to look at the total system. Two-thirds of this is funded by the state legislature through appropriations and the other third is through E-rate and federal, state, and local contributions and other revenues.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND said that if they were still looking at that requirement, they would be at 76 percent average across the state, so they are doing better across the state, on an average basis.

MR. HORN answered on an average basis, yes. They are above the 70 percent that was the floor set.

DR. PARADY said the Mat-Su number is close to 78 or 79 percent, Kenai is around 79 percent, and the Anchorage School District is in that high 70s. It is an average. It demonstrates that districts are committed to putting the dollars into classrooms to support students. Businesses would be hard pressed to meet an administrative cost of six percent.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND said that she agreed. She wanted to make a point from her experience as a school board member for the Anchorage School District school board, the largest district in the state. When her term ended in 2003, they had considered joining the Great City Schools Conference, made up of the 100 largest school districts in the nation. At that time Anchorage

was approximately number 80 in that ranking. That is how to compare apples to apples. It is very hard to compare a large, urban district like Anchorage to small, tiny single-site school districts. Anchorage was in line with what other similar-sized school districts were spending. One of these days she wants to see the 54 percent chart that is being bandied about. This set of statistics has been very valuable to her. She has not seen one like the pink chart before [COMBINED ALL SCHOOL DISTRICTS STATE OF ALASKA]. She would like the teacher statistics and the classroom size statistics that he spoke about in the narrative.

[9:26:43 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY said that all communities are interested in these numbers and want their instructional dollars to be as high as possible. She asked how often they do community outreach, such as speaking to Rotary clubs and Chambers of Commerce, to give them this data so that they understand. When Mr. Horn said that six percent is for administration, she thought of how often they hear that administration is top heavy.

MR. HORN replied that they could do better engagement with the community. He presents this to his board as the business manager. One is always concerned about administrative costs and being efficient as they can. For example, the per student cost is \$267 for the district administration, which is the office of the superintendent, the school board, legal costs. That is like one trip to Costco once a year for leadership administration. Business services is a bigger category. That is payroll and all those things. There is all the effort people have to put into reporting state and federal data. Six percent is lean. Even he was pleasantly surprised when he did the analysis. Those other areas besides the six percent that are supportive functions are mostly the buildings, student activities, and school secretaries. That is not some big administration. That is people right with the kids.

DR. PARADY said it is the primary job of superintendents and principals to speak with their community organizations not only about their lean and efficient operations but to tell about the great things happening in education. All their education leaders own that as a responsibility and do a good job of getting out to communities. In these times, sharing these numbers is even more important. They can redouble their efforts to talk about this.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked Mr. Pederson to talk about the Title I preschool in his school and his observations about early intervention and instruction at the preschool level.

MR. PEDERSON said that every year they do a community screening. They use the DIAL [Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning] assessment to screen students. With DIAL they rank students and take the students who have the most needs academically and socially. They have a morning and afternoon preschool. The focus depends on the cohort. Traditionally, when those students become kindergarteners, they know how school works and so do the parents.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked if they are able to follow the progress of those preschoolers through his school.

MR. PEDERSON said that he can get that for her. The school has data from AIMSweb.

9:32:04 AM

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS said they were talking about identifying issues early. There has been a lot of discussion in the building and in the administration about holding students back at the third grade to make sure they have reading proficiency. When he has talked to educators and school board members about this, they talk about the wraparound services that would be integral to making sure that would be successful instead of just failing kids at third grade. He asked what wraparound services Mr. Pederson would need at his school to make a program like that successful and how does early childhood fit into that.

9:32:52 AM

MR. PEDERSON said that with early childhood, the longer they have them, the more time they can provide those wraparound services. At his school they have intervention. AIMSweb is a diagnostic assessment they use to pull out students who are struggling or not making gains. They monitor the rate of improvement. They address the student's specific needs and watch for nine to 12 weeks to see if intervention is working. If the intervention isn't working, they have to try something else. They have to meet students where they are. Many students are coming in with trauma. This month he had two students with significant OCS reports. Getting those kids to read right now focus is not their focus. Their focus is can they make it through the day, can they get them ready to learn. Those are the wraparound services they are providing. When looking at the school administrators as part of the 76 percent, he thought that he is definitely a teacher throughout the day. He is written into most behavior plans. They are short on subs all the time.

He was teaching music last week. Those are the wraparound services they provide.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked if children need an IEP to get wraparound services.

MR. PEDERSON answered not at that point. They are trying to do whatever they can prior to that. Usually the process to be placed on an IEP is first weeks of intervention and switching things up. If that doesn't succeed, then they do a more intensive approach, which could be an IEP.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS clarified that it avoids the IEP and special education designation early on. He asked if an IEP would be for third grade or later and that is how it cuts back on special education designation, because it is caught earlier, and students have had those services.

MR. PEDERSON said that in his district they use RTI. They do have students getting IEPs before third grade, but they try to hold off on putting a label like learning disabled on students.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS stated that some students need the designation early and quickly to get services and preschool certainly helps get those students the services they need.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked if the Title I preschool is funded through the Title I program, not through Head Start.

MR. PEDERSON said it is a federal grant, Title I funds.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND said the ASDN presentation referred to a webinar series on trauma-informed and engaged practice and positive behavior intervention and supports. Schools are not simply teaching any more. She asked if that training was not provided on trauma-informed and engaged practice, what would school be like.

MR. PEDERSON answered that he just went through Dr. Chamberlain's course that the district brought to them. It is almost a mindset. A kid is not being defiant because the kid wants to ruin his day. There are significant needs that they need to address. They would probably be working in triage mode.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND said it's not the what did you do question, it's what happened to you. She is starting to understand how all this works. It is incredible that they are having to provide

services like this, but if they didn't, teaching and learning would not happen.

DR. PARADY said that ASDN introduced Linda Chamberlain to Alaska about ten years ago because their educators have needed that support with trauma-informed and trauma-engaged practices. They have offered that for years and will continue to do so. It is a basic need. Those skills are required today to best support students.

CO-CHAIR STORY said they hear the job of teaching is getting harder. She asked if the association has data that the job is harder and if the number of special kids is increasing.

DR. PARADY answered that they do not have those trendlines, but maybe DEED does. They will be working on getting that to her.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND said the remote schools have the highest turnover among teachers and principals in 2018 and 2019. She asked Mr. Carstens if they have any idea how Alaska's turnover rate compares to other states.

MR. CARSTENS replied that Alaska does have a higher turnover rate. He is not sure what it is in the lower 48. At times he gets phone calls from principals in rural areas. They are often from out of state. They come to Alaska after they have retired in the lower 48 and are looking for an adventure. A lot of people come and end up leaving. Some people make it. It is such a different animal than what they are used to, being able to drive to the store to buy a gallon of milk for a couple of bucks instead of going to the store and buying a gallon of milk for 15 bucks. Unique challenges.

DR. PARADY said that they are in a cohort with the states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana with the Northwest Regional Lab to study what that looks like. All the states are experiencing an extreme shortage. They are trying to understand all sides of that. What the shortage looks like. What strategies are working. What are the reasons for the turnover. She will share the preliminary data with the committee.

CO-CHAIR STORY said she appreciated the efforts and partnerships to grow their own educators.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS said that they spoke about Educators Rising, the teacher mentorship program, and the teacher job fair with only 80 some candidates instead of hundreds. He pointed out

that those are run through the K-12 Outreach program at the university. Educators Rising, teacher mentorship program, the Alaska teacher placement program, and the place-based curriculum office are all within the K-12 Outreach program. It is not well known and utilized, but it does good and important work. He asked how ACSA partners with that K-12 office.

DR. PARADY responded that ACSA does partner with the K-12 office. They are often presenters at meetings to share opportunities that are available to members. She sits on their advisory board and is in regular contact with Dr. Atwater, who works closely with them, and their director. Her members help to shape the services they provide because they do a great job of doing needs assessment. There has been a lot of discussion around Alaska Teacher Placement and what is the future of the job fair in terms of return on investment. They have gone from thousands of applicants to 80. Last year it was 211. They have to look at ways to enhance those numbers. They will continue to work with them to answer those questions. While K-12 is doing wonderful things, her members recognized services that were not being provided to principals, superintendents, and other administrators and took it upon themselves, through their association, to provide those. Mentorship and professional learning in those early transition years can help to retain them. They know anecdotally, from talking to new folks, that it does make a difference when they get that call from a mentor or have that opportunity to call someone. She could tell many stories about a superintendent flying on his or her own dime to fly to another district to help that first-time superintendent with the budget. There are incredible stories. These folks are helping each other. There isn't a person in the room who wouldn't pick up a phone to do so. It is remarkable. They understand that they are in crisis and everyone is doing what they can.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS said he has heard almost identical issues with teacher turnover. Mentorship, support, and understanding how the world works are things shared throughout the school system.

MR. CARSTENS said that no one knows what the future holds for the teacher job fair. One of the reasons is that the fair happens in April and school districts don't know their budgets and so no one is hiring there either. No positions are posted, which contributes to losing teachers to the lower 48, so the teachers they do produce, they will lose.

[9:47:48 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH said the elephant in the room is that the legislature forward funded education last year. That included the base student allocation amount plus \$30 million extra dollars. It would take an act of the legislature to reverse that, and he encourages his colleagues not to, but there is discussion in the majorities in the House and Senate to do so. If they did, he asked what impact that would have on teacher turnover.

MR. CARSTENS replied that it would have a huge impact if the \$30 million is repealed. That would force them to go into their reserves more, almost zeroing those reserves. He would presume that many of the nontenured, the younger, dynamic teachers, would leave and not come back. By the time they know their budgets, they will be swimming in the shallow end of a depleted candidate pool.

SENATOR BEGICH said that his follow up is that it would take an act of legislature. Both bodies would have to affirmatively reject the act that passed last year. He wanted to encourage them to remind his legislative colleagues of the devastation this would cause when they have meetings to discuss things like improved graduation rates and how they are on the right trajectory. What Mr. Carstens just said is that they will slip backwards and begin to fail students again. He asked if he is correct in that assumption.

MR. CARSTENS replied that yes, he is exactly right. He thanked him for reminding them that that is something they can advocate for.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND said asked Mr. Horn to explain the community services category on the slide, "COMBINED ALL SCHOOL DISTRICTS STATE OF ALASKA."

MR. HORN said that is not even a tenth of a percent. It relates to activities provided to the community. There are some staffing costs. In the past a lot of costs were going into this category, so this community service line was created. Only a few districts incur those minimal costs.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND noted that Nenana had the funeral of a renowned Alaskan in the school gym recently and there was probably not another facility that could have handled that.

MR. HORN said that was right.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND said that he mentioned that in a number of communities, school districts pay for teacher housing.

MR. HORN said yes. That is under Operations and Maintenance of Plant. There is often a capital component of purchasing the properties. They could be rentals, and then there are the utilities. Some school districts charge rent but at a favorable rate.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND said she was sure that was something school districts in the lower 48 don't do too often.

MR. HORN said he was not aware of any.

[9:55:51 AM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Co-Chair Drummond adjourned the joint meeting of the Senate and House education committees at 9:55 a.m.