

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

April 8, 2019

8:04 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Harriet Drummond, Co-Chair
Representative Andi Story, Co-Chair
Representative Grier Hopkins
Representative Chris Tuck
Representative Tiffany Zulkosky
Representative Josh Revak
Representative DeLena Johnson

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION(S): STRATEGIES FOR MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN STUDENT
ACHIEVEMENT BY THE ALASKA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

TIFFANY JACKSON, Board President
Association of Alaska School Boards; Board President
Aleutians East Borough School District School Board
Sand Point, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Introduced a group of presentations on the
topic, "Strategies for Making a Difference in Student
Achievement," by members of the Association of Alaska School
Boards.

STARR MARSETT, Board President
Anchorage School District School Board
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-provided a PowerPoint presentation
entitled "Strategies for Making a Difference in Student
Achievement within Anchorage School District," dated 4/8/19.

DEENA MITCHELL, Board Member
Anchorage School District School Board
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-provided a PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Strategies for Making a Difference in Student Achievement within Anchorage School District," dated 4/8/19.

KAY ANDREWS, Board President
Southwest Region School District School Board
Dillingham, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-provided a PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Bristol Bay Region CTE."

SHANNON-JOHNSON NANALOOK, Board Member
Lake and Peninsula School District School Board; Board Member
CTE Governance Board
Newhalen, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided a personal story of support for the Bristol Bay Regional Career and Technical Education Consortium.

KIMBERLY WILLIAMS, Board President
Dillingham City School District School Board
Dillingham, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-provided a PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Bristol Bay Region CTE."

REBECCA HAMON, Board Member
Bristol Bay Borough School District School Board
King Salmon, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-provided a PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Bristol Bay Region CTE."

ROXANNE BROWER, Board President
North Slope Borough School District School Board
Utqiagvik, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Introduced North Slope Borough School District leadership prior to the PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Early Childhood Education at NSBSD," dated 4/4/19.

STEWART MCDONALD, Superintendent
North Slope Borough School District
Utqiagvik, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-provided a PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Early Childhood Education at NSBSD," dated 4/4/19.

KATHY ITTA AHGEAK, Director of Inupiaq Education
North Slope Borough School District
Utqiagvik, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-provided a PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Early Childhood Education at NSBSD," dated 4/4/19.

MURIEL BROWER, Board Member
North Slope Borough School District School Board
Utqiagvik, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Early Childhood Education at NSBSD," dated 4/4/19.

JIM SLATER, Board President
Pelican School Board
Pelican, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided a statement in his capacity as president of the Pelican School Board.

FRANK KELTY, Mayor
Unalaska; Board President
Unalaska City School Board
Unalaska, Unalaska, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided a statement in his capacity as the mayor of Unalaska and the president of the Unalaska City School Board.

BARBARA AMAROK, Vice President/Clerk
Nome Public Schools School Board
Nome, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-provided a PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Strategies for Making a Difference in Student Achievement," by the Alaska Association of School Boards.

EMELY MARTINEZ, Student Representative
Lower Kuskokwim School District; Student
Bethel Regional High School
Bethel, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified following the presentations by members of the Alaska Association of School Boards.

MAYA WALL, Student
Bethel Regional High School
Bethel, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified following the presentations by members of the Association of School Boards.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:04:42 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HARRIET DRUMMOND called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:04 a.m. Representatives Story, Tuck, Revak, Hopkins, and Drummond were present at the call to order. Representatives Zulkosky and Johnson arrived as the meeting was in progress.

PRESENTATION(S): Strategies for Making a Difference in Student Achievement by the Alaska Association of School Boards

[8:05:12 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND announced the only order of business would be presentations on the topic, "Strategies for Making a Difference in Student Achievement," by the Alaska Association of School Boards (AASB).

[8:05:56 AM](#)

TIFFANY JACKSON, Board President, Association of Alaska School Boards, and Board President, Aleutians East Borough School District School Board, informed the committee local school board members are responsible for the governance and allocation of resources within school districts, and must make difficult choices on how to manage dwindling resources and increasing mandates. She referred to a survey that indicated Alaskans have overwhelming support for public education: 79.7 percent of Alaskans surveyed support providing students with a well-rounded education; 72.1 percent support elected officials who increase funding for [kindergarten through twelfth grade] (K-12) education. Ms. Jackson said school boards strive to meet challenges and to work in the best interest of students as evidenced by the following presentations. She stressed that without support from all legislators - no matter what actions educators and school boards implement - Alaska will fail to meet its minimum basic requirement to fund and support quality education for all of its students.

The committee took a brief at-ease.

[8:10:42 AM](#)

STARR MARSETT, Board President, Anchorage School District School Board, co-provided a PowerPoint presentation entitled,

"Strategies for Making a Difference in Student Achievement within Anchorage School District," dated 4/8/19. She stated the Anchorage School District (ASD) has strategies for student success through its mission - Destination 2020 - including six initiatives or goals, the successes of which are measured by a public data dashboard (slides 2 and 3). She explained the data dashboard provides easily accessible information on students such as school, grades, ethnicity, proficiency, and behavior. One specific initiative is to increase reading proficiency (slide 4), and she directed attention to slide 5, which illustrated the K-2 reading benchmark measuring curriculum-based reading. Ms. Marsett pointed out at Homestead Elementary in Eagle River, winter assessments indicate reading proficiency was increased and the school is moving toward the goal of lowering the percentage of at-risk students. The district also offers Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) programs at Central and Campbell schools; exceptional world language programs; career technical education; dual high school and college credits; robust fine arts; home school resources at Central school; online learning; future coding in elementary schools (slide 6). Ms. Marsett continued, noting ASD has a goal to expand its existing internship program and provide internships for all students within the next five years (slide 7). Slide 8 illustrated the success of a student who attends Specialized Academic Vocational Education (S.A.V.E.) High School. Ms. Marsett cautioned all of the aforementioned programs could "be gone tomorrow" due to painful cuts to resources. She said, "We've been asked to do more with less and I think we've done that, but to do less with less ... you wouldn't see the successes that we're talking about today." Ms. Marsett asked the committee to support HB 287.

[8:16:41 AM](#)

DEENA MITCHELL, Board Member, Anchorage School District School Board, expressed her appreciation for the committee's support of HB 287. She returned attention to the internship program and said ASD seeks to provide week-long internships to every high school student, which promotes graduation from high school; however, the program takes resources and is being piloted at King Tech High School. Further, ASD has placed reading and educational coaches in all of its elementary schools. Ms. Mitchell stressed all of these programs take resources.

CO-CHAIR STORY asked how ASD is able to add coding to the elementary curriculum without additional funding.

MS. MARSETT explained coding will be provided in cooperation with a software company at minimal cost to ASD. In further response to Co-Chair Story, she said the program will be offered to fifth or sixth graders and she offered to provide more information when available.

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY returned attention to slide 5 and questioned whether reading proficiency measurements accommodate testing in bilingual students' most proficient language.

MS. MITCHELL said testing is in English; however, the Academic English Learner (AEL) program has been restructured to bring services to the school level and support AEL students.

MS. MARSETT added ASD is exploring ways to better communicate with [AEL] families through a smartphone QR Code Reader that would provide messages from the school in their first language.

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY spoke in support of immersion programs in schools.

[8:21:54 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS noted Ms. Jackson referred to increased mandates placed on schools and asked for examples of mandates that may be unfunded and may not be beneficial.

MS. MITCHELL said Bree's Law [House Bill 214, passed in the Thirtieth Alaska State Legislature] requires training and programming and is an unfunded mandate. She offered to provide additional information in this regard.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND offered to verify the source of funding for Bree's Law.

MS. MARSETT said other mandates, such as third grade retention, are under discussion and expressed her hope ASD and the state would collaborate on mandates.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked what ASD is doing to strengthen social and emotional learning programs.

MS. MARSETT said the district has active social and emotional learning (SEL), and efforts such as Capturing Kids' Hearts furthers relationships between teachers and students. She cautioned schools are not able to provide sufficient counselors

and social workers or suicide prevention; in fact, students have requested more mental health services.

MS. MITCHELL added United Way provides a social worker at Title 1 "plus" schools. However, a student referred for psychiatric services sometimes waits nine or ten months for an appointment.

MS. MARSETT pointed out ASD has four health clinics in schools, which provide mental health services, that are funded through outside organizations and thus are in jeopardy of closing.

[8:26:11 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked how student achievement differs from student learning.

MS. MITCHELL said ASD views each student holistically, including their possible trauma or foibles, hence the impact of SEL efforts. She opined teacher turnover, and a 30 percent [student] transient rate in Anchorage, do not help students form helpful long-term relationships; however, extracurricular activities create opportunities for students to develop long-term relationships.

MS. MARSETT advised learning takes place when a student is present; achievement occurs when the school meets the needs of a student beyond learning.

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK illustrated the importance of technical and arts classes by stories of students who were inspired to stay in school and out of trouble.

[8:30:33 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY returned attention to slide 5 asked what interventions are directed toward K-2 students who are identified with reading proficiency levels of some-risk and at-risk.

MS. MARSETT explained within the English Language Arts program a portion of time is used to work with students in groups based on assessments of their level of proficiency, whether they need extra help, or more challenge.

CO-CHAIR STORY questioned whether there is contact with the parents of children who need extra support.

MS. MARSETT said contact is made through the school, by the teacher, and through the student information system [Zangle/Q].

MS. MITCHELL advised [communication with parents] is an area in which ASD can improve with time and resources; however, improvement is difficult for teachers with large classes.

MS. MARSETT gave an example of a fifth-grade class so large two of the thirty-five students were seated on the windowsill of the classroom.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND questioned whether results have been reported from the new [AEL] program.

MS. MARSETT advised the K-2 program is in its second year and fall and winter measurements have been mixed. The program will take time after a "rough start with our teachers" thus the program will create more interaction with teachers.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked if schools have problems reaching families who do not have smartphones.

MS. MARSETT said she was unaware of any instance where a parent could not be reached.

The committee took a brief at-ease.

[8:37:39 AM](#)

KAY ANDREWS, Board President, Southwest Region School District School Board, co-provided a PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Bristol Bay Region CTE." She introduced a consortium of school boards from four school districts: Southwest Region School District (SWRS); Lake and Peninsula School District (LPSD); Dillingham City School District (DCSD); Bristol Bay Borough School District (BBBSD). Ms. Andrews said the consortium is composed of school districts that support student achievement in the 24 communities of the Bristol Bay region. The Bristol Bay Regional Career and Technical Education Consortium (BBRCTE) seeks to facilitate the delivery of career and technical education (CTE) to students in said school districts. Between fiscal year 2012 (FY 12) and FY 19, hundreds of students from the aforementioned four school districts have taken coursework and/or have completed CTE course work and earned over 1,000 college credits and industry certifications, which could not have been provided by individual school districts (slide 2). The courses and pathways are based on regional and state labor

markets and provide continuing education, apprenticeships, or employment (slide 3). Critical to BBRCTE's success are the partnerships with school districts and local and regional organizations that inform industry-recognized certifications, occupational endorsements, and dual credit opportunities to students (slide 4). Further, the program serves to develop all skills that are necessary to be successful in the workplace (slide 5).

[8:41:12 AM](#)

SHANNON-JOHNSON NANALOOK, Board Member, Lake and Peninsula School District (LPSD) School Board, and Board Member, CTE Governance Board, informed the committee she is a graduate of LPSD and lives with her family in Newhalen. She gave a personal story of her daughter's success after earning her Emergency Trauma Technician certification through the BBRCTE program. Her daughter is now a first responder in their community, a community which lacks law enforcement or adequate healthcare response. In addition, her daughter received dual credits, which allowed her to graduate from high school with honors and pursue her dream of graduation from college. Ms. Nanalook pointed out CTE graduates are workforce ready with skills to find and maintain jobs; the CTE program makes a difference in student achievement in her region.

[8:42:51 AM](#)

KIMBERLY WILLIAMS, Board President, Dillingham City School District School Board, provided examples of risks to BBRCTE's partnerships - and the opportunities and successes it provides to students - that are posed by the governor's proposed budget. She explained each school district provides time for certified staff to develop coursework, and for classified staff to coordinate student travel so that students can participate in one-week courses four times per year. Also, school district administrators provide collaboration and oversight. Ms. Williams stressed Alaska's public schools are at a "tipping point." She said, "... I'm asking you to please place Alaska's future at the forefront of your decision as our students and children will be the leaders of our great state."

[8:44:28 AM](#)

REBECCA HAMON, Board Member, Bristol Bay Borough School District School Board, observed the wide diversity between urban and rural regions is one facet that makes Alaska a unique state.

The communities in the Bristol Bay region are traditional and beloved homelands containing many of Alaska's most valuable resources and profitable industries that are supported by residents of local communities; however, children are the region's most valuable resource and schools provide employment and the "heartbeat" of communities. She cautioned against a future in which Alaskans cannot live with their families in the Bristol Bay region. Ms. Hamon urged for a growing economy and a ready workforce throughout the state made possible by stable funding for schools and innovative programs such as BBRCTE.

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY asked whether BBRCTE receives direct or in-kind financial assistance from any of its partnerships and, if so, the scope of the support that is provided.

MS. ANDREWS said all partners listed on slide 4 have contributed to the program. In further response to Representative Zulkosky, Ms. Andrews said she would provide to the committee the total amount of funding received from BBRCTE partners.

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY expressed her belief partners typically provide a significant amount of money; for example, other Bristol Bay entities have invested tens of thousands of dollars in fisheries research in partnership with the Department of Fish and Game.

[8:48:51 AM](#)

MS. WILLIAMS stated from her knowledge as a board member of the Bristol Bay Native Corporation (BBNC) board of directors, BBNC provides each of the four school districts with \$25,000; furthermore, one of BBNC's subsidiaries provides tax credits to the consortium. These contributions leverage grants to the consortium.

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY concluded slide 4 reflects tens or perhaps hundreds of thousands of dollars of investment by BBRCTE partners.

MS. HAMON agreed the consortium benefits from its great partnerships; however, the program cannot exist without a robust public school foundation that provides teachers and staff.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS strongly supported Ms. Hamon's statement.

CO-CHAIR STORY noted the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DLWD) has proposed HB 67 which would direct DLWD to

collaborate with the Department of Education and Early Development to coordinate and monitor career and technical education programs. She asked whether BBRCTE publicizes its offerings to inform other districts and DLWD, and if BBRCTE has an opinion on the bill.

MS HAMON was unsure as to whether information about the training programs has been circulated beyond the Bristol Bay communities and local industry; she offered to provide more information.

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK expressed his strong support of career and technical education and the partnerships BBRCTE has established with industry.

[8:55:23 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:55 a.m. to 8:59 a.m.

[8:59:27 AM](#)

ROXANNE BROWER, Board President, North Slope Borough School District School Board, informed the committee the North Slope Borough School District (NSBSD) represents Atqasuk, Anaktuvuk Pass, [Utqiagvik], Kaktovik, Nuiqsuit, Point Hope, and Point Wainwright.

[9:00:42 AM](#)

STEWART MCDONALD, Superintendent, North Slope Borough School District, introduced a PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Early Childhood Education at NSBSD." He said the North Slope Borough School District (NSBSD) team is focused on what is important to children in the NSBSD education system. He related NSBSD made a \$1.6 million cut to achieve a balanced budget; in addition, the North Slope Borough cut over \$3.5 million, thus the school district is currently starting the fiscal year with \$7.5 million less in its budget. Dr. McDonald said the following presentation is not about the details of budget cuts but relates to NSBSD's vision of early childhood education - preschool through third grade - and the importance of early childhood education to a former student.

[9:03:07 AM](#)

KATHY ITTA AHGEAK, Director of Inupiaq Education, North Slope Borough School District, gave remarks spoken in her first language, Inupiaq. Ms. Ahgeak said NSBSD seeks ways to bring

people together and considers the very early years of a child's life to be years of tremendous growth that merit significant investment (slide 2). She advised the presenters represent five generations since contact and noted the tremendous change on the North Slope; although change is hard, economy is a philosophy that is embraced by the region. Ms. Ahgeak related NSBSD is redefining its definition of early childhood to "the formative years" even before conscious memory. The North Slope culture seeks to bring elders, youth, and children together to provide a good education for children. She recalled the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Week of the Young Child used to be celebrated in Alaska (slide 3). One of the strategic goals of NSBSD is to create a vehicle through which language and culture programs will revitalize the endangered Inupiaq language; immersion programs are successful and supported by communities in the region. Currently, NSBSD has added two locations of immersion programs to existing programs, and has based its strategy on "creative curriculum," developed by certified teachers and best practices (slides 4-8).

[9:09:29 AM](#)

[Due to technical difficulties, portions of the audio were lost briefly.]

MS. AHGEAK continued, describing how NSBSD is bringing back local teacher aides "that were somewhat pushed out of the system through [the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation]. Another NSBSD strategy is how it directs place- and culture-based education to young children by teacher instruction in the classroom. She closed, relating her personal story of mitigating the effects of difficulties presented by changes to her culture through the "net" provided by the school system.

[Due to technical difficulties, portions of the audio were lost.]

[9:12:20 AM](#)

MURIEL BROWER, Board Member, North Slope Borough School District School Board, informed the committee prior to her childhood, NSBSD had created an early childhood education (ECE) program known as "ECE 3 and ECE 4" to support 3- and 4-year-olds, and to set them up for success. This was a foundation for her success, from [pre-K to twelfth grade], and through the University of Alaska (UA) system. Ms. Brower graduated from Barrow High School in 1997, from UA Fairbanks (UAF) in 2018, and is

continuing her education at UA Southeast (UAS). She acknowledged there are still great racial disparities within Alaska, but her resiliency came because the path of her culture and the path of the public education system worked together successfully. She said her life could have gone differently without the opportunities presented by higher education to her and her mother throughout the public education system, including a pre-K program.

[Due to recording difficulties, the remainder of Ms. Muriel Brower's testimony was lost.]

[Due to recording difficulties, a portion of the audio was lost.]

[9:17:00 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK said the foregoing testimony reminded him of the motto of the [2014] Alaska Federation of Natives: Rise As One. He directed attention to slide 8 and inquired as to NSBSD's teacher turnover rate.

DR. MCDONALD said teacher turnover has been as high as 30 percent, is now improved to 25 percent, and the goal is for 20 percent turnover. He mentioned the difficulty of retaining a workforce in remote villages.

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK lamented the state's unwillingness to compensate teachers and stressed the importance of efforts to make teachers part of their communities. He then asked for more information on the Week of the Young Child.

MS. AGHEAK explained NAEYC has a history of a strong presence in Alaska supporting teachers and honoring their work. The organization sponsors national and regional celebrations during the Week of the Young Child, and in [Utqiagvit], there was once a circus celebration for the community. She expressed her hope this event can again be celebrated in Alaska - especially in rural areas - and suggested a [legislative] proclamation would be appropriate.

[9:22:30 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY, through her personal experience, spoke of the importance of cultural identity programs that are incorporated in the education of young children throughout the

state. She asked how long NSBSD has been working to establish a language immersion program.

MS. AGHEAK said immersion programs begin in the 1990's with collaboration between local scholars and colleagues in Hawai'i. However, the programs struggled to meet testing assessment criteria and to find certified teachers at the first- through fourth-grade levels. Since then, NSBSD has had a partial immersion program in K-3 and K-4, which it seeks to expand with the support of volunteers.

[Due to recording difficulties, a portion of the audio was lost.]

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY asked how bi-lingual and immersion programs effect language proficiency.

[9:27:19 AM](#)

DR. MCDONALD advised, prior to his service in the district, the strategic plan had "pushed out measurement indicators" However, the present school board insisted on the use of measurement indicators, thus, when related to the language program, the use of measurement indicators to guide practice has now been renewed. He acknowledged the district has ways to measure [the success of the language program] and, although the information has not been collected and reported for some time, it is the responsibility of the superintendent of schools to do so.

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY urged school districts that are experienced in delivering place-based indigenous language programs to share their expertise related to measuring program success. She then asked how additional state education budget cuts would impact similar language programs.

DR. MCDONALD restated NSBSD adjusted its budget by \$1.6 million to account for [inflation]. In addition, NSB cut the local school district appropriation by 10 percent, and cut back Career Technology education, Yup'ik education, and other supplemental programs. The final reduction of \$7.5 million came from reduced professional technical services, non-student travel, reduced materials and supplies, and the elimination of 14 positions from districtwide and administrative services. Additional cuts will come from teacher and teacher aide positions.

[9:33:08 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY questioned what has reduced the rate of teacher turnover in NSBSD.

DR. MCDONALD said the school board committed to cultural orientation with staff to ensure teachers feel welcome and understand the school population; also, teachers demanded more engaged professional development. He advised improvements in retention are directly connected to meeting teachers' needs through professional development, supporting curriculum, and cultural integration.

MS. AGHEAK, in response to Co-Chair Drummond, explained ILF stands for Inupiaq Learning Framework, which is "a work in progress for many years." She added even before the school district was incorporated, there was an early initiative that urged for a strong place-based science curriculum to address the interests of the Arctic region.

[Due to recording difficulties, a portion of the audio was lost.]

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked for the source of NSBSD's pre-K funding.

DR. MCDONALD said NSB made a commitment to fund the preschool three- and four-year-old program; also, some developmental preschool funds are received through "special education" and federal and state passthrough grants.

[9:38:06 AM](#)

JIM SLATER, Board President, Pelican School Board, informed the committee he and his wife and three children live in Pelican. For the past 20 years, Pelican has struggled for existence due to the cyclical vagaries of the commercial fishing industry. Efforts by the community to diversify its economy and stabilize its population depend upon the fundamental services supplied by state government, such as support for Pelican City Schools. Currently, there are new families in town and new fish buying and processing businesses, and volunteers are now providing extracurricular classes in the schools. Mr. Slater said the state budget proposal is damaging to Pelican's recovery effort; in fact, the proposed budget cuts will be devastating to the future of Pelican, and he expressed opposition to the proposed budget, noting negative impacts to young Alaskans. Mr. Slater suggested alternatives to cuts to the education budget and urged the committee to "carefully consider our priorities."

[9:40:57 AM](#)

FRANK KELTY, Mayor, Unalaska, and Board President, Unalaska City School Board, said he is a 50-year resident of Unalaska. He described how Unalaska schools have grown from one school that graduated four to five students to two schools of over four hundred-fifty students. He credited the growth and success of Unalaska's schools to the success of the fishing industry, which allows the community to support its school district. Unlike in the past, the school district has received maximum funding from the city for over 35 years. The city also supports school maintenance through a community schools program, and funds preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds, less tuition. Mayor Kelty spoke of the academic achievements of Unalaska schools and said he views a successful educational system as a three-legged stool: funding from the state, funding from the city, and excellent staffing and students. He said quality staff is critical to successful schools and advised the school district hires English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers to serve the children of fish-processing workers, from all over the world, who speak many different languages.

[9:45:39 AM](#)

MAYOR KELTY expressed his concern about the proposed cut to the base student allocation (BSA) that would result in a loss to Unalaska of \$1.3 million, or 17 percent of its budget. The district has about \$700,000 in reserves; however, \$250,000 was used to balance its upcoming budget. He pointed out due to Unalaska's location in the Bering Sea, the school district travel budget is \$600,000. Furthermore, he opined proposed budget cuts to education funding have encouraged staff retirement and discouraged workforce recruitment. Mayor Kelty stressed a quality education is mandated by the Alaska State Constitution.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND questioned the state and local percentages for school funding [in Unalaska].

MAYOR KELTY clarified local funding is 50 percent without contributions for food service, preschool, and community schools.

CO-CHAIR STORY observed Unalaska honors and supports a rich diversity of cultures within its school district.

[9:51:58 AM](#)

BARBARA AMAROK, Vice President/Clerk, Nome Public Schools School Board, informed the committee she has served on the school board for nine years and worked for the school district for twenty years. Nome has recently implemented initiatives that address the long-standing achievement gap for Alaska Native students in order to teach strategies that make a difference. For example, in 2017, Nome Public Schools adopted a strategic equity framework that identifies the district's role in erasing [racial] disparities; a few years ago, it was not recognized that the responsibility for the disparity rests with adults. Although societal and historical factors contribute to inequities, the Nome School District has begun to address and overcome inequities, in the areas of cultural competence, by examining personal biases and placing value on ancient ways of life in Alaska. Dr. Amarok said, "... we've been working with AAFC and with the First Alaskans Institute to hold regional community and district dialogue and provide training in understanding institutional racism. In our district 85 percent of the student population is Alaska Native but there has always been little representation of our history and culture in school." She provided examples of messages of acceptance and understanding of other cultures and stressed the importance of community collaboration and integration to students' wellbeing in school. Dr. Amarok further advised education equity means raising the achievement of all students and narrowing gaps between the lowest and highest performing students to eliminate the disproportionality of achievement. Because past efforts to reach this goal have been unsuccessful, the school district is altering its policy and practices to achieve and maintain racial and societal economic equity; in addition, the Nome School District is working with AASB and other school districts on policies, cultural safety, and other practices. She further explained the concept of educational equity goes beyond formal equality in order "to [foster] a barrier-free environment where all students succeed because of who they are, not in spite of who they are"

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS appreciated Dr. Amarok's testimony regarding institutional racism.

[9:56:23 AM](#)

EMELY MARTINEZ, Student Representative, Lower Kuskokwim School District, and a student at Bethel Regional High School, expressed appreciation for the school districts that fight for

the future leaders of Alaska. She said she moved to Alaska from Georgia and is happy she now receives personal attention in her small class from her teachers who want her to succeed. She cautioned budget cuts will harm students and deprive them of motivation, which is vital for students who live in rural areas.

[9:58:53 AM](#)

MAYA WALL, Student, Bethel Regional High School, said she is new to Alaska and appreciates the opportunities offered at her school that have created new possibilities for her.

[10:00:18 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 10:00 a.m.