

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

April 10, 2019

8:01 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

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Representative DeLena Johnson

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

CONFIRMATION HEARING(S) :

Alaska Board of Education & Early Development

Sally Stockhausen - Ketchikan, Alaska  
Bob Griffin - Anchorage, Alaska

- CONFIRMATION(S) ADVANCED

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

SALLY STOCKHAUSEN, Appointee  
Alaska Board of Education & Early Development  
Ketchikan, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as appointee to the Alaska Board of Education & Early Development.

BOB GRIFFIN, Appointee  
Alaska Board of Education & Early Development  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified as appointee to the Board of Education & Early Development.

## **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[8:01:46 AM](#)

**CO-CHAIR HARRIET DRUMMOND** called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:01 a.m. Representatives Story, Revak, Hopkins, and Drummond were present at the call to order. Representatives Tuck and Zulkosky arrived as the meeting was in progress.

### **CONFIRMATION HEARING(S)** **Alaska Board of Education & Early Development**

[8:02:28 AM](#)

**CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND** announced that the only order of business would be the confirmation hearing for the governor's appointee(s) to the Alaska Board of Education & Early Development.

[8:03:52 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:04 a.m. to 8:05 a.m. to address technical difficulties.

[8:05:07 AM](#)

**SALLY STOCKHAUSEN**, Appointee, Alaska Board of Education & Early Development, provided her background information. She is a special education teacher at Ketchikan High School. She began her teaching career in 1998, in Texas, and moved with her husband to Glen Allen, Alaska, in 2002, which is when she got her start as a paraeducator. She said being an advocate for students in special education is her passion. She earned a master's in special education at University of Alaska - Anchorage (UAA). She has taught in Ketchikan since 2008. She emphasized her interest in teaching students who struggle how to advocate for themselves and creating a safe learning environment for them.

**MS. STOCKHAUSEN** said the board is strong and committed to investing in the future of Alaska. She stated her support of the mission statement that every student receive an excellent education every day. She expressed support of the Alaska Education Challenge to increase student success, cultivate student wellbeing, and support responsible and reflective learning. She expressed excitement regarding the trauma

informed school movement that she said is transforming schools. She said the movement addresses the issues that classroom teachers have been struggling with in helping students. She said she is optimistic in the benefits that can result from addressing the traumas that many students or their families are facing.

MS. STOCKHAUSEN listed that which she brings to the board: years of teaching at the elementary and secondary level; experience teaching in inner-city and rural schools; years teaching general education, English as a second language (ESL), and special education; and service on "many teams and committees." She expressed excitement in the opportunity to bring her perspectives to the board, as well as the opportunity to gain new perspective by serving on the board. She said times are challenging.

[8:08:28 AM](#)

MS. STOCKHAUSEN imparted that her goal for the board is to help districts implement the Alaska Education Challenge by finding creative ways "to increase students' success, cultivate safety, and support learners." She called educators resourceful people, and she said she is excited to be helping to find ways to make the education system sustainable in a changing economy. She emphasized the importance of addressing trauma so that students are able to learn. She stated, "Often out of times of adversity comes times of great growth." She said she sees struggles related to test scores, budget issues, and accreditations as opportunities for growth. She emphasized the importance of skills classes to give students, who may struggle in school, confidence. She said she is excited about the goal of improving partnerships with families, communities, and tribes, which is a priority at the state level.

[8:10:34 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY asked Ms. Stockhausen what she believes are the tools to help students reach third-grade literacy standards.

MS. STOCKHAUSEN answered that the earliest intervention is the best. In the past, screening was not done until third grade, and it is known now that if a child is not reading by third grade, he/she is never going to "catch up."

[8:11:51 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK asked how Ms. Stockhausen was selected for a position on the board.

MS. STOCKHAUSEN offered her understanding that those doing the selecting were looking for someone in Southeast Alaska. She expressed interest, applied, and "went through the process." In response to a follow-up question, she said the role of a board member is to support the goals set forth in the Alaska Education Challenge, set policies to that end, and support districts that are implementing [the policies and practices necessary to reach] those goals. To a question regarding Mt. Edgecombe, she offered her understanding that the board has a liaison that goes to Mt. Edgecombe's meetings. She recapped her passion related to supporting children, and she talked about taking a more active role in standards, assessments, and policies, along with the staff of the Department of Education & Early Development (DEED). She recollected some committee names related to standards and assessments and policy.

[8:14:44 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY asked Ms. Stockhausen if she supports Governor Mike Dunleavy's proposal to reduce school funding by 25 percent.

MS. STOCKHAUSEN said the budget worries her; however, she is also concerned about the financial future of Alaska. She said she does not envy the job of the legislature and the governor to figure out how to create a budget that works now and for future generations. She stated, "I thank you for your service in carrying this burden for us, so we as a board can focus on students in Alaska."

CO-CHAIR STORY said she views the board's role as being an advocate for public education, and she expressed her hope that the board would "adequately look at situations and make advisements based on what they see as the need." She said she knows resourcing is "not everything to make positive changes," but it does matter; therefore, she expressed her hope that Ms. Stockhausen would "adequately advise for public education."

[8:16:16 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND noted that Ms. Stockhausen had "worked through multisensory instruction" in Copper Center, and she asked if that included the identification of children with dyslexia.

MS. STOCKHAUSEN responded that there was multisensory training, but "what we had was the Linda McBell [program]." She explained it as "a huge assessment package" that breaks reading down into little parts. She said, "While we didn't and couldn't, exactly, diagnose people with dyslexia, we could easily find out where the weaknesses were." She explained that the Linda Bell program helped in finding students with "dyslexia-like tendencies."

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked Ms. Stockhausen if, as a special education teacher, she is aware of a letter from the U.S. Department of Education stating that dyslexia is an identifiable reading disability, which should be identified in students by schools.

MS. STOCKHAUSEN answered yes.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND, assuming the necessary training did not occur, asked whether Ms. Stockhausen is able to recognize dyslexia in students now and subsequently able to do something for those high school students she teaches.

MS. STOCKHAUSEN answered yes. She said the Ketchikan School District does not use the Linda McBell program, but her training has helped her to identify those children who have dyslexia and are not already coping with it, by giving them a reading assessment. She said she has paraprofessionals on her staff who have taught reading at the elementary level; therefore, as a team they work together "to meet those needs."

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND noted that Ms. Stockhausen had said she had worked in an inner-city school district.

MS. STOCKHAUSEN confirmed she had worked for four years in a school district in Fort Worth, Texas.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked Ms. Stockhausen if she supported the section of the Constitution of the State of Alaska that promises appropriate public education to every student in the state.

MS. STOCKHAUSEN said she swore on the constitution and it is her duty as a board member to uphold the constitution; however, in terms of amendments to the constitution, she said, "It's my duty to also be open to the discussion from all angles, to help make a decision of what is best for students." She added, "But if the constitution prohibits that, then it's my job to support that."

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked whether the Ketchikan School District had done an assessment on the impact of the governor's proposed budget cuts.

MS. STOCKHAUSEN answered yes. She said it is terrifying how many teachers could be lost and how that could affect class sizes; however, she said she is split on the issue, because there needs to be change made for a sustainable future. She said, "It's time to go back to the table and say, 'Okay, what can we do to make this work?'"

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked how Ms. Stockhausen would vote on the governor's budget as a board member.

MS. STOCKHAUSEN answered as follows:

I'm going to yield to our statement that we released, that we're supportive of you guys, and we're supportive of the governor, as you work together to create a budget that will carry us into the future. And regardless of how much that budget increases or decreases, we're going to remain steadfast to the Alaska Education Challenge.

[8:23:31 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK posited, "That's kind of a non-opinion statement."

MS. STOCKHAUSEN responded, "Uh-huh."

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK offered his understanding that Co-Chair Drummond had asked specifically how Ms. Stockhausen would vote on "this past budget."

MS. STOCKHAUSEN acknowledged that she had, but said that at this point the board is not going to vote on that. She concluded, "And so, I'm going to yield to that."

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK cited AS 14.07.150, which read as follows:

Sec. 14.07.150. Budget and fiscal authority.  
The commissioner has responsibility and authority for the preparation and execution of a budget and for the other fiscal affairs of the department, subject to the approval of the board.

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK asked again if Ms. Stockhausen would approve of the budget.

MS. STOCKHAUSEN apologized for not answering the question directly, but explained that she felt she needed to "stay united" with the statement released by the board. She reiterated her concerns both with the budget and with the future of Alaska, and she concluded, "I don't know where that answer lies."

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK pointed out that Ms. Stockhausen has a role and responsibility [as a member of the board], and avoiding it, even united with others, "isn't what's written in statute." He encouraged Ms. Stockhausen to read the applicable statutes in order to understand her role on the board.

MS. STOCKHAUSEN thanked Representative Tuck.

[8:25:23 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE REVAK expressed his appreciation for Ms. Stockhausen's resume, the work she has done, and her avoidance of being political. He said he thinks it is important not to get into partisan politics.

MS. STOCKHAUSEN thanked Representative Revak.

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REPRESENTATIVE TUCK responding that following law isn't playing into politics but is "the duty and responsibility of a board member." He asked Ms. Stockhausen to share which budgets she has had the experience in overseeing.

MS. STOCKHAUSEN answered that she serves on the Ketchikan Theatre Ballet Board, and as such has addressed expense issues. Further, she serves on the board at her church, which includes budget discussion.

[8:26:43 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND said she would like to ask Ms. Stockhausen about preschool, but time had run out. She expressed appreciation for Ms. Stockhausen's service to Alaska.

[8:27:03 AM](#)

BOB GRIFFIN, Appointee, Alaska Board of Education & Early Development, after sharing some information about his wife and children, provided his background information. He said his family has lived in Alaska since 1899, when his great-grandparents came to Skagway to build the White Pass & Yukon Route Railway. At age four, he was one of the first students enrolled in Head Start. He shared that he has been a professional pilot for over 40 years.

MR. GRIFFIN listed the experience he brings to the board: six years on the Budget Advisor Commission for the Anchorage School District; the last eight years on the Capital Improvement Advisory Committee; and ten years as senior education research fellow for the Alaska Policy Forum, which included travel through the U.S. to attend education conferences to seek opportunities to improve student outcomes. He said he has "a wonky sense of curiosity"; he involves himself in the never-ending search for information. He said he hopes to contribute his knowledge working collaboratively with other board members and stakeholders "to fully implement the Alaska Education Challenge to increase students' success, to ... cultivate [the] safety and wellbeing of our students, and [to] support responsible and reflective learning."

MR. GRIFFIN said his personal goals are in line with the Alaska Education Challenge. One is to address "the crisis of early childhood literacy in Alaska." He mentioned a handout [provided to the committee], which outlines the history of test scores for fourth-grade reading; Alaska is shown in the trends. He said he is an advocate of the Florida model, which focuses on improving student outcomes with science-based rating. He said he appreciates the taskforce chaired by Representative Drummond, and he acknowledged the many volunteers who participated in that effort. He opined that early screening of children must be one of the highest priorities. He said the state has had "great pockets of success," as well as "great pockets of disappointing results."

MR. GRIFFIN expressed his excitement to be serving on a board comprising people with a wide variety of skill sets. He said he has gotten to know the members pretty well "over the 32 hours and 1,800 pages of materials" covered in the first two meetings. He relayed that he is currently serving on Regulatory Review Subcommittee, and he expressed pride in being the only non-Inupiaq speaker serving on the Tribal Compact Subcommittee that was recently formed. He said he is excited to be present to tackle challenges. He stated, "Despite our challenges, I'm

always comforted by the knowledge that our kids are just as bright as kids anywhere; our teachers are just as dedicated; and our parents love their kids just as much as parents anywhere else." He opined that strong policy prescriptions will enable children to achieve at "the level that they naturally would."

8:34:51 AM

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked if Mr. Griffin has any experience in the education system within schools.

MR. GRIFFIN answered that he has been involved in his children's schools, and he said he had been a flight instructor. He opined that one of "the beauties" of the Alaska Board of Education & Early Development is the wide variety of skill sets brought by its members, and many of those skills complement one another. To a follow-up question, he said he has no inside school experience other than his six years serving as member and chair of the budget advisory commission for the Anchorage School District, during which time he visited about half the campuses in the district.

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REPRESENTATIVE TUCK noted that his own experience on a like committee gave him insight into how the school system works. He revisited the previous discussion concerning the board's role regarding budget and the statement read by Ms. Stockhausen, and he asked, "Are you standing beside that statement, as well?"

MR. GRIFFIN answered, "Absolutely." He said he thinks it is important that the board maintain solidarity on this issue and do the best job it can with the resources allocated. He talked about the substantive discussions by the board toward improving the outcome for students.

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK said part of the budgeting process includes recommendations by commissioners of departments for the governor and the legislature to consider. The final say involves "the governor's veto pen." He said [the legislature] relies heavily on the recommendations of the board and DEED regarding the budget. He said he knows the governor wants to take the control away from the board, and he said he does not like to see new board members let that happen. He mentioned a legal opinion by the Department of Law, which left out AS 37.07.110, which read:

Sec. 37.07.110. Interpretation of chapter.

This chapter shall be construed as supplemental to all other state laws not in conflict with it. If a section or part of a section of this chapter is in conflict with federal requirements for a program for which federal grant-in-aid funds are available, the section or part, to the extent of the conflict, is inoperative.

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK said the first line in that statute addresses the Executive Budgeting Act. He said, "The statute that is more prescriptive is the one that prevails." He opined that there is "very prescriptive language" related to the role and responsibilities of the board. He indicated that "shall be construed as supplemental" means that the language is not in conflict with other statute. He said he feels this administration is "trying to cripple education in putting board members in there that are willing to go along with that." He said he hopes Mr. Griffin will stand up for his role and responsibility as a board member.

MR. GRIFFIN responded that because board members live across the state and do not have the time and resources to prepare the budget, he sees the board's role more as on the execution of the budget - to take the allocated resources and execute the vision and produce best educational outcomes. He said "we" are in the horrible position of having to reduce good programs to preserve the core program for long-range stability.

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK emphasized the importance of hearing from the board as to what resources would be needed to follow the aforementioned Florida model for literacy. He opined that "the solidarity stand" [of board members] does not support the idea that there is passion for education. He said that if the board cannot convince the governor of what needs to happen, then it may need to convince the legislature. He acknowledged that serving at the whim of the governor can result in "walking a fine line"; however, he expressed hope that [Mr. Griffin] would "find boldness" to support his vision for the board.

[8:44:56 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked whether Mr. Griffin is currently a member of the Alaska Policy Forum.

MR. GRIFFIN answered yes. He answered a series of follow-up questions. He confirmed his work is strictly volunteer. He confirmed that he was one of the people who wrote the report

regarding literacy and "must read by [age] nine." He said he thinks the policy prescriptions being requested in the "read by nine" document closely mirror the laws passed in 2002 in Florida. He said it is difficult to "divvy out if those were the only things that ... created better student outcomes." He mentioned the chart he had previously provided to show that one good outcome in Florida was in relation to reading levels of low-income students, which rose from "twenty-eighth to first" in a short time. He confirmed that Florida has a similar system to that of Alaska. Regarding how a cost differential might compare between the two states, he said it is more expensive to do things in Alaska. He said K-12 spending in Alaska and average student daily attendance has grown faster than in Florida over the last 18-year period [since] the policies in Florida were instituted. He said Alaska does not spend too much, but Florida has found a way to reallocate resources on a tight budget. He said Florida has a constitutional amendment limiting class sizes; however, he noted that Florida currently has about 19 students per educator, whereas Alaska averages 13 students per educator. Florida's pre-K program came about in 2005, and "voluntary pre-K has probably helped them maintain their number one status; it wasn't actually part of the number one status."

[8:51:49 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY said cost comparisons are often made between Alaska and other states, but she pointed out that the cost of living in Florida is dramatically different from that in rural Alaska. She offered examples of the high cost of living in rural Alaska. She asked Mr. Griffin if he recognizes that there is a stark difference in providing education throughout rural Alaska compared to Florida.

MR. GRIFFIN answered, "Absolutely." He said as chair of the Budget Advisory Commission, he is familiar with the cost drivers of K-12 education, many of which are related to outside classroom costs, such as healthcare. He said this begs the question as to how some states have been able reign in cost drivers when some of them have grown out of control for Alaska.

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY asked whether Mr. Griffith, as a board member, would "uphold the solvency of delivering education throughout Alaska equitably through full and adequate funding of the (indisc.) student allocation" and by increasing opportunities for funding to ensure the provision of "adequate state match for early learning programs."

MR. GRIFFIN answered yes. He said the state board will take the resources available to produce the best student outcomes, while living "within the reality of the situation that we're in."

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY echoed Representative Tuck's statement that the board is in the position of developing a position that is then forwarded to the governor and legislature for consideration; therefore, she implored Mr. Griffith that the board take a position advocating education with adequate funding.

[8:57:11 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY said her experience shows larger class sizes than what Mr. Griffith stated as the number 13. She encouraged him to visit schools, because she said the board is responsible for knowing the students it serves and classroom situations, and for being the voice for students.

[8:58:17 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND noted that among the solutions Mr. Griffith proposed in a report are home reading programs. To that end, she asked what he thought about the governor's proposal to completely eliminate the Parents As Teachers program and Best Beginnings, the latter of which provides books to thousands of children in Alaska.

MR. GRIFFIN reiterated that the state is in the horrible situation of having to reduce programs to preserve core programs.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND emphasized the programs are being eliminated, not reduced.

MR. GRIFFITH reiterated his statement about having to eliminate programs in order to preserve core programs.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND said Florida has voluntary universal preschool. She said Governor Dunleavy is proposing to eliminate any preschool programs, as well as the Head Start program's basic grant, which she said generates another \$50 million in federal revenue. She asked Mr. Griffith if he approves of the elimination of preschool when it contributes to improved reading scores.

MR. GRIFFIN said he personally gained value from the Head Start program as a child. He suggested there are possibly more innovative solutions available to produce similar outcomes if Alaska is in the situation where it cannot afford preschools.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND questioned how the expense of the innovative solutions would be covered. She then asked Mr. Griffith whether he supports Governor Dunleavy's "sweep of the higher education investment fund that currently generates about \$20 million in interest revenues at over 6 percent a year [and] provides scholarships and grants to hundreds of Alaskan students." She explained that the fund would be swept into the general fund where the scholarship applicants would have to compete with every other request of the general fund, and it would generate less than one percent in interest, and once it is spent, it would be gone.

MR. GRIFFIN responded that that issue is not in his wheelhouse; therefore, he could not make an educated comment.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND said she would then ask a series of questions to which she asked Mr. Griffith to provide a yes or no answer. She asked whether it is true that Mr. Griffith would not run for public office again because he refused to take the candidate training class from the Alaska Public Offices Commission (APOC).

MR. GRIFFIN answered no.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND remarked that she has a file from APOC in which indicates Mr. Griffith had said he would not take [the training]. She then asked Mr. Griffith whether it is true that APOC found that Mr. Griffith accepted cash contributions for his campaign for school board in excess of the allowed amount.

MR. GRIFFIN answered, "That's true."

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND asked Mr. Griffith if it is true that APOC found that he accepted anonymous contributions to his campaign for school board.

MR. GRIFFIN answered, "That's true." He began to offer an explanation.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND interjected her next question, asking whether it is true that APOC could not determine how Mr. Griffith spent excess campaign funds after the campaign but did determine that

most were taken from the account through automatic teller machine (ATM) withdrawals in another state.

MR. GRIFFIN answered, "That is true."

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND told Mr. Griffith, "In that case, if you can't manage your personal campaign finances running for public office, I can't support you in an appointed position - especially when you're overseeing ... upwards of a billion-dollar budget in the state Department of Education & Early Development." She thanked Mr. Griffith for his public service and his coming forward today.

[9:03:32 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY stated that the House Education Standing Committee had reviewed the qualifications of the governor's appointees to the Alaska Board of Education & Early Development and recommends that the names of Sally Stockhausen and Bob Griffin be forward for consideration by a joint session of the legislature. She said this does not reflect intent by any of the members to vote for or against these individuals during any further sessions for the purposes of confirmation. [The confirmations were considered advanced.]

[9:04:11 AM](#)

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:04 a.m.