

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

March 16, 2020

8:33 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Senator Gary Stevens, Chair
Senator Shelley Hughes, Vice Chair
Senator John Coghill
Senator Tom Begich

HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Senator Mia Costello

HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION: THE STATE OF ALASKA K-12 SCHOOLS BY THE 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 (ACSA)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Introduced the presentation on State of Alaska K-12 Schools.

ROBIN JONES, President
Alaska Council of School Administrators; President
Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals; Principal
Chief Ivan Blunka School
Southwest Region School District
New Stuyahok, Alaska

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

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

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

KAREN MORRISON, President
Alaska Association of School Business Officials (ALASBO);
Finance Director
Petersburg School District
Petersburg, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented for the Alaska Association of School Business Officials.

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

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented on the work of the Alaska Staff Development Network.

SHAWN ARNOLD, President
Alaska Superintendents Association; Superintendent
Valdez School District
Valdez, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented for the Alaska Superintendents Association.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:33:09 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY called the joint meeting of the Senate and House Education Standing Committees to order at 8:33 a.m. Present at the call to order were Representatives Hopkins, Tuck, Prax, Story, and Drummond and Senators Coghill, Hughes, and Begich. Senator Stevens and Representatives Johnson and Zulkosky arrived as the meeting was in progress.

PRESENTATION: THE STATE OF ALASKA K-12 SCHOOLS BY THE ALASKA COUNCIL OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

[8:34:10 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY announced the presentation: The State of Alaska K-12 Schools by the Alaska Council of School Administrators.

CO-CHAIR STORY noted that the presentation would be unique because the committees, meeting jointly, are practicing being as healthy as possible and the guest presenters will present via teleconferencing. She called on Dr. Parady to testify.

[8:35:22 AM](#)

LISA SKILES PARADY, Ph.D., Executive Director, Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA), Juneau, Alaska, said the committees would hear from Alaska's finest administrators. The mission statement of the Alaska Council of School Administrators is to create a common voice, advocating for public education by shaping policy and growing leadership capacity across the state.

[8:37:29 AM](#)

DR. PARADY said she could not proceed without talking about the coronavirus and school closures. She explained that the council has created a website with resources for members, including links to the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) page, to try to be a clearing house for school administrators during this time. The council is working hand-in-hand with Commissioner Michael Johnson and DEED. The council has a weekly call with all superintendents and the commissioner. She thanked Commissioner Johnson and his team for working so closely with the council to keep everyone updated with the information needed during this crisis.

[8:40:40 AM](#)

DR. PARADY displayed an illustration that showed that ACSA is the umbrella organization that represents the Alaska Superintendents Association, the Association of Elementary and Secondary School Principals, and the Alaska Association of School Business Officials. ACSA is a private nonprofit that supports statewide public education.

[8:41:36 AM](#)

DR. PARADY said ACSA presents joint position statements every year that prioritize the most important areas of public education policy to advocate for. She introduced Robin Jones; a principal who has been recognized in the state for 100 percent retention of teachers in one of the state's most rural areas.

[8:42:34 AM](#)

ROBIN JONES, President, Alaska Council of School Administrators, President, Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals, Principal, Chief Ivan Blunka School, Southwest Region School District, New Stuyahok, Alaska, said she was born and raised in Anchorage, but for 11 years she has been in rural Alaska. She cautioned that she wrote her testimony before any real threat from the coronavirus and hopes that it does not appear insensitive. She noted that she changed her plans in the last few days to return to support her students, staff, and community.

[8:44:21 AM](#)

MS. JONES stated that as president of the Alaska Council of School Administrators she has the opportunity to create a vision and guide the council. This year her theme is "creating meaningful connections through unity in leadership."

[8:44:49 AM](#)

MS. JONES said she has been in the same school district for 11 years as school counselor, assistant principal, and now principal. She realized early on that to make a difference in the life of her students she had to first immerse herself in the community and then help her staff connect in the same way.

[8:45:21 AM](#)

MS. JONES related that a recent report from the Pew Research Center identified principals as the most trusted leaders in the

country's most prominent institutions. This public trust puts principals in a better position to advocate for all students. However, with a 38 percent turnover rate for principals and a 36 percent turnover rate for teachers in rural, remote Alaska has caused communities to develop a deep sense of mistrust in schools, principals, and teachers, which makes teacher retention efforts more important than ever.

[8:46:21 AM](#)

MS. JONES said principals affect student learning through their influence over schools, support of staff, and work to maintain a positive culture and climate. Research shows that a principal's ability to create positive working conditions and a collaborative, supportive learning environment plays a critical role in attracting and retaining qualified teachers. Teachers cite principal support as one of the most important factors in their decision to stay at a school or in the profession. When principals leave, teachers' view of their schools and classroom conditions are less favorable. When principal turnover is frequent, teachers and the community are less likely to support the new leader. Principal turnover can derail school improvement initiatives and result in higher teacher turnover, which is related to lower student achievement. ACSA and its affiliate association have joined forces to improve retention across the state.

[8:48:47 AM](#)

MS. JONES said that when she first became a principal, she had access to a rural Alaska principal preparation and support program and the Alaska administrator coaching project. Those programs have long been cut due to funding, but the partnership of ACSA, the Alaska Staff Development Network, DEED, the Anchorage School District, the principal associations, and the University of Alaska Southeast have been able to offer the Alaska School Leadership Academy (ASLA), which provides early-career principals with a mentor and a collegial cohort. She has been a mentor coach to six new principals. The second year of ASLA is just finishing. It has provided limitless benefits to principals, staff, and students across the state.

[8:50:31 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY asked when and how outreach happens when a new principal is hired.

[8:51:04 AM](#)

MS. JONES explained that first- and second-year principals go through a fairly simple identification and application process. They are asked if they are willing to commit to the program through the year, which includes several in-person trainings and a lot of distance delivery work. There is also a narrative about how they would take that training back to their schools.

[8:51:59 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES asked if the leadership academy is tracking whether turnover is reduced if a new principal is mentored.

[8:52:33 AM](#)

MS. JONES replied the ASCA is tracking that data and she believes they could provide it.

[8:53:17 AM](#)

MS. JONES said stable leadership matters. She made a commitment to be consistent for students, staff, and community year after year. She has guided people to be deeply connected to their work, community, and each other. At the school level, principals are the second most important factor associated with student achievement, right after teachers. The average cost of teacher turnover is \$20,000 as opposed to \$75,000 for each principal turnover. Her site has had many years of nearly 100 percent retention. But instead of investing in these exceptional teachers and principals to combat this alarming turnover, public education is continually on the chopping block.

[8:54:50 AM](#)

MS. JONES said staff members function as counselors, nurses, social workers, law enforcement agents, and mental health providers for students with some of the highest rates of trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences. These communities lack adequate public safety supports and health services. Each of these teachers go above and beyond for these children each day with limited resources and training to be everything. One hundred percent of her certified staff, including herself, fall into the Tier III defined contributions retirement system without access to Social Security or safety in their future. Many rural Alaska leaders model what has been accomplished in New Stuyahok. However, until education funding is prioritized, a

more competitive retirement system is adopted, and school safety measures are adopted, including social, emotional, and mental health supports, the students and communities will suffer the most. She urged the committee to support any legislation that helps to create these meaningful connections through unity in leadership.

CHAIR STEVENS called on Eric Pederson.

[8:56:42 AM](#)

ERIC PEDERSON, President, Alaska Association of Elementary School Principals, Principal, Paul Banks Elementary, Homer, Alaska, said he has been the president of Paul Banks Elementary for seven years. He has three children in the public school system. He noted that he prepared his testimony over the last few months. His thoughts are with his community in Homer as it deals with this changing situation.

[8:57:44 AM](#)

MR. PEDERSON said he wanted to address the current state of education as an elementary principal. In the past he always spoke of staffing uncertainty due to funding. This is the first year in a long time that this was not the case. He thanked the legislators for allowing his district to capitalize on early staffing and budgeting. It has had a direct effect on his building, community, and most importantly, on the future success of his students. Timely and reliable funding of education is the most important topic in the budget discussion.

[8:58:17 AM](#)

MR. PEDERSON said the ACSA joint position statement supports early childhood education. Paul Banks has two preschool programs; one is for students with special needs and the second is a Title I program. Each year the 20 students in the Title I pre-K program are the leaders in kindergarten, both academically and socially. This is confirmed by research on early intervention and instruction.

[8:59:06 AM](#)

MR. PEDERSON said cost-benefit analysis shows positive returns for early childhood programs. All Alaskan children deserve the opportunity to attend preschool. He thanked the legislature and governor for looking at ways to make this a reality for all

students. He also applauded the committee for shining a light on early literacy acquisition. It is a major building block for student success and confidence.

[9:00:52 AM](#)

MR. PEDERSON said that in his 19 years of education in Alaska, a disturbing trend is the increase of students with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). The opioid crisis plays a large role in the data about ACEs. Schools are serving the children of this drug epidemic. Many schools do not have counselors and it falls upon teachers to provide support. This year, the number of Office of Children Services reports and homeless rates are increasing in all districts.

[9:01:41 AM](#)

MR. PEDERSON noted that Dr. Linda Chamberlain, one of Alaska's foremost experts on childhood trauma, said there is no point in talking about trauma unless something can be done about it, such as teaching resiliency skills that benefit every child. Next year, the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District is funding school counselors to help students who experience ACEs.

[9:02:39 AM](#)

MR. PEDERSON said the single most important contributing factor to student achievement is a quality teacher. The second most important factor is a quality principal. Every October his organization provides the principals' conference that provides national caliber professional development.

[9:04:06 AM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease.

[9:04:11 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS introduced Karen Morrison.

[9:04:19 AM](#)

KAREN MORRISON, President, Alaska Association of School Business Officials (ALASBO), Finance Director, Petersburg School District, Petersburg, Alaska, said she has been the finance director for the Petersburg School District since 2011.

[9:05:04 AM](#)

The committee took a brief at-ease.

[9:05:33 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS reconvened the meeting.

[9:05:44 AM](#)

MS. MORRISON said the mission of ALASBO is to promote the highest standards in school business practices. Its vision is to educate stakeholders in the effective use of resources for the benefit of Alaska's children.

[9:06:30 AM](#)

MS. MORRISON said that for FY 2020, the total budgeted expenditures for all Alaska school districts is just over \$2.1 billion. Districts spend about 76 percent of their budget on instructional costs and an average of 24 percent on support functions. The U.S. Census Bureau has a different method of calculating education costs. It calculates that for 2017 Alaska spent 53.3 percent on instructional costs. The average instructional cost for all states in 2017 according to the Census Bureau is 61 percent. In Alaska, DEED's Uniform Chart of Accounts provides standardization for districts to develop their budgets. It also provides a framework for compliance and comparability. The definition of instruction funding in Alaska is based on function codes 100 through 400. Prior to 2016, public school districts were mandated to allocate a minimum of 70 percent of their budgets for direct student instruction. While this requirement is no longer in statute, districts still work to ensure that at least 70 percent is still spent on instructional costs.

[9:08:20 AM](#)

MS. MORRISON displayed a slide to show the instructional costs included in the U.S. Census calculations vs. the costs included in Alaska's calculations.

[9:09:33 AM](#)

MS. MORRISON said costs are higher in Alaska. The CPI increased by 17.2 percent from 2011 to 2019. Alaska's health care costs are the most expensive in the nation. This directly affects the

high cost of worker's compensation. Alaska has higher energy costs, which impacts districts differently due to geographic diversity.

MS. MORRISON said Alaskans pay their teachers a fair salary, but the state's competitiveness is eroding. In 2018, Alaska ranked 25th in the nation with teacher salaries adjusted for the cost of living.

MS. MORRISON said shipping and transportation costs are high in Alaska. It is the most geographically diverse state in the nation. The additional cost of operations in Alaska due to the coronavirus is unknown.

[9:11:09 AM](#)

MS. MORRISON said the base student allocation (BSA) for FY 20 is \$5,930. That is a 4.4 percent increase from 2011 to 2020, although the funding has been flat since 2017. Districts are grateful for the funding that has occurred outside the foundation formula, but districts are still challenged with how to financially plan for the short-term and long-term without predictable and reliable funding. The BSA adjusted for inflation in FY20 would be \$6,451. The modest increase proposed in HB 236 is greatly needed.

CHAIR STEVENS called on Mr. Jordan.

[9:12:31 AM](#)

SAM JORDAN, Grants Administrator and Outreach Coordinator, Alaska Staff Development Network (ASDN), Juneau, Alaska, said he has been an educator for 19 years. ASDN is a private, nonprofit organization that has been in existence for over 35 years. Outside of school districts, ASDN is the largest provider of education professional development in the state.

[9:13:41 AM](#)

MR. JORDAN said the mission of ASDN is to provide Alaskan educators with multiple pathways to refine instructional practice and maintain certification. ASDN has responded to tightened budgets and fewer travel opportunities for professional development with online classes. ASDN has 5,000 overall registrations annually and serves over 2,000 educators with online classes. ASDN hosts the largest Alaskan education conference. One in 10 educators attends the annual RTI (Response

to Intervention) Conference. ASDN brings national experts to the conference.

[9:16:27 AM](#)

MR. JORDAN shared that a national expert on trauma-informed schools, Ricky Robertson, spent time at the conference learning about the landscape of trauma in Alaska's schools. He was alarmed by the level of trauma students were dealing with and the impact of that trauma on educators. The presenters continue to work with Alaska educators through online classes. Mr. Robertson has 180 educators enrolled in his course.

[9:17:04 AM](#)

MR. JORDAN reviewed the Alaska School Leadership Institute and noted that ASDN is the lead professional learning partner in four federal grants. ASDN partners with the Lower Kuskokwim School District/Bering Strait School District for the federal GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) grant. He reviewed the Alaska School Leadership Academy, which will graduate its first cohort this May and begin recruiting next month.

[9:20:39 AM](#)

MR. JORDAN said ASDN is leading the advancement of computer instruction in Alaska as the regional partner with Code.org to empower teachers to teach coding. This year ASDN offered 40 professional development trainings to over 580 educators.

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MR. JORDAN described the Statewide Professional Learning Network, which addresses the need for educators to be connected. The AkPLN online platform is more relevant with COVID-19. It has 1,500 registered users and can be used in a variety of ways. His passion project is Our Alaskan Schools blog. It highlights positive things happening in schools.

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The committee took a brief at-ease.

[9:25:02 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS reconvened the meeting.

[9:25:22 AM](#)

SHAWN ARNOLD, President, Alaska Superintendents Association, Superintendent, Valdez School District, Valdez, Alaska, said he first came to Alaska in 1994 with the military. After 10 years he left active duty for a career in education. He previously served as superintendent in Nome for four years. This is his second year in Valdez.

[9:26:09 AM](#)

MR. ARNOLD said districts must have timely, reliable, and predictable revenue. School districts cannot operate efficiently and effectively without knowing what their revenue will be.

[9:26:35 AM](#)

MR. ARNOLD said it is almost April and in four months teachers and students will return for the 2020-2021 school year. As a school superintendent, he wants to be able to provide a globally competitive education that will enable students to be successful. The only problem is that he probably will not know what his district funding will be until summer. Despite that, he must turn in a balanced budget to his local municipality by May 1 and he must hire teachers. The value of predictability for Alaska's school districts cannot be overstated. It takes months during the school year to comprehensively evaluate spending, reflect on progress, and develop new budgets and then wait on word from legislators to finalize local budgets. If districts are expected to spend responsibly, they must be given the time to plan accordingly. Early notification of funding is crucial for sound financial management, as well as for recruitment and retention of quality educators. Stabilizing districts budgetarily will improve student achievement.

[9:27:57 AM](#)

MR. ARNOLD said high superintendent turnover is an issue that plagues the state, not just individual school systems. He showed a slide titled K-12 Instability Equation with photos of superintendents from five years ago. The x's on the photos indicate superintendents who are no longer there. If the state wants to turn the tide on superintendent turnover, the state must adopt a rational mindset. Superintendents and school boards must work together to create synergy among all stakeholders in the system. School leaders cannot take credit for singlehandedly

improving student outcomes any more than these administrators can blame themselves for poor test scores, but it can create the conditions to coalesce school communities and transform school systems. Teamwork is at the heart of school systems, but superintendents undeniably have a role in creating conditions that matter for students. School districts reel when superintendents leave after only one year. Superintendents are not afraid of accountability and want to work across the state for solutions.

[9:29:23 AM](#)

MR. ARNOLD said the state has teacher shortages throughout the system. At the beginning of the year, there were 63 special education teacher vacancies. These are for the students who have the greatest needs. College special education enrollment is down while needs are going up.

[9:30:09 AM](#)

MR. ARNOLD presented Zogby polling data to show that Alaskans support public education.

[9:31:27 AM](#)

MR. ARNOLD said the Superintendents Association is committed to providing support for superintendents in transition through professional development in their first two years on the job and mentors. The association does this as a private nonprofit with no outside funding.

[9:32:22 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS asked Dr. Parady for any wrap-up comments.

[9:32:38 AM](#)

DR. PARADY said she was available to answer any questions and her association would be happy to be a resource, especially considering the present circumstances.

[9:33:26 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS asked Karen Morrison about instructional costs because the ALASBO comparisons do not seem to be apples-to-apples. He asked what an apples-to-apples comparison would be.

[9:34:08 AM](#)

MS. MORRISON replied she didn't have one because there are inconsistencies from state to state about what is included in instructional costs. She said she included this information because there are still questions about the comparison of the state of Alaska vs. the U.S. Census Bureau.

[9:34:48 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS suggested that she help legislators understand that in the future.

[9:34:58 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TUCK related that the Alaska Leadership Institute will be held at the downtown Hilton Hotel and he hoped that in the future Mr. Jordan could pick a hotel that is more worker friendly.

[9:35:20 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES responded to Senator Stevens' comment on the U.S. Census Bureau. She said it is an apples-to-apples comparison; ALASBO includes some things in instructional costs while the U.S. Census Bureau includes the same costs for all 50 states. She reported that the states' average for instructional spending is 61 percent., but the Alaska average is only 53.3 percent. Although costs for health care and worker's compensation are high, Alaska still needs to focus on how to get more dollars in the classroom. Regarding the comment about how the public supports increased funding for education, she was sure if asked, that the public would support more dollars in the classroom but would not likely support more funding for school administration.

SENATOR HUGHES said she hoped to hear from the Council of School Administrators about what the state can do to improve student outcomes and scores, but she has not heard it. She pointed out that Senator Begich introduced SB 6, but it seems a shame that policy makers must put a reading bill forward. An organization like this should be working on what the state needs to do. Her concern is that legislators should not have to put it in a bill. Educators should be doing it. She listened to whole presentation with excellent presenters and great slides, but she found it lacked any focus on students and student learning. She said she would like this association to take greater responsibility for that. One of the presenters said superintendents are not afraid

of accountability, yet this association is resisting any strong promotion/retention policy in that legislation, even though the data is clear that that will improve student outcomes. She would ask the association, if it does this presentation again, to focus on student outcomes and what the association is doing to turn the tide.

[9:39:36 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS commented that she made some excellent points. He said he is still hearing from people in education who say that a reading program is an unfunded mandate. "We put a billion dollars into education. How can you say that reading is an unfunded mandate? That's why we have any money in education, primarily for reading skills."

[9:40:03 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND said she takes issue with the U.S. Census Bureau parsing budgets when their job is to count people. She questioned why the figures are not coming from the U.S. Department of Education working with state departments of education and perhaps the Department of Labor. She said she understands the costs of delivering education and the costs of building, operating, and maintaining school buildings. In rural Alaska those costs are tremendous and cannot be compared to the rest of the states.

[9:41:20 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS said he appreciates her comments.

[9:41:41 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY said the DEED commissioner has been straightforward in saying that one metric cannot measure student success. As legislators consider what Representative Drummond said and look at schools holistically, there are many factors that may or may not be contributing to success in Alaska. The ACSA presentation focused on all of the considerations that have to be made as the state moves forward, understanding that not all schools, not all school districts, not all communities have the same starting line. This presentation gave a thorough analysis of all considerations that policy makers need to make as the districts put forward policies to improve student outcomes across the state. She asked Dr. Parady to speak to the

intention of providing this information today and how they relate to student outcomes.

[9:43:10 AM](#)

DR. PARADY said she wanted to reaffirm that every school administrator is 100 percent focused on student needs, which includes student outcomes. She said she agrees with the reference to Commissioner Johnson's statement that measuring student success by one metric falls short of the big picture. She explained that the presentation was designed to indicate it is not unidimensional. Of course, ACSA prioritizes its focus on academics, but it would be naïve and ill-advised to say that it is a unidimensional picture. It is multidimensional she said.

DR PARADY said the presentation was focused on sharing the reality of what is happening in the field. Teachers and school administrators cannot penetrate a child's learning if the child is suffering from ACEs, is hungry, or has abuse in the home. She said this is not an excuse but represents reality. Mr. Jordan spoke to an expert on trauma at the RTI Conference who was alarmed when he was debriefed about the level and severity of student trauma that teachers must contend with. While it easy to state that scores are not high enough, it is more realistic to state that in order to address scores in Alaska, the state must address other factors impacting students' ability to learn.

DR. PARADY said this also includes the crisis in teacher turnover. The Northwest Regional Educational Lab research shows that Alaska has 36 percent turnover of teachers and 38 percent turnover of principals each year. It almost does not matter what program is given to a rural, remote school because of these turnover rates. All these things need to be addressed in concert to move the needle forward. Mr. Pederson agreed that reading by third grade is critical but it is affected by these issues.

DR. PARADY said she has heard many positives about the Alaska Reads Act, but the main hesitation has been on student retention. Dr. John Hattie's international research shows that retention of children has negative consequences, akin to corporal punishment for students. Any resistance to that part of SB 6 is related to student well-being and the recognition by educators across the state that retention hurts kids.

[9:47:29 AM](#)

DR. PARADY said school administrators support universal preschool 100 percent and largely support and feel optimistic about the bill. All the pieces must be taken together to shift the terrain in Alaska. Each administrator today focused on their reality in the field. In terms of apples-to-apples, the 76 percent figure cited for instructional costs is higher in most of the larger school districts. ACSA will work with ALASBO to provide an apples-to-apples comparison with the U.S. Census Bureau. She said she agrees with Representative Drummond that it should be coming from another source. ACSA will verify that a high proportion of dollars goes into instruction across Alaska. ACSA is leading in accountability across the state not only for student outcomes but considering the whole child and ensuring student safety. For example, administrators are working overtime to keep students and schools safe in the most recent COVID-19 outbreak. Administrators will be leaders in the communities to help do that, she said.

[9:49:50 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND said she appreciates what Mr. Jordan said about the impact of trauma on students, as well as educators. It reminded her that reading is not the only thing schools are doing. House Education has heard bills this year on mental health curriculum, on social and emotional learning, as well as on literacy. The committee is working on a bill to increase the BSA. The House has passed resolutions on the impact of ACEs on citizens. Under Governor Walker, the state held a summit with all state agencies on trauma as it impacts state employees, such as OCS workers who have to deal with dysfunctional families and public safety workers who have to enter homes where extreme domestic violence or murders have occurred. The state has to pay attention to that as it impacts everyone and costs a lot of money. She said she is pleased that the administrators pointed out that trauma impacts students and educators and everyone else in the state. The uncertainty of budgets must be traumatic for people trying to plan their near futures. The state has lost dozens, if not hundreds, of teachers to other states because the state is not funding education sufficiently.

[9:51:59 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY thanked everyone for the information. She asked for some follow-up information about changes to districts' fixed costs in the last two years for things like energy, workman's compensation, and health care. Legislators need a better education funding policy. Their method of providing money

outside of the formula funding needs to be looked at. House Education saw a chart showing 19 years of funding. In 18 years, the state has done a BSA increase or done one-time funding. Uncertain funding is well documented. She asked why the legislature puts districts in the position of having to wait until the end of the year to plan. The legislature is not doing a good job with a funding policy. She said she understands why the Supreme Court said the legislature can fund two years of education funding, which is critical for staff stability. She would like another presentation about reading curriculum. She said she would like to know what districts are using science-based curriculum with the five criteria for teaching reading. She said she is excited about the Alaska Reads Act. Interventions are critically important, but the legislature must be confident that all teachers have good professional development in reading and are using evidence-based curriculum. She would appreciate a session on that. She added that she appreciated the work on coding. She would like to know how many districts are offering that program to middle and high school students, even elementary students. She commended the presenters for their dedication to students and staff.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX said he was contemplating the idea of apples-to-oranges. He asked if all the states can fit into a national accounting standard since it seems similar to comparing urban to rural schools in Alaska.

[9:57:29 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS said that is a question for ACSA since the committee would like to see a breakdown of that information.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX said the real question is if the state is meeting the needs of each individual region. He suggested that each region might not need the same degree of computer science, for example.

[9:58:03 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE D. JOHNSON pointed out that the U.S. Census determines a lot of the funding regarding special education, technology, Head Start and afterschool programs. The bureau has a responsibility to put forward apples-to-apples types of data, so legislators should not discount it. It is a helpful tool. ACSA specifically disagrees with retention, although many high-performing schools across the country have a retention policy. She said the state is looking for ways to increase reading, and

according to some statistics retention is important to success of a reading program. She expressed interest in obtaining more information about the mix up in data.

REPRESENTATIVE D. JOHNSON said she is hearing the concerns about consistency of funding, which is critical for districts. However, the legislature is often presented with problems and the answer is more funding. She would like to hear how these problems will be fixed and the funding necessary to do so.

[10:00:52 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES said research shows that the more dollars that go into the classroom, the better the student outcomes. Keeping that in mind, the census data is important because Alaska is the worst in the country according to that apples-to-apples comparison. Regarding retention, there is recent research from Harvard and the University of Chicago showing that with comprehensive reading intervention programs, like the ones the legislature is looking at, student GPAs go up and students who repeat a grade with a different type of instruction catch up to graduate.

[10:02:17 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the committee, the joint meeting of the Senate and House Education Standing Committees adjourned the meeting at 10:02 a.m.