

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

January 29, 2019

8:59 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

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

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

SENATE BILL NO. 30

"An Act establishing the middle college program for public school students; and relating to the powers of the University of Alaska."

- HEARD & HELD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: SB 30

SHORT TITLE: COLLEGE CREDIT FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) STEVENS

01/23/19	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/23/19	(S)	EDC, FIN
01/29/19	(S)	EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205

**WITNESS REGISTER**

Tim Lamkin, Staff  
Senator Gary Stevens  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Introduced SB 30 on behalf of the sponsor.

PAUL PRUSSING, Project Coordinator

Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Provided information on SB 30.

STEPHANIE BUTLER, Executive Director  
Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE)  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented information on middle college and bridging programs.

DEENA BISHOP, Ph.D., Superintendent  
Anchorage School District

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented on Alaska Middle College School.

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

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented on Mat-Su Middle College School

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[8:59:55 AM](#)

**CHAIR GARY STEVENS** called the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:59 a.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Begich, Hughes, Costello, Birch, and Chair Stevens.

#### **SB 30-COLLEGE CREDIT FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

[9:00:21 AM](#)

**CHAIR STEVENS** announced the consideration of SB 30. He stated his intention to hear testimony on the bill and hold the bill for further review.

[9:00:54 AM](#)

Tim Lamkin, Staff, Senator Gary Stevens, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, said the bill establishes a state-sanctioned collaborative between the secondary and postsecondary education systems. He chose not to inundate the committee with research on the effectiveness of dual credit and middle college programs at this point, but the merits of the programs are not in dispute. Of course, the devil is in the details, particularly the financial structure of transferring funds between institutions and other parties. Details also included the language of whether districts "shall" or "may" participate. That

will be a key policy consideration for the committee. Another topic will be whether mandates are funded or not. The fiscal note is forthcoming. He noted the letter in the committee packets from Norm Wooten, Executive Director of the Association of Alaska School Boards.

9:03:29 AM

SENATOR BIRCH asked what distinguished this from students earning college credit with Advanced Placement (AP) classes.

MR. LAMKIN answered that AP does not result in outright credit for college courses, but others can address that with more information.

CHAIR STEVENS said middle college is more structured than an occasional dual credit class. Students can get the first or even second year of college done while in high school. It has been successful around the country. It is more structured and requires more counseling with a goal of degree completion. It also addresses the issue of students entering the University of Alaska system who are not prepared and must take remedial courses. This makes students prepared to enter college.

9:05:35 AM

SENATOR BEGICH said he supports the concept of the bill but noted that Alaska Gateway School District Superintendent Scott MacManus asked if this becomes a mandate they cannot afford. Another issue is that even if it becomes a "may" clause, it may lead to disparities in the long run. School districts with higher energy costs may not be able to avail themselves of the option while wealthier school districts can. But it seems solvable to him.

CHAIR STEVENS said he is hesitant to say "may." It is important to say it "shall" be done. They have heard from the Anchorage, Mat-Su, and the Kodiak districts that they can do this under the present foundation formula. Mat-Su has found that it saves money for them. They pay the university for the classes, but they don't need as full a faculty. A district that can't do it simply has to make a report to explain why it cannot offer the program. He agreed with Senator Begich about equity. Kids in Shishmaref deserve to have a college education as much as kids in Anchorage.

SENATOR HUGHES echoed Senator Begich's concern about how it will work with rural students. She noted that they have discussed virtual education as a way to give rural students the

opportunity to be in a live, two-way classroom with cream-of-the-crop teachers in other parts of the state. That could be part of this. The bill requires students to pick up the tab for books and materials, but housing could be an issue for rural students who might want to come to an urban area. However, a robust virtual education system could help solve that.

CHAIR STEVENS responded that the bill does require districts to pay for university tuition, but students would pay for books, fees, and transportation. Anchorage and Mat-Su (and Kodiak will also) pay for the cost of transportation

SENATOR HUGHES said the fairness issue needs to be part of the conversation if some districts would pick up the extra costs and some wouldn't.

CHAIR STEVENS said they would need information from the university about fees. For example, would a student from Shishmaref need to pay for the athletic program in Anchorage or Fairbanks.

[9:10:46 AM](#)

SENATOR COSTELLO said she is an advocate for options for students and families. She asked what does this look like. She understands that students can take one or two classes on a college campus. In this bill it almost appears that the student becomes a college student.

CHAIR STEVENS answered not exactly. Students can take as many college classes as they'd like, but they are still a high school student. They can participate in high school activities but have the opportunity to get college credit.

SENATOR COSTELLO gave the example of someone who is on an advanced math track. She asked if the student could leave just for the math portion and spend the majority of the student's time at high school.

CHAIR STEVENS answered yes. The bill would also address senioritis, when often the last year of high school is wasted. It is a good opportunity to spend the last year seriously.

[9:13:29 AM](#)

MR. LAMKIN presented the sectional analysis of SB 30, version U.

Sec. 1: Amends current statute regarding an annual report submitted to the legislature by the state board of

education and early development, to include in that report a current summary of middle college activity in the state.

Sec. 2: Adds a new Article 15 to AS 14.30 (Educational Programs For Pupils) regarding Dual Credit.

(A) Establishes a Middle College program for eligible students in high school to enroll in courses at the University of Alaska, and to earn credit toward a college degree as well as credit toward high school graduation.

(B) Establishes some baseline eligibility requirements for students to be enrolled in a public school, be in the 11th or 12th grade, to not have already received a high school diploma, and otherwise meet minimum requirements set in regulation.

(C) Requires every school district in the state to participate in the middle college program, making dual credit available to eligible students. Respective school districts shall pay course tuition. The student is responsible for all other expenses associated with the course, including fees, books, and transportation.

MR. LAMKIN pointed out that subsection C is the "shall" vs. "may" section.

(D) Holds harmless a school district's Average Daily Membership (ADM) calculation; students participating in the middle college program are to still be counted toward the respective school district's ADM.

(E) Allows the University of Alaska and individual school districts to share student transcript information for purposes of determining program eligibility and satisfactory course completion.

(F) Aligns the existing definition of "school district" as set in AS 14.30.350, meaning a borough school district, a city school district, a regional educational attendance area (REAA), a state boarding school, and the state centralized correspondence study program.

Sec. 3: Amends AS 14.40.040(a), relating to the general powers and duties of the University of Alaska, to allow for the UA system to enter into agreements with school districts in the state for purposes of carrying out the Middle College program.

[9:16:32 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES asked if Anchorage, Mat-Su, and Kodiak are concerned about reporting. She also asked why not allow highly motivated 9th and 10th graders to participate.

CHAIR STEVENS answered that they can ask districts to respond about the grade question.

MR. LAMKIN said that is a policy consideration.

[9:18:42 AM](#)

PAUL PRUSSING, Project Coordinator, Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), Juneau, Alaska, said section one adds three data elements to gather from the university. It has no fiscal impact on the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED).

SENATOR HUGHES asked if this was one of the recommendations of the Alaska Educational Challenge.

MR. PRUSSING replied that the Alaska Educational Challenge has 13 recommendations, three commitments, and five goals. One goal is career and technical education dual credit, but increasing educational opportunities is part of the Alaska Educational Challenge. As Senator Begich pointed out, ensuring that all districts have access to these classes is important.

[9:20:30 AM](#)

STEPHANIE BUTLER, Executive Director, Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE), Juneau, Alaska, said she planned to present a high-level summary of programs that create bridges from high school to college in Alaska. ACPE's nexus with middle college and dual enrollment programs is around financial aid

questions and coaching and other services that their outreach team offers to students and families. They do not have expertise in middle school per se, but they have lots of experience in connecting students and families and their questions with the experts.

MS. BUTLER reviewed the agenda for her presentation:

- ACPE Mission
- Middle College Connections
- Benefits
- Barriers
- How ACPE Can Help

MS. BUTLER described the difference between middle college and dual enrollment. Dual enrollment is any program that allows high school students to earn college credit in high school. Middle college is a subset of dual enrollment. It is a collaboration between a student's high school and local college that provides for student cohorts to enroll in the local college and earn college credit. Students generally attend the local college campus with traditional college students, but with very specific supports from their high school. Many states described their middle college programs as a high school embedded in a local college campus. Students must apply to get into a middle college program. They generally graduate with both a high school diploma and associate degree at the same time. The overarching terms for programs that help students bridge the gap between high school and college are bridging programs.

MS. BUTLER said that slide 5 showed the ACPE nexus with middle college and bridging programs is mainly about providing informational resources to students. She reviewed the number of existing dual enrollment programs in Alaska shown on slide 6. She pointed out that middle colleges are operated by school districts and that Anchorage and Mat-Su already have middle colleges.

MS. BUTLER reviewed the diversity of other programs available, including a program at AVTEC [Alaska's Institute of Technology] that allows high school students to graduate with a credential as a merchant mariner.

MS. BUTLER said other early college options include the International Baccalaureate (available at West High and Palmer High); CLEP, the College Level Examination Program offered by the College Board; summer college programs, offered by many for-

profit organizations; AP testing, another College Board program; and internships.

CHAIR STEVENS asked if she agreed SB 30 does not impact any of these programs.

MS. BUTLER agreed.

[9:28:28 AM](#)

MS. BUTLER reviewed the potential benefits of bridging programs on slide 8:

- Increased high school graduation rates
- Increase college enrollment rates
- Higher college GPAs
- Greater college persistence and faster progress to graduation
- Larger benefit to traditionally underrepresented populations (males and low-income students)
- Include collegiate and CTE tracks

CHAIR STEVENS asked if these programs would reduce the need for remedial education.

MS. BUTLER answered that one finding in her research is that the structure of middle college programs, where all the supports are available to high school students while they are taking a college course, is very effective. Students are more likely to be successful.

MS. BUTLER said potential barriers to participation in bridging programs are financial, academic, and informational. A student not enrolled full-time in a degree program generally cannot access state or financial aid. For example, the Alaska Performance Scholarship is only available to high school graduates.

[9:31:35 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH asked if it could be possible to have a grant program draw from existing scholarship programs to assist low-income students in middle colleges.

MS. BUTLER responded that she would research available options.

SENATOR BEGICH said it poses the possibility of offsetting the issues he brought up earlier about potential disparity.

CHAIR STEVENS added that college books can be \$100 or more.

SENATOR HUGHES wondered if private scholarships, particularly for children of active duty military, would be eligible for aid related to college.

SENATOR BEGICH said he runs a private scholarship program and this would fall under that grant program.

MS. BUTLER said she will research scholarship options.

MS. BUTLER addressed academic considerations. Students must be prepared for academic rigor. Their grade point averages (GPAs) in collegiate courses become part of their student transcripts, and grades can affect future financial aid eligibility.

MS. BUTLER said students need to understand processes and bureaucracies to enroll in these programs, and they need to understand the benefits. Middle colleges tend to remove barriers because students have high school supports.

[9:36:17 AM](#)

MS. BUTLER reviewed how ACPE can help on slide 13.

- Success Centers in-person (Dimond Mall and UAA Enrollment Services) and telephone/distance coaching and assistance
- Alaska College and Career Advising Consortium (ACAC) initiatives, including mentoring provided through partners
- AKCIS online planning tools ([www.akcis.org](http://www.akcis.org))
- Financial aid and higher education outreach events

SENATOR BIRCH asked if there is a presumption that every high school will have an associated college campus in the vicinity or if there is a distance learning option. He wondered how much flexibility there would be for high school students without a nearby college campus.

MS. BUTLER referred the question to Mr. Lamkin.

CHAIR STEVENS said the university has many extension programs. Maybe the university can provide the details.

SENATOR BIRCH said he was intrigued by students at AVTEC in Seward graduating with Coast Guard credentials. He asked whether the International Baccalaureate (IB) was a degree program.

MS. BUTLER answered that the IB is an internationally-recognized credential that documents high academic rigor. It is not a college credential, but some colleges will award up to 30 credits to students with an IB.

CHAIR STEVENS encouraged everyone to visit AVTEC to learn more about the program.

SENATOR BEGICH reinforced the points made by Senator Birch and Senator Hughes about distance learning and how that could be integrated into this. He mentioned the concepts in SB 96 from the previous session that had broad support.

9:42:07 AM

DEENA BISHOP, Ph.D., Superintendent, Anchorage School District; Anchorage, Alaska, began by noting that this is her third year with the Anchorage School District (ASD) and the second year that ASD has had a middle college. She was the assistant superintendent in Mat-Su when they began the middle college there.

DR. BISHOP said this offers all 53 school districts the opportunity to see who their students are and to ask how they can make middle college happen for their students. It starts with asking who are the students. One of the biggest opportunities and challenges in Anchorage is language diversity. Twenty percent of their students have more than 100 languages. Challenges to Alaska's school districts are unique. With support of the bill, they can figure it out.

DR. BISHOP said one of the biggest variables for the ASD is economically disadvantaged students. The middle college excites her with this group. They have strong students whose families do not have the financial or cultural capital to navigate college. The middle college allows them to assist with navigating those waters.

DR. BISHOP said many times they talk about college or career and technical education (CTE). She hopes people understand the power of "and" and "both." The University of Alaska is one of the largest suppliers of CTE. CTE is not done outside of college readiness or middle college. It is combined with it. Concentrators, which are two or more semesters within a pathway, a structured approach to CTE, provide success for students. The graduation rate for students who have taken concentrators in CTE is 93 percent compared to the overall rate of 81 percent. The impact is especially high for students with disabilities.

DR. BISHOP showed a picture of the Alaska Middle College School Chugiak-Eagle River Campus of UAA. Anchorage juniors and seniors were able to take courses at the campus and simultaneously complete high school graduation requirements and earn college credit. The campus is closed because of damage from the earthquake, and those students now attend the Anchorage campus.

IB and AP students must take an exam and then colleges can accept those credits. She pointed out that middle colleges do not always have more rigorous courses. Some AP courses can be more rigorous. It is not "either or"; it is "and" and "both." It is about offering choices to students.

DR. BISHOP said their middle school students continue to want a connection to high school, such as going to the prom or playing sports. ASD middle college is a place-based model with 11th and 12th graders students on campus. It is dual credit. This is not college is taking over the high school, and it is not high school taking over college. It is a true partnership. School districts would work with institutions in their areas to find the best answers for students.

DR. BISHOP said she would not call this an unfunded mandate, but an uncomfortable opportunity because it pushes them. In ASD they pay for fees, books, and transportation from the base student allocation (BSA). It is affordable. They also can provide teachers, counselors, and support so that the scaffolding on both sides works for their students. Even when they use an online learning vendor, someone in the local community is still the advisor or coach.

[9:55:19 AM](#)

DR. BISHOP said one of their goals to have the demographics of the middle college match the demographics of Anchorage. They are on a good path to have that diversity represented in middle college. They spend time sharing and advertising with many groups. They have learned that they must go to where families are to share the opportunities in the Anchorage School District.

DR. BISHOP shared student feedback:

- Students reported best features as:
  - Sense of independence and responsibility
  - Flexibility in schedule
  - Ability to get ahead in college

- Students reported best resource as:
  - Anchorage School district teachers
  - Resources available on campus to support emotionally and academically
- Students reported math as most challenging subject

DR. BISHOP shared parent feedback:

- Parents reported best features:
  - College environment
  - Challenging coursework
  - Opportunity to get a head start on college while fulfilling high school graduation requirements
- Parents appreciate support their students are given by ASD staff as they transition to college-level work

DR. BISHOP said they have successes with students who thought they could never have success in college. This bill provides the opportunity to get the work of equity done for students. It is a huge asset for them to be able to provide college to their students. They believe in choice and success for life for all Alaskan students.

SENATOR BEGICH said that while he is glad that ASD can fund this through the BSA, they have lower energy costs and a higher tax base than rural Alaska. The higher energy costs in rural Alaska eat into the BSA and allows less flexibility. He referenced the higher graduation rate for students who take concentrators and asked if these students are self-selected.

DR. BISHOP replied that they have data on students who have tried many different avenues, such as culinary arts and welding. Once they find a desire in ninth or tenth grade and take consecutive courses and build competencies, they are highly successful. ASD is working on placing students in internships in the community. Even in middle college it is total self-interest. Their biggest challenge is sharing the many opportunities with students. With the superintendents she is working with now, the issue isn't necessarily the finances for CTE or college. It is the ability to find people who can teach courses students are interested in. Partnerships help provide more opportunities for students. Middle college is not the answer to everyone. Whether it is CTE partnerships or middle college or partnerships among districts, it all starts with students and their interests.

SENATOR BEGICH said he would like to see the data about the percentage of economically disadvantaged students in the middle college.

DR. BISHOP said she would provide the data on the representation of low socio-economic students.

SENATOR HUGHES said she wanted to recognize Kathy Moffitt [Director, Administrative Projects, ASD] for her work in starting middle colleges in Anchorage and Mat-Su. She asked what the benchmark is for economically disadvantaged. She noticed 53 percentage of students in the ASD are economically disadvantaged. She asked whether the ASD has data on the first generation of students attending college.

CHAIR STEVENS echoed that he would also like that data.

SENATOR HUGHES asked whether the reporting requirements in the bill would be burdensome and whether students are paying any costs.

[10:05:13 AM](#)

DR. BISHOP said reporting the self-reported data on first generation college students would not be difficult. The fees depend on individual courses. One of the biggest issues for them has been paying for textbooks. The university kept changing the required books, which was expensive. They worked with the university to narrow the textbook selection.

SENATOR HUGHES asked about the economically disadvantaged criteria.

DR. BISHOP answered that it is mainly federal criteria as determined by the free reduced lunch program. She suggested that a DEED representative could answer the question.

CHAIR STEVENS noted that many states and universities are moving to online textbooks, which are cheaper.

SENATOR BIRCH said the impact on their 48,000 students is one half of one percent, a modest number of students. He asked for a description how it works, such as do kids go to classes with other students at a campus.

DR. BISHOP responded that if students want an experience of high school on a college campus, they would enroll in Alaska Middle College with one foot in high school for wrap around services.

Middle college is their school, located at the university campus. Student can get a ride from their high schools because the campus is next to King Tech. Most juniors or seniors ride the city bus or have their own car. They can spend the day at the university. They have a flexible schedule. They can only enter courses if they are college ready as shown through a variety of assessments.

DR. BISHOP said many of students earn between 35 and 45 credits; some have earned 60 or more. The middle college is on campus, but students can still take courses at their high schools.

SENATOR COSTELLO mentioned that DEED is looking at coding opportunities. She asked if computer science counts as math credit in the ASD.

DR. BISHOP responded that she will investigate that. She agreed that it should if it doesn't. The Anchorage School Board is looking into coding opportunities for all ASD students.

CHAIR STEVENS said each district will approach this differently. [Superintendent] Larry LeDoux in Kodiak said that he believes many classes will be at his high school, but some will be on the college campus as well. He asked Dr. Bishop if some of her qualified teachers teach college classes.

DR. BISHOP said there are several models. Their middle school model is placed based, where students experience the power of the place. About 75 percent of the students in the program stay with the University of Alaska. Lots of high school teachers are adjunct teachers for college courses at night. In some high schools they offer college credit for a single course. This bill will provide opportunities for districts to think about the students they are servicing and how to best meet the needs of those students. It will depend on resources, such as constraints regarding bandwidth. Kodiak is doing an innovative program. Not everything has to look the same.

[10:19:23 AM](#)

MONICA GOYETTE, Ph.D., Superintendent, Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District, Palmer, Alaska, went over the overview of her presentation.

- Historical Review of the Mat-Su Middle College School (MSMCS)
- Program Design
- Student Outcomes

- SB30 Support and Language Revision Recommendations

DR. GOYETTE said MSMCS began with a partnership with the University of Alaska. The original vision was to prioritize first generation college students. The program has not reached capacity so haven't had to prioritize those students, but they would if they did reach capacity. Their original campus was in Eagle River. Legislative funds allowed them to expand and improve that campus.

DR. GOYETTE said they did transition to the Mat-Su College Campus in 2018. At that time the ASD took over the Alaska Middle College and they became the Mat-Su Middle College.

DR. GOYETTE said they started with 47 students in 2011 and now enroll 177 students. The ethnicity of students at MSMSC match the district enrollment except Alaska Natives are under-enrolled. She believes that is mainly because they have the ANSEP [Alaska Native Science & Engineering Program] Accelerated High School, which is a form of middle college. Forty Alaska Native students are in that program. MSMSC has two girls for every male. Forty-four percent of Mat-Su students are eligible for free and reduced lunch compared to 17 percent at the middle college, so they need to do targeted outreach in those areas.

DR. GOYETTE said the MSMSC is very structured. They have a dedicated high school counselor on site full time and partner with college advisors. Since the college semester is 16 weeks and the K-12 semester is 18 weeks, they use the first two weeks to do orientation and to run students through a basic writing course about expectations for scholarly writing at a college level.

DR. GOYETTE said they do pay for all books. They track all add/drop withdrawal dates. They have scaffolded support. The first semester students have an assigned study hall, and they track the students' grades. The MSMCS campus has three portables. They pay energy and custodial costs of the portables and pay for 3.5 Mat-Su district staff.

DR. GOYETTE said it is difficult for people to change their mindsets that high school students are not ready for college. They have a vetting process so students can demonstrate they are ready for college. Universities can report up to 60 percent of their freshman class dropping out, which means those students probably have bad grades on their transcripts and debt. MSMCS has a five percent drop out rate from one year to the next, so

95 percent of their students are essentially making it through their freshman and sophomore years of college. To her, that is a huge indicator of success.

DR. GOYETTE reviewed ACT data on slides 9 and 10. The English and composite ACT scores for MSMCS juniors are higher than the national, Alaska, and Mat-Su borough averages.

DR. GOYETTE displayed slide 11, which compared the 2017 per student cost at Wasilla High, Colony High, and Mat-Su Middle College. Wasilla High School and Mat-Su Middle College are very similar in costs. Even in their community there is concern that they are diverting funds from needier students. They think that it is an excellent use of taxpayer dollars. It is a win-win to help families with future college costs, which is incredibly expensive.

DR. GOYETTE said they pay a flat fee for tuition. The bill would support standardization of tuition. Tuition is \$212 per credit for lower level courses. Fees can be 12 to 15 percent of the total cost of tuition. They provide transportation from high schools to all the schools of choice. They pay for Chromebooks because many texts are e-books. They pay the full cost of going to college for their students.

[10:34:20 AM](#)

DR. GOYETTE stated that she supports the spirit of the bill. She is excited that these opportunities could be available to more students. Their district recommendation is to change "every school district shall participate in the middle college program" change to "may" participate because of district variables such as access. Many distance courses are in the evening to accommodate working adults, which means even less scaffolded support for students. They have staff with college level expertise. She concluded by noting that students must be prepared for college to have success in middle college. It would be a travesty to mass enroll students who were not prepared and who would then internalize that as a failure and feel that college was something not available to them.

CHAIR STEVENS apologized to witnesses who did not have a chance to testify and expressed his desire to give them an opportunity at a future hearing.

[SB 30 was held in committee.]

[10:36:47 AM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Stevens adjourned the Senate Education Standing Committee at 10:36 a.m.