

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE**  
**SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 12, 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
01/29/19	(S)	Heard & Held
01/29/19	(S)	MINUTE (EDC)
02/12/19	(S)	EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205

**WITNESS REGISTER**

MELISSA HAFFEMAN, Principal  
Kodiak Middle School  
Kodiak Island Borough School District  
Kodiak, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified on Kodiak Middle College in the context of SB 30.

MEL LEVAN, Ph.D., Principal  
Kodiak High School  
Kodiak Island Borough School District  
Kodiak, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified on Kodiak Middle College in the context of SB 30.

LARRY LEDOUX, Ph.D., Superintendent  
Kodiak Island Borough School District  
Kodiak, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified on Kodiak Middle College in the context of SB 30.

GENE STONE, Chief of Operations  
Lower Yukon School District (LYSD)  
Mountain Village, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified on LYSD's middle college plan in the context of SB 30.

PAUL PRUSSING, Acting Program Coordinator  
Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions on SB 30.

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

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified about concerns with SB 30.

JACKIE BOYER, representing self  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supported SB 30.

TERI COTHREN, Project Manager  
Workforce Programs  
University of Alaska  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions on SB 30.

BRIDGET WEISS, Ph.D., Superintendent  
Juneau School District  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified on SB 30.

SCOTT MACMANUS, Superintendent  
Alaska Gateway School District  
Tok, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified on SB 30.

PATRICK MAYER, Superintendent  
Yakutat School District  
Yakutat, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified on SB 30.

CHRIS REITAN, Superintendent  
Craig City School District  
Craig, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified on SB 30.

DAVID NEESE, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified on SB 30.

STEWART MCDONALD, Superintendent  
North Slope Borough School District  
Utqiagvik, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified on SB 30.

JEFF DEETER, School Board Member  
Alaska Gateway School District  
Tok, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Testified on SB 30.

KATHY MOFFITT, Director  
Administrative Projects  
Anchorage School District  
Anchorage, Alaska  
**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supported SB 30

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[8:59:01 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 Costello, Birch, Begich, Hughes, and Chair Stevens.

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

[8:59:54 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS announced the consideration of SB 30. He said his intent was to continue public testimony and hold the bill for further review. He read from a National Conference of State Legislatures' paper on dual enrollment, noting that it points out some risks but also opportunities:

Proponents of dual enrollment view it as a way to increase the academic quality and rigor of high school classes, lower the need for postsecondary remediation, reduce the high school dropout rate, reduce student costs of attending postsecondary institutions, and prepare young people to succeed in college.

[9:01:24 AM](#)

MELISSA HAFFEMAN, Principal, Kodiak Middle School, Kodiak Island Borough School District, Kodiak, Alaska, said that Kodiak Island Borough School District has been working for a year and a half to develop a middle college program. The focus has been on developing a pre-kindergarten through 12th grade approach which aligns academic and career tech pathways while smoothing student transitions from elementary to middle school and from middle school to high school and from high school to college. She offered her belief that the success of a middle college program is built on the foundation of vocational and academic pathways, which begin in middle school, when students are dreaming about their futures. Kodiak Middle School has been working on three key aspects of a middle college program.

MS. HAFFEMAN said the school have been putting plans in place to facilitate the transition from elementary to middle school. A main component has been the vertical alignment and scaffolding of reading, writing, and mathematics from kindergarten to 12th grade. The school is developing improved orientations at the end of fifth grade, which showcase the pathway options available at Kodiak Middle School. Secondly, KMS has been partnering with teachers to create professional development that will create smooth transition points and establish academic and vocational pathways. Professional development is increasingly focused on project-based, applied, and STEM instructional methods. Elementary and middle school teachers have increased opportunities for dialogue to elevate the district's instructional effectiveness. Finally, Kodiak Middle School is working with Kodiak High School on helping students transition to the high school environment. A key aspect for smooth transitions is exposure to career and technical pathways available at Kodiak High School and Kodiak College.

MS. HAFFEMAN said that in the next academic year, Kodiak Middle School is going to dramatically increase career tech opportunities by working with high school teachers through an alignment of schedules and use of the Kodiak High School shops. The plan is to offer eighth graders welding, culinary arts, construction, drafting, fisheries, business, digital media, health occupations, and coding options. Dr. LeVan, the principal of Kodiak High School, will speak more on this. She concluded that SB 30 creates a formal structure for middle college partnerships that will benefit all Kodiak students.

CHAIR STEVENS commented that she sees the importance of preparing students, even in middle school, for this opportunity.

9:05:51 AM

MEL LEVAN, Ph.D., Principal, Kodiak High School, Kodiak Island Borough School District, Kodiak, Alaska, said he was excited to bring about change through collaboration with Kodiak Middle School and Kodiak College. The ongoing initiative is to raise the performance bar by vertical alignment of academic and vocational programs from grade 6 through college and technical school graduation. Kodiak High School initiated this bar raising with a vocational partnership with Kodiak Middle School, the continuous grade 6-12 dialogue among teachers, expanding concurrent enrollment options with UAA, and creation of new academic and vocational pathways with Kodiak College. These transitions are natural because of KHS's longstanding relationship with Kodiak College. After working for a year and a half, the agreement is in the final stages. Along the way, they recognized that the only barrier that held them to a traditional school day was the momentum of past practice. He stressed the importance of exploring other areas of academic and vocational proficiency that students can achieve during evenings, weekends, and summers. He stated support for SB 30 as it formalizes what Kodiak has been doing informally for many years.

CHAIR STEVENS asked how the district ensures that students who enter a middle college program are ready.

DR. LEVAN replied that KHS tests and assesses students now but is aware that they need to do better job as they take the step to encourage students to launch into college a year or two early. He opined that it was helpful to hear the Anchorage and Mat-Su middle colleges make the point that counseling is the centerpiece to make sure students have a successful transition from high school work to college work.

SENATOR BIRCH said the only pushback he has heard from school districts is that this is an unfunded mandate. He asked if the requirement makes a material difference to school districts.

DR. LEVAN answered that Kodiak has learned that this is the right thing to do for students, but formalizing the agreement puts people who have to do the lifting, such as himself, on task to get it done. He said he can't speak for other districts but Kodiak has the advantage of having one main high school, one middle college, and one local college. He acknowledged that the coordination to get the program started is complicated and requires effort. The weight of a formal agreement is helpful in that regard.

[9:11:00 AM](#)

SENATOR COSTELLO said the committee heard yesterday about districts' concern that some kids might not be ready. She asked the bill sponsor to comment on the flexibility that districts have about who can participate in the proposed program.

[9:11:28 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS replied that it is crucial that districts have flexibility because the last thing he wants to do is put a young person in jeopardy of failure. The committee needs to hear from districts about how they ensure that students will likely be successful. Part of the process is to understand that districts can do that.

[9:12:11 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH said Section 2 of the bill, lines 20-24, requires the school district to pay the University of Alaska's resident tuition for students. He asked Principal LeVan if Kodiak High School is doing that.

DR. LEVAN said currently no.

SENATOR BEGICH asked if the students pay the tuition.

DR. LEVAN answered that students who currently go to Kodiak College pay the tuition. However, there is a concurrent enrollment program taught by Kodiak teachers at Kodiak High School. Those students pay a nominal fee to get their credits.

SENATOR BEGICH pointed out that the bill would require school district to pay the University of Alaska's tuition rate. He asked if the school district could absorb that cost.

DR. LEVAN responded that it is a matter of scale. At some point if the program grows large enough, it would be an issue. Mat-Su and Anchorage testified that they are able to make do because they offset the cost by not having a teacher provide that education. He said it is an issue but would hate to see that get in the way of moving forward with this concept. He said the state has the one obligation to educate its students and everyone has to work together to get it done.

SENATOR BEGICH said he wants to make sure that the bill does what it intends to do while allowing access to all students. The state needs innovative ways to get students learning.

CHAIR STEVENS pointed out that school districts may do this now and it's an important distinction that this bill says "shall." If districts want children to move forward and have the opportunity to get college credit in high school, this is probably the way to do it. He acknowledged that some school districts have expressed concern that it will be too costly. He said he is certainly willing to hear suggestions and perhaps the commissioner of education could grant exemptions if there's a good reason.

SENATOR BEGICH suggested the phrase "shall pay the student's tuition" on [page 2], line 21, could be a "may" clause to give flexibility to school districts to pay the tuition.

CHAIR STEVENS asked Kodiak Superintendent LeDoux to comment on the costs and the idea that some have said the district savings money by paying for college tuition instead of paying for normal classes on their own campuses.

9:17:35 AM

LARRY LEDOUX, Ph.D., Superintendent, Kodiak Island Borough School District, Kodiak, Alaska, said that the Kodiak middle college is a critical component of a systemic initiative to graduate students who are fully prepared and equipped to pursue the vocation of their choice. The district has adjusted the scale and scope of the middle college program to reflect its size but has not compromised the vision pioneered by the Mat-Su and Anchorage programs. The district has worked for years to transition its youth into postsecondary programs. However, transition programs have been insufficient to bridge the gaps between programs that are out of phase with each other with regard to academic expectations, philosophy, and personal accountability.

DR. LEDOUX said while many of the district's students have successfully transitioned from high school, too many are academically and emotionally unprepared for college or tech school. Students rarely give college or tech school a second chance if they fail after their first try. A middle college integrates both institutions into a seamless pathway. Everyone benefits when a student's first experience is with an Alaska college. There is no need to leave Alaska for postsecondary education when a student can accumulate college credits and earn a college degree or licensure while in high school. Last year a Kodiak student graduated with a diploma and an associate degree. He said continuous budget deficits are challenging the district's best efforts to help every child achieve their full potential, but tough times can catalyze new scales of efficiency, innovation, and collaborative partnerships. The formal partnership envisioned in SB 30 is a step forward in eliminating the barriers that challenge a true K-12 system of education. The agreement about to be signed with UAA provides a stable foundation for a long-term partnership that is somewhat hardened from the tough financial times everyone is facing.

DR. LEDOUX said the middle college in Kodiak is unique to the district's circumstances and may not be financially or logistically feasible in all districts. He expressed concern about the language [on page 2, subsection (c)] that requires school districts to pay all costs, including tuition, fees, books, and transportation. He said it is unlikely that a small school district would have enough students in a cohort to reduce the need for a teacher, so every dollar spent on tuition and fees would represent a new cost. This is frightening considering the budget landscape. He said there should be time for districts, universities, and communities to work out contracts and perhaps there could be language that participating students would not incur the full cost of tuition. He said he will not be part of any middle college program that denies access if a student cannot pay the cost. He noted that homeschool students can use their allotment to pay for college courses. He noted that SB 30 refers to students completing 10th grade but he believes that access to the middle college should be based on performance, not completion of a grade level.

CHAIR STEVENS asked for his thoughts on making sure students are prepared.

DR. LEDOUX said the district is reviewing its entire K-12 program to ensure students have the skills to be successful in

college or tech school. Many currently are not. He said the intent is to make sure all the transition points are well connected, not just between high school and college. They start with the expectations of universities or tech schools and work backwards to make sure kids are ready.

CHAIR STEVENS read from the National Conference of State Legislatures' paper on dual enrollment:

In Utah, the New Century Scholarship Program exemplifies a statewide dual enrollment policy that distributes costs among program partners, allowing students to participate without incurring personal costs.

SENATOR HUGHES asked if the committee would have the opportunity to ask the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) questions.

CHAIR STEVENS said there would be that opportunity and noted that DEED's fiscal note is zero and the university fiscal note is indeterminate.

[9:26:13 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES commented that the sponsor's intentions are very noble because middle college is an excellent opportunity for kids. Noting that students would be responsible for expenses other than tuition, she said that could include housing for rural students who come to urban campuses. She questioned whether putting a formal structure for middle college in statute makes the case for an adjustment in the school formula so that rural district could pay the additional expense. If not, she questioned whether there is a risk of a lawsuit about equity for students. She cited an NCSL (National Conference of State Legislatures) article that says dual enrollment terms describe a variety of accelerated learning practices and questioned whether the dual enrollment policy in Alaska doesn't already give districts sufficient flexibility. She reiterated her concern about the potential cost of outlining a formal structure in state statute and asked DEED to respond.

CHAIR STEVENS replied that SB 30 seeks to add to existing programs, not replace them.

SENATOR BEGICH suggested the committee review Superintendent LeDoux's testimony when he mentioned a series of different ideas when he discussed subsection (c).

CHAIR STEVENS said the committee will find out what is in state statute about dual enrollment and will hear from DEED when someone is available.

SENATOR BIRCH related his early construction experience was building schools in rural areas as required by the Molly Hootch Act, which mandated the state provide an equivalent level of education statewide. He said Senator Hughes' concern is that the state funds 100 percent of the cost of some rural schools and with the "shall" provision, there will be an expectation that the state will provide a middle college program statewide. He said it is a valid issue and he looks forward to DEED's comments.

CHAIR STEVENS found that a DEED representative was not available and reiterated that the committee will get answers eventually.

9:32:38 AM

GENE STONE, Chief of Operations, Lower Yukon School District (LYSD), Mountain Village, Alaska, said that by supporting SB 30 LYSD is demonstrating that it believes that students who meet qualifying criteria can benefit substantially from early college experience plus accumulate college credits toward an associate degree. He related that as a participant in the design and implementation of Mat-Su Middle College, he is familiar with the benefits and cost structure of the program. He opined that using K-12 dollars for dual-credit middle college is a smart investment. He said the partnership between LYSD and the Anchorage School District (ASD) students will facilitate a middle college opportunity for LYSD students. Their students will live in an LYSD residential facility in Anchorage and attend Anchorage Middle College as LYSD students. He reported that early research of middle college models found that "the power of the place" is key to the success of a middle college. Simply providing dual credit through Advanced Placement and online courses does not provide a campus experience. The early success of the Anchorage and Mat-Su middle colleges was a direct result of students experiencing the power of the place, experiencing college courses on a UAA campus.

MR. STONE said statewide participation should be encouraged, but a statewide plan is needed to provide a residential component for qualifying students. While LYSD has addressed the residential component, further discussion is needed to facilitate residential requirements for other districts to satisfy the "shall" language.

SENATOR COSTELLO said she is encouraged by the innovation and creativity that LYSD and ASD have shown in putting the program together. She described it as a win-win situation; LYSD is using some of the \$24,000 it gets per student through the base student allocation (BSA) formula to partner with ASD so students have the opportunity to go to a larger community and perhaps take classes at King Career Center, along with academic courses. She asked for more financial details about the agreement.

MR. STONE clarified that the BSA is closer to \$18,500 per student. LYSD purchased three buildings to have a boys and a girls residential facility and an administrative facility and the district will purchase credits through Anchorage. At King Tech, LYSC will purchase after normal school hour sessions that are taught by ASD teachers.

SENATOR COSTELLO described it as a wonderful model to offer career and technical opportunities that may not be accessible in rural areas. She offered kudos for the innovation. This is exactly the kind of partnerships that are needed in Alaska, she said.

SENATOR HUGHES agreed with Senator Costello's comments. She asked if LYSD was able to absorb the residential cost, including the purchase of the buildings, using the BSA funding or if the district was requesting a separate appropriation.

MR. STONE said LYSD is using statute to qualify for residential funding. He noted that statute provides an opportunity for the commissioner to authorize up to \$1 million for the startup of the residential facility. Using K-12 dollars to access middle college would eliminate the need for some teachers in a traditional high school structure. If LYSD brings 50 students in every nine weeks, they will be able to reorganize FTE (full-time equivalent) for staffing at the secondary level.

SENATOR HUGHES asked how much the statutory residential funding would amount to.

MR. STONE answered that it will depend on the regional formula. He said he wasn't sure of the amount but the Northwest Arctic [Borough receives] \$16,000 per student for the residential component and some transportation. Grant funding also helped facilitate transportation.

SENATOR HUGHES asked with 50 students in a cohort, how many cohorts would LYSD do per year.

MR. STONE answered four cohorts, including a summer cohort.

SENATOR BEGICH commented on the potential fiscal impact of the residential school bill that expanded the capacity of DEED to approve regional residential schools. He said he brought that up to caution against establishing DEED approved residential schools that result in a massive fiscal note for the department. He suggested the committee look at the model that was described to ensure the bill does not raise questions about equity and cause every district in the state to demand a residential school. That is not the intent. Rather, the intent is to offer a new option to students to help move them to success and hopefully lower the cost for school districts.

CHAIR STEVENS announced that Paul Prussing from the Department of Education was available to answer questions.

SENATOR HUGHES asked if there is a dual enrollment policy in statute.

[9:46:12 AM](#)

PAUL PRUSSING, Acting Program Coordinator, Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), Juneau, Alaska, responded not that he was aware of.

SENATOR HUGHES asked whether formalizing the middle college structure in statute sets up a case for adjusting the funding formula to allow rural school districts to offer middle college. The costs for those rural districts might involve transporting students to urban areas and housing them, even if participation is permissive rather than mandatory. She asked if the state would be obligated to cover those costs and even if the answer is no, if there could be a question of equity.

MR. PRUSSING replied that he didn't know how districts were funding programs now. His understanding of middle college programs is that the school districts would pay tuition and associated costs through the existing ADM [average daily membership] for each student. He said he believes that districts could leverage their existing funds to offer middle college courses, but he didn't know for sure.

SENATOR HUGHES said Mr. Stone testified that LKSD is looking at the residential statutes to possibly get \$16,000 per student for 200 students a year plus the startup funds for the residential component. She asked if he could calculate the additional cost

if other rural districts duplicated that model of using the residential statutes.

MR. PRUSSING responded that he would need to ask School Finance to run those calculations.

CHAIR STEVENS said he heard differently and would suggest the committee asked Mr. Stone to clarify the costs. [Mr. Stone was no longer available.]

9:53:12 AM

DR. LISA SKILES PARADY, Ph.D., Executive Director, Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA), Juneau, Alaska, said her members support choice and increased opportunity for students. She opined that if the requirement language was removed, everyone would be on the same page. She said it is cause for celebration that school districts are creating great opportunities for students without a mandate. She noted that [ASD Superintendent] Dr. Bishop said middle college may not be for every student or every district; [Mat-Su School District Superintendent] Dr. Goyette said about eight percent of her students attend middle college and recommended changing the language from "shall" to "may;" Dr. LeDoux said the model may not fit for every district, but it fits for them; and Mr. Stone said the LYSD concept of the residential opportunity in Anchorage is working for their students but it may not be right for every district.

DR. PARADY said ACSA wants to support this model, but not as a requirement for every district. She noted that [Executive Director of Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education] Ms. Butler testified about the numerous districts working on bridges and transitions across the state. She informed the committee that a coalition of all Southeast Alaska districts, minus two, is working with Sealaska, the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) College of Education, and ANSEP (Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program) to build a middle college hybrid for Southeast Alaska students. The scale is not the same as Anchorage, Mat-Su, or Kodiak, but they are trying to do their own middle college program. They are meeting regularly to figure out funding sources and how to make it work for their kids with the UAS campus as a hub. She emphasized that so much is happening that a mandate is not necessary. She reiterated the recommendation to change "shall" to "may" if the bill goes forward.

DR. PARADY said Senator Hughes raised important considerations about housing. Senator Birch mentioned virtual education and that raises the question about whether districts that do not have a campus have adequate bandwidth to offer virtual education. That is an equity issue. She said she is confident that all districts are looking at how to best serve their students. She opined that everyone in education today thinks about that. The job of school boards at the local level is to work with school districts to best meet those needs.

DR. PARADY said that a requirement to do more with less may not be the right step for public education at this point. She thanked Senator Stevens and the committee for their constant attention on how to improve education. She expressed hope that her comments be taken as supportive of the concept of how to increase opportunities for students in Alaska. She said her final comment is that the fiscal note did not account for an analysis of the districts. The zero note from the department and indeterminant note from the university and says nothing about the cost at the local level. ACSA does not see it that way and believes that analysis is needed.

CHAIR STEVENS responded that it is a good point about the fiscal note. He said he would like to hear more about the Southeast hybrid model.

DR. PARADY said she would share the contact information after the meeting.

SENATOR HUGHES asked if she was familiar with the dual enrollment policies that other states have in statute and whether ACSA could recommend any of those policies.

DR. PARADY answered that she would work with her members and follow up with that information.

10:03:11 AM

SENATOR BEGICH recalled that that when there was a community college system statewide, he was able to take both a high school and college course at ACC when he was 16 and receive credit for both. The dual authority existed in the community college structure under AS 14.45.70. He asked if that authority might be presupposed to exist between the university system, in Anchorage in particular, and school districts.

SENATOR BEGICH said he believes the first "shall" clause is a protection of equity so every student has the opportunity to use

the middle college concept. It is the second "shall" clause that drives the cost. He asked Dr. Parady to consider that there is a place to still provide every student the opportunity to access middle college programs.

SENATOR BEGICH noted that since the legislature is the school board for the unorganized borough, that cost should be reflected in the fiscal notes. Regional Attendance Areas (REAA) may not appear to be under the legislature's jurisdiction, but they are. He encourage DEED to report on the impacts for REAAs. The districts in organized boroughs should report those costs or cost savings.

CHAIR STEVENS said that it is a good reminder that the legislature is the school board for the unorganized borough.

DR. PARADY said she completely supports knowing the full cost, especially for the unorganized borough. She clarified that ACSA members support the middle college model if it didn't add a financial burden and was equitable. She pointed out that another option is for the University of Alaska to waive those costs. She said there are a lot of ways to look at this before moving forward. with an additional requirement.

CHAIR STEVENS said the university is supportive of this program but whether they would pick up costs is another question.

[10:08:15 AM](#)

JACKIE BOYER, representing self, Juneau, Alaska, said she graduated from Alaska Middle College in 2014 with a high school diploma and an associate degree as part of the first two-year graduating cohort. Because of her education, she immediately started working for a nonprofit called First Alaskans. The following January she was an intern for the Alaska Legislature. She thought she still held the title of youngest intern as she had just turned 19 at the time. She worked full time and finished her bachelor's degree early while raising two of her siblings. She is starting her fifth year of work and has to remind herself that she is under 23. Hard work and coffee and middle college made her life possible. She didn't have a lot of support in high school, but her initiative and ability to attend middle college and jump start her education and career had a domino effect. She has had so many opportunities she wouldn't have had. The program is not just data and statistics. It is individual stories of success.

CHAIR STEVENS noted that she got two years of college in high school.

SENATOR HUGHES asked how she heard of the program.

MS. BOYER said she was planning to homeschool and work and when she heard of the Mat-Su middle college, she thought why not.

CHAIR STEVENS asked if there was any possibility of reduced university tuition for dual credit programs.

10:13:00 AM

TERI COTHREN, Project Manager, Workforce Programs, University of Alaska, Anchorage, Alaska, replied that the university submitted an indeterminate fiscal note for SB 30. She offered to investigate that further as the bill progresses.

SENATOR BEGICH asked whether the university currently provides dual credit through agreements.

MS. COTHREN said the university has several models of supplying dual credits.

SENATOR BEGICH pointed out that it is allowed in practice whether or not it is in statute.

SENATOR BIRCH asked if high school students in Fairbanks have the ability to attend classes at the university.

MS. COTHREN responded that high school students have several opportunities and options to receive dual credit at the university campus in Fairbanks. A robust career and technical educational program has been in place for many years.

SENATOR HUGHES said that she understood that when a university works on a partnership agreement, high school students get high school and college credit. She asked whether a student not in a formal agreement who decided to take a math class would automatically get high school credit. She questioned whether other states had put that into state statute.

MS. COTHREN deferred the question to Dr. Parady or the department.

DR. PARADY answered there are some differences across the state regarding dual credit. University of Alaska President Jim Johnsen has formed a task force on that question in order to

have alignment and consistency across the state. It is an issue UA is working on.

CHAIR STEVENS noted the concerns about setting students up for failure by taking college classes they are not prepared for. He asked if they have any records of dropout rates.

MS. COTHREN replied that UA was in the process of completing a paper through UAA's Center for Education Policy Research on dual credit outcomes. More information would be available this spring.

[10:21:10 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS opened public testimony.

[10:21:28 AM](#)

BRIDGET WEISS, Ph.D., Superintendent, Juneau School District, Juneau, Alaska, said school districts are doing some incredible things across state with dual credit. The Southeast collaboration is about preparing students to access dual college credit programs early so that they can ensure a larger body of students are academically and socially ready for that step. ANSEP is looking at how to initiate the program with UAS and Southeast communities, using Southeast resources.

DR. WEISS said last week she was in Senate Finance listening to the proposed supplemental budget education cut of \$20 million for the current fiscal year and then heard the discussion of SB 30. As the person responsible for meeting the needs in the district, it was disheartening. She completely applauded the dual credit options that the committee has heard of. Last year 184 Juneau School District students received dual credit. However, the unknowns of the fiscal impact of bill were unnerving as all districts are facing unprecedented financial decisions.

CHAIR STEVENS asked if the program included the Ketchikan and Sitka campuses, as well as Juneau.

DR. WEISS answered yes, and they partner with UAS. She asked the committee to explore the subsidized tuition piece.

SENATOR COSTELLO said that she used to teach in the Juneau School District after graduating from the UAS Master of Arts in Teaching program. She said she is encouraged by all the opportunities for students and feels strongly that every student deserves the education they are ready for. She suggested a

mandate might not be the way to go, but districts sharing with each other about what they are doing would be good. She didn't want the governor's proposed budget to mean that this type of effort stops. She stated support for career and technical education (CTE) and dual credit and getting students real world skills.

DR. WEISS said that one of the biggest challenges is meeting the needs of the continuum of students and dual credit plays a critical part on how to serve one end of the continuum. CTE is another. The graduation rate for students who take two or more CTE courses is 93 percent. She pointed out that those CTE programs become most vulnerable with fiscal challenges.

10:29:01 AM

SCOTT MACMANUS, Superintendent, Alaska Gateway School District, Tok, Alaska, said Alaska Gateway is a small district with 380 kids. They must make size an advantage and personalize instruction. Hundreds of students have received dual credit since they started offering it in 2003. The district learned that kids and families have to have skin in the game in order to be successful. When the program started, 25 percent of students didn't pass their classes. The district wasn't providing the tutoring and counseling support that it does now, but also, when the district was paying all fees, kids didn't finish. When kids had to pay, the success rate jumped to 95 percent.

10:32:26 AM

PATRICK MAYER, Superintendent, Yakutat School District, Yakutat, Alaska, said SB 30 represents increased opportunities for students through the establishment of a middle college program. Many districts offer dual credit, but through many different models. In a perfect world, the tenants of SB 30 would be ideal and all districts would have the same platform and resources. The reality is that Alaska is diverse. Some districts with less monetary resources focus on a cadre of small programs done well. Yakutat operates on the thinnest of margins and couldn't afford SB 30. When they pay for dual credit classes up front, students don't seem to have the motivation to complete them, but completion rates increase when students pay. Yakutat does not have a local campus, and poor connectivity prevents multiple students from participating in distance delivery classes simultaneously. He said this is an unfunded mandate. Dual credit options are a local control issue. He urged the committee to substitute "may" for "shall" in SB 30.

CHAIR STEVENS said he appreciated his comments. He didn't want to make life more difficult but to improve things.

10:36:14 AM

CHRIS REITAN, Superintendent, Craig City School District, Craig, Alaska, said he is in full support of SB 30 in theory because its intent is to expand curriculum options and ease transitions from high school to university. He recommended changing "shall" to "may." He said this model works very well for school districts directly connected to a local university. Lower Yukon School District has a great plan, but not all school districts can buy a facility to offer access. Craig and Galena, where he was superintendent for seven years, are looking at expanding dual credit with tech prep agreements with the university where they can house the classes and have a local instructor. He emphasized the need to attach the program to the local needs and economy. He noted there are many questions are about whether this would require a change to the BSA. He said LYSD is looking at AS 14.16.200, which is state funding for districts operating residential schools. That would be the vehicle of funding if districts have the wherewithal to have a residential facility. He recommended the committee look at that funding because it is broken down by region.

SENATOR COSTELLO asked if students who are pursuing dual credit are in the classroom and participating when achievement tests are administered.

MR. REITAN replied that achievement tests are specific to reading, writing, and math and the dual credit programs at Craig and Galena are through CTE fields, such as welding, aviation, and carpentry.

10:42:23 AM

DAVID NEESE, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, described SB 30 as a nice attempt to expand education opportunities in Alaska. He suggested that the "shall" provision should apply to unorganized parts of the state where the legislature sits as the school board and the "may" language should apply to organized boroughs. He also observed that the bill limits the program to University of Alaska campuses, so dual credit through correspondence will need to be considered.

10:45:51 AM

STEWART MCDONALD, Superintendent, North Slope Borough School District, Utqiagvik, Alaska, said the dual credit program has been around since Alaska had community colleges, but it isn't an

organized effort. The first inconsistency is that school board graduation requirements limit the kind of credit that can be given. A student who has completed a full semester of a college course may only receive a half credit toward their high school graduation requirements. He said he understands that the university is trying to resolve those inconsistencies but it cannot change school board policy.

MR. MCDONALD pointed out that dual credit is not an organized degree-seeking program so students cannot officially work on a degree until they receive their high school diploma. He also pointed out the need to work out the funding mechanisms for when the university supplies the teacher versus when the public school system provides the teacher, all of which can affect the cost to the districts. Technical assistance also needs to be provided to all 53 school districts throughout the state because not everybody is at the same level. He said this can help everyone get focused and resolve issues rather than letting everybody discover the pitfalls.

MR. MCDONALD said that under the current dual credit system, students seeking professional certifications will take countless CTE dual credit courses that do not in the long run support a degree. The credits are not transferable because they are not inside the structure of a degree. He said the key here is the "shall" and "may" discussion. The mechanism of mandated payment needs to ensure the technical work and fiscal plan is sound and doable at scalable levels. Especially for single site districts like Yakutat. He said he applauds the effort represented in SB 30 completely and strongly urges that the funding mechanism is part of the mandate. He said we need to pull together and sort out these details.

CHAIR STEVENS said he appreciates the comments.

[10:52:22 AM](#)

JEFF DEETER, School Board Member, Alaska Gateway School District, Tok, Alaska, recounted how dual credit benefitted both himself when he was in high school in the Alaska Gateway School District and his children. He said he ran for the school board because of the discrepancy between the rigor of core UA classes and what was available in Dot Lake. The school board recently worked to make that transfer between high school and the university more on par. He said he is pleased with the discussion and eager to see the bill move forward but the "shall" or "may" in today's fiscal climate is a concern. Another

concern is that the university should make the decision about a ninth grader who has demonstrated proficiency.

SENATOR COSTELLO commented on the value of his testimony.

10:58:54 AM

KATHY MOFFITT, Director, Administrative Projects, Anchorage School District, Anchorage, Alaska, said SB 30 supports choice and opportunity for students who meet criteria to enroll in college courses. She shared that she was instrumental in bringing middle college programs to Mat-Su and the Anchorage School District. She has seen first-hand the benefits to students and their families. She said SB 30 has parameters but allows flexibility for each unique district. She said she knows the implementation processes will need refinement. She offered her belief that the state has the resources to support and work through hurdles or roadblocks. She said she supports the word "shall" because it will require school districts to consider how to move beyond the K-12 curriculum. She added that she does believe there must be an opt-out plan, which could be a report on a why a district could not offer the program.

SENATOR HUGHES asked if she believes that the current funding school districts statewide receive would be adequate for all districts to implement a middle college model.

MS. MOFFITT answered that it is hard to predict what hurdles and roadblocks there might be. Districts may implement dual credit programs through correspondence, one course, or CTE. She said she interprets the bill as telling districts "you shall look into it," but there must be an opt out.

SENATOR HUGHES said it is important for us to understand if some districts aren't allowing that college credit to count maybe that districts have crosswalks so students know that if they take a certain math class that it will count for high school credit. Noting that David Neese testified that correspondence coursework met the Moore vs. State of Alaska decision, she said it is important to hear from DEED about whether distance, virtual coursework would meet the equity requirement or if it must be a live, on-campus experience.

11:07:07 AM

CHAIR STEVENS concurred that it is important to know. He held SB 30 in committee.

11:07:27 AM

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Stevens adjourned the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting at 11:07.