

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 5, 2019

9:01 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. 56

"An Act relating to health education and physical activity requirements for students in grades kindergarten through eight; and establishing the Thursday in February immediately following Presidents' Day as PLAAY Day."

- HEARD & HELD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: SB 56

SHORT TITLE: MAND. PHYS. ACTIVITY SCHOOLS; PLAAY DAY

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) COSTELLO

02/13/19	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/13/19	(S)	EDC
02/26/19	(S)	EDC AT 8:30 AM BUTROVICH 205
02/26/19	(S)	<Bill Hearing Canceled>
03/05/19	(S)	EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205

**WITNESS REGISTER**

CHAZ RIVAS, Staff  
Senator Mia Costello  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Introduced SB 56 on behalf of the sponsor.

ERIN LAUGHLIN, Intern  
Senator Mia Costello  
Alaska State Legislature  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Introduced SB 56 on behalf of the sponsor.

DENALI DANIELS, President  
Denali Daniels and Associates  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented research on physical education and recess policy survey during the hearing on SB 56.

CAREY CARPENTER, representing ASD60  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supported SB 56.

KELLY LESSENS, Ph.D., representing ASD60  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supported SB 56.

POSIE BOGGS, Member  
Alaska Reading Coalition  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supported SB 56.

DOROTHY ORR, Executive Director  
SHAPE Alaska  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supported the intent but not the language of SB 56.

MIKE COONS, representing self  
Palmer, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supported SB 56.

DAVID NEES, representing self  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Supported SB 56 with some concerns.

## **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[9:01:16 AM](#)

**CHAIR GARY STEVENS** called the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Costello, Hughes, Begich, and Chair Stevens. Senator Birch arrived shortly thereafter.

**SB 56-MAND. PHYS. ACTIVITY SCHOOLS; PLAAY DAY**

[9:01:26 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS announced the consideration of SB 56. He announced his intent to introduce the bill, take public testimony, and hold the bill in committee.

[9:02:02 AM](#)

SENATOR COSTELLO invited her aides to introduce the bill on her behalf.

[9:03:16 AM](#)

CHAZ RIVAS, Staff, Senator Mia Costello, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, said that SB 56 is an act relating to physical activity requirements for students in kindergarten through grade 8. This bill strengthens the law enacted in 2016 so that Alaskan students have the opportunity to benefit from physical activity during the school day. Under the bill, school districts would provide at least 90 percent of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommendation for physical activity for adolescents. School districts would have the flexibility of meeting the requirement of 54 minutes through physical education (PE) classes, recess, classroom brain breaks or a combination of activity types.

[9:04:17 AM](#)

MR. RIVAS said breaks in the school day have been shown to improve information retention and focus. Recess lets students process classroom lessons and allows for an education outside of the classroom. A CDC review of 50 peer-reviewed studies documents a link between physical activity and academic performance, including achievement, behavior, cognitive skills, and attitude. The American Association for Pediatrics also found that recess, either indoor or outdoor, led to more attentive and productive students. Various peer-reviewed studies show that students who are active in school do better in nearly every way.

MR. RIVAS said SB 56 does the following:

- Requires school districts to "establish guidelines for schools in the district to provide opportunities

during each full school day for grades kindergarten through eight"

- Physical activity in schools must meet at least 90% of the Centers for Disease Control recommendation.
- Recognizes the Thursday after President's Day as PLAAY Day.

MR. RIVAS said PLAAY stands for Positive Leadership for Active Alaska Youth. PLAAY Day began a few years as an effort to meet that physical activity requirement for the day.

MR. RIVAS said the presentation summarizes research that helps support the idea that physical activity in schools helps students academically and behaviorally.

MR. RIVAS said the study "Physical Activity and Cognitive Functioning of Children: A Systematic Review," published in 2018 in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, states a brain break can do the following:

- The ability to focus attention is improved among children who participate in physical activities (pg. 2)
- Classroom-based physical activity (a 10-min aerobic physical activity integrated with math practice) improved both physical activity levels and academic achievement. (pg.5)

[9:07:22 AM](#)

ERIN LAUGHLIN, Intern, Senator Mia Costello, Alaska State Legislature, Juneau, Alaska, referred to findings from a CDC systematic review of 56 studies.

[9:07:56 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH asked if the academic improvement is retained over time.

MR. RIVAS answered that some of the studies look at retention for academics and some focus on behavior.

SENATOR BEGICH asked if the research speak to retention over time.

MS. LAUGHLIN said some of the studies in the CDC systemic review do. She offered to follow up with more information.

CHAIR STEVENS asked if classroom behavior improves when play occurs.

MR. RIVAS replied that it does correlate positively with on-task behavior. He showed a finding from the CDC review:

Time spent in recess has been shown to positively affect students' cognitive performance (e.g., attention, concentration) and a classroom behaviors (e.g., not misbehaving). 40-44 (pg. 3)

MR. RIVAS displayed a table on slide 5 from "The Effects of Recess on Fifth Grade Students Time On-Task in an Elementary Classroom" published in the International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education. This study was conducted in northern Mississippi with 12 students. The table shows a doubling to tripling of on-task activity after recess.

MS. LAUGHLIN added that the sample size is a limitation, but the study says it is easily repeatable. It shows a positive correlation between recess and on-task behavior.

[9:13:32 AM](#)

SENATOR BIRCH asked if this information is available to educators and school boards across the state. He expressed concern about changing the law from a "must" to a "may." He asked what kind of engagement has occurred about this with districts. He said seems that a reasonable person would do this, but perhaps there are tradeoffs. He said he worries about sidelining local school boards.

MR. RIVAS responded that SB 56 is very similar to the bill that passed in 2016. A goal is for school districts, schools, and teachers to be creative in how to reach that [54]-minute threshold. School districts across the country have found ways to reach this threshold without major disruption to classrooms or academics.

[9:16:36 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES asked how many school districts across the state achieve the [54] minute threshold. She expressed concern that time would be taken out of academics because children in Alaska already are in school several weeks less than the national average.

MR. RIVAS said there would be invited testimony from Denali Daniels who did a study on the question.

SENATOR HUGHES said the bill applies to K-8, but high school students benefit from physical activity too. She said youths that participate in an afterschool athletic program can go home to study with their brains ready to go. However, students can't participate if they don't keep their grades up. She commented that some of the kids who start to slip through the cracks would benefit from afterschool athletic programs.

MR. RIVAS said the high school question is worth exploring. The bill structure is K-8 because elementary schools do not have access to accredited sports like in high school. In middle school, sports accessibility is more limited than in high school. The bill has an exemption clause for those participating in accredited sports.

[9:22:14 AM](#)

SENATOR BIRCH said he too worries about the mandate. He asked if the sponsor had any commentary from school organizations about how school districts are reacting to the mandatory nature of the bill.

MR. RIVAS replied that the sponsor had not received written testimony or heard concerns.

SENATOR BEGICH said he would be curious to know their position.

CHAIR STEVENS advised that the committee would hear from representatives from the Anchorage School District today.

MR. RIVAS reviewed information from "Physical Fitness and Academic Achievement in Third- and Fifth-Grade Students" published in 2007 in the Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology. One important takeaway was that children benefitted socially, particularly at the elementary level.

- Opportunities for children to be physically active and become physically fit should be provided by the school, especially at the elementary level. (pg. 248)
- This study confirms that physical fitness is generally associated with academic performance in elementary school children. (pg. 250)

MR. RIVAS reviewed the Alaska student overweight and obesity rate, which ranges from 32 percent in Mat-Su, 36 percent in Anchorage, and up to 53 percent on the North Slope.

SENATOR BIRCH asked what the national benchmark is.

9:25:38 AM

MS. LAUGHLIN said she would follow up with the information. The HA 2020 Indicator on the graph stands for the Healthy Alaskans 2020 initiative from the partnership between the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) and the Alaska Tribal Health Consortium. Healthy Alaskans 2020 has 25 benchmarks to reach by 2020, and one is a 35 percent overweight and obesity rate.

MR. RIVAS reviewed information from "The Decline of Play and the Rise of Psychopathology in Children and Adolescents" published in the 2011 American Journal of Play:

- Play functions as the major means by which children (1) develop intrinsic interests and competencies; (2) learn how to make decisions, solve problems, exert self-control, and follow rules; (3) learn to regulate their emotions; (4) make friends and learn to get along with others as equals; and (5) experience joy. (pg. 1)
- Through all of these effects, play promotes mental health.

SENATOR BIRCH said he would be interested in the correlation between the decline in play and the rise in screen time over the last 20 years.

MR. RIVAS asked whether he was referring to during school or after.

SENATOR BIRCH answered just generally as it relates to play.

MR. RIVAS said he could investigate whether there is any correlation. He would also look at K-8 policies about student access to cell phones during recess.

SENATOR BEGICH commented that the title is apocalyptic. He asked if the studies looked at the structure of play time. For example, what if kids only looked at their phones during recess. He asked if the bill or the studies address that. He said he was looking for guidelines of when it works and when it doesn't.

MS. LAUGHLIN said this particular study does mention the increase in sedentary lifestyle in the past decades and how children are not as active both inside the classroom and at home. Many studies define structured and unstructured play.

Recess is unstructured play. Almost all the studies that are available show the benefits of unstructured play and that it may be greater than structured play.

SENATOR BEGICH said that is fascinating.

CHAIR STEVENS commented, free range children.

SENATOR HUGHES said it would be valuable to know if districts have policies about children not taking phones out during recess. She opined that by fourth or fifth grade, a lot of students have cell phones, and unstructured play needs to be physical.

[9:32:50 AM](#)

MR. RIVAS shared information from "The Power of Play: A Pediatric Role in Enhancing Development in Young Children," a clinical report published in September 2018 by the American Academy of Pediatrics:

- Play is not frivolous: it enhances brain structure and function and promotes executive function (i.e., the process of learning, rather than the content), which allows us pursue goals and ignore distractions" (pg. 1)
- Advocate for the protection of children's unstructured playtime because of its numerous benefits, including the development of foundational motor skills that may have lifelong benefits for the prevention of obesity, hypertension, and type 2 diabetes.

MR. RIVAS shared information from "The Crucial Role of Recess in Schools," an article published in 2010 in the Journal of School Health:

- Recess acts as a break from challenging mental tasks performed within a confined space. As such, recess offers a child a means for relieving and managing stress.

MR. RIVAS shared a quote from an opinion piece published in the Anchorage Daily New written by Dr. Lily Lou, Chief Medical Officer for DHSS and DHSS Commissioner Designee Adam Crum:

- "Unfortunately, children today have fewer opportunities to play and grow in healthy ways, which negatively affects their ability to decrease stress,

overcome adverse childhood experiences, learn positive social behaviors and develop higher-level reasoning skills.”

MR. RIVAS shared the following information about PLAAY Day.

- PLAAY Day (Positive Leadership for Active Alaska Youth) is a synchronized, statewide event that encourages the importance of physical fitness in youth.
- PLAAY Day is held on the Thursday following Presidents' Day.
- Goal of PLAAY Day is to provide a day of opportunity for Alaskan students to be physically active and reach their daily physical activity goal.

SENATOR HUGHES asked if other states have something similar and why the Thursday after Presidents' Day was chosen.

MR. RIVAS said the statewide organization suggested the day.

SENATOR HUGHES asked if this is being done in other states and if there is an organization called Positive Leadership for Active Alaska Youth.

MR. RIVAS answered that the organization does exist. He offered to follow up with information about whether other states do this.

[9:38:06 AM](#)

MR. RIVAS provided the following sectional analysis for SB 56:

Section 1: Amends AS 14.30.360(c) (Health education curriculum; physical activity guidelines). Requires Alaska school districts to meet 90 percent of the daily recommended [60]-minute physical activity guideline set by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

Section 2: Establishes the Thursday following President's Day as PLAAY Day (Positive Leadership for Active Alaska Youth). This day will be established for recognizing the importance of physical activity in school; and provides a certain day where students are able to meet the national recommendation of physical activity in the school day.

[9:39:13 AM](#)

DENALI DANIELS, President, Denali Daniels and Associates, Anchorage, Alaska, said that in 2014 she conducted research on behalf of DHSS. Her testimony is on behalf of the work her team conducted and does not represent the state of Alaska. That work is part of the public domain and was part of the basis for SB 200 in 2016. Her team is a consulting firm with offices in Anchorage and Juneau. They provide strategic planning, facilitation, public involvement, and policy research. Most clients are nonprofits or small businesses and at times government agencies.

MS. DANIELS said her team's work was specific to policies in Alaska. The cost of obesity is dramatic and the statistics are quite high. The CDC has tied academic performance to physical activity. Her research was focused on PE and recess policies in Alaska school districts.

MS. DANIELS said the CDC recommended that school-age children participate in at least 60 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous physical activity. The National Association of Sport and Physical Education recommends 150 minutes of PE per week for elementary students and 225 minutes per week for secondary students.

MS. DANIELS said that two federal policies have set the stage for what happens at the state level. The Child Nutrition and Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) Reauthorization Act of 2004 required that entities eligible for the school meal program had to have a wellness policy. The deadline for establishing the policies was the 2006-2007 school year. She said she will share some data about Alaska's wellness policies. The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 established best practices for wellness policies.

[9:44:38 AM](#)

SENATOR BIRCH asked her to speak about the nuances between federal policy and guidelines. For example, 55 m.p.h. is a policy if states want federal highway money. He asked if any federal education dollars are dependent on following any of the policies.

MS. DANIELS said it is all policy. It comes down to enforcement and the way legislation is written.

MS. DANIELS reviewed the elements of wellness policies established in 2010. She said elements of a good wellness policy address nutrition, meal guidelines, nutrition education goals,

physical activity, student wellness, and implementation. Today the scope would be limited to PE and recess, but wellness policies are an umbrella for wellness overall.

SENATOR BIRCH said he was trying to understand the role of the Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development in this policy structure. He asked if she had opinions about education policy and if the committee has any obligation to work with them.

MS. DANIELS replied that she didn't have the answer.

CHAIR STEVENS suggested the committee ask someone from the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED).

[9:48:24 AM](#)

MS. DANIELS said there were two parts to the project. The first was a survey of 54 school districts asking 29 questions about PE and recess policies. All 54 school districts responded. She said she is showing the data that relates to SB 56, which is only K-8. She noted that the number 53 is on some of the data because Mt. Edgecumbe is a high school. The second part was an analysis of the 51 written policies that were collected. A scoring methodology established by the Robert Wood Johnson foundation was then applied.

MS. DANIELS said written policies are important because they establish a clear vision and accountability. Only 32 percent of school districts said their elementary schools had a written policy about recess and only six percent of middle schools. The majority said they had no written policy but a decent amount of practice in place. Most noteworthy was the number of school districts with no policy at all. Ten districts said they had no elementary school policies and 19 said they had no policies for middle school.

MS. DANIELS said 53 percent of school districts had a written policy for PE at the elementary and secondary level. A number had no written policy but have practices in place. Five school districts at the elementary level had no policy for PE and seven school districts had none at the middle school level. She said she found not having a policy at all, even in practice, surprising.

MS. DANIELS reminded the committee that she surveyed districts, not schools; she has not counted the number of schools and students involved.

CHAIR STEVENS said the two percent who didn't know at the middle school level was surprising.

MS. DANIELS said the survey asked open-ended questions. Anecdotally, people at the school districts were eager to talk about this issue. Some survey comments were about stipulating the number of minutes needed, stronger teeth in number of minutes suggested by the state, more state-mandated PE and recess, and increased compliance.

[9:54:17 AM](#)

SENATOR BIRCH commented that this didn't take into account soccer moms, who are constantly driving children to sports practices and other evening activities.

MS. DANIELS agreed that the scope of work did not include those things.

MS. DANIELS said the team scored the written policies with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation coding scheme. A strong policy required an implementation plan and included strong language such as "shall," "must," "will," and "require," and met or exceeded CDC recommendations. A weak policy included vague terms, suggestions, or recommendations, and did not meet the CDC recommendations. There were a lot of "no policy" responses, which was an eye opener.

MS. DANIELS said that 33 percent of Alaska school districts had no policy or had not updated them since 2007. The 2010 act established guidelines for effective policies, so the 33 percent shows that the 2010 act did not make an impact in improving policies. Her work was in 2014 and SB 200 passed in 2016. She opined not much has changed since that time.

[9:58:14 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES asked what SB 200 did.

MS. DANIELS responded that she would prefer not to address legislation.

MR. RIVAS said that SB 200 looks similar to SB 56. SB 200 said that school districts shall provide opportunities. It was amended in the state House and the "shall" became a "may." SB 200 passed as a recommendation, not a requirement.

MS. DANIELS said physical education would be a component of a wellness policy. Forty percent of school districts had no written policy/provision for PE at both the elementary and middle school level.

MS. DANIELS said 50 percent of school districts had no policy about the daily minutes for recess. One hundred percent of middle schools had no policy. She said she wondered if recess was the correct term to use at middle school, but it was the state that provided the questions for the study.

[10:01:13 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES said policy or no policy, every elementary school in the state probably has recess. She said it is important to know how many minutes school districts have scheduled for recess. She posited that for middle school, it is probably part of the lunch period and they all take PE.

MS. DANIELS said she would follow up with that information. She had it but didn't include it in the presentation.

SENATOR HUGHES reiterated that it is important information.

MS. DANIELS said that in 2014, school districts agreed about the importance, but were hesitant to put minutes in policy and formally schedule the time. By asking about practices the team learned that there is a disconnect between written policy and practice. She said it sounds like there is a need for further exploration about PE and recess at the elementary and middle school and about the questions raised today.

[10:04:05 AM](#)

MS. DANIELS said that she had jumped ahead to the conclusion, so she would go over some more findings. She said some school districts struggle to balance time between PE and core curriculum. A direct quote from a respondent is, "School is focusing on attendance and grades, and PE has taken a backseat."

MS. DANIELS said 50 percent of districts do not have a recess policy, but 50 percent do. Recess is provided more in practice than in written policies. The team did hear that 63 percent of districts provide middle school recess/open gym in practice, and 77 percent of elementary schools schedule lunch and recess separately. That means 23 percent of school districts may not be following best practices.

MS. DANIELS said she personally supports SB 56. She recounted that her daughter-in-law, who is a teacher at Kasilof, mentioning that students were doing well this year with 30 minutes of recess and 30 minutes of PE.

[10:07:40 AM](#)

CAREY CARPENTER, representing ASD60, Anchorage, Alaska, supported SB 56. She said that ASD60 is a grassroots group that supports increased physical activity and appropriate amounts of time for students to eat lunch, following the CDC recommendation. She is a parent of two students at Sand Lake Elementary School and a young adult cancer survivor who understands the importance of health. Last year, on the first day of school, her children told her that recess had been cut. She was shocked. Recess and PE improve learning and physical, emotional, and psychological health. This activity mandate is necessary because many school districts have not changed anything to give students more physical activity since SB 200 passed in 2016. Schools are free to cut recess. Alaskan students deserve the best in education and opportunity in life. Children like her daughter who sit through three days of school a week with only 20 minutes of recess need someone to speak for them. Some districts in Alaska are making physical activity a priority. They see the connection it has to better education. It makes learning more efficient.

MS. CARPENTER said some schools are doing it right, but children don't get to pick where they go to school. Children deserve equal access to these benefits. The issue is so important in the lives of children. It's important to ensure that districts across Alaska are doing the right things for students.

[10:10:20 AM](#)

SENATOR BIRCH asked if she raised this issue with her daughter's principal or anyone else in the Anchorage School District.

MS. CARPENTER said she asked the principal why recess was cut. His response was that the school had to fit in more academic time. She said just sitting in a chair does not make children learn; the process is about blood flow to the brain. Children learn with movement. As part of that, ASD60 formed. They have tried to work with the Anchorage School District, and the district did decide to start a health and wellness committee. ASD60 also started a petition for increased physical activity and lunchtime and over 6,000 people signed.

[10:12:06 AM](#)

SENATOR BIRCH said testimony earlier was that the tradeoff was diminished time for core academic curriculum. He said he is struggling with intervening at a statewide level with something that should be a school district or school board or local government decision. He asked if recess is 20 minutes in all Anchorage K-8 schools.

MS. CARPENTER answered that is the minimum.

SENATOR BIRCH asked if 20 minutes is the actual time and if that includes lunch periods.

MS. CARPENTER answered that 20 minutes is a minimum. Most schools meet that, but it is not being well tracked by the Anchorage School District. Some schools are supposed to have a 45-minute block for lunch and recess, and some only had 40 minutes. The Anchorage School District is not doing a good job making sure students get the physical activity they need, which is why ASD60 supports this bill. She noted that three or four schools in Anchorage allocate over an hour. Those schools indicate teachers have an easier time teaching and the students learn more. She said everyone wants all students to have equal opportunity for those huge benefits. There are mountains of research showing the benefits. Every single student in every school deserves this opportunity.

[10:15:47 AM](#)

KELLY LESSENS, Ph.D., representing ASD60, Anchorage, Alaska, supported SB 56. She said she has a doctorate in American culture and she studies race, gender, and environmental history. She is the cofounder of ASD60. She cares about the overall environment in which her children and their peers learn. Many people emphasize the importance of local control at the district and classroom level, but just as they don't leave the question about wearing seat belts, smoking in restaurants, or selling alcohol to minors to local jurisdictions, establishing evidence-based minimums designed to promote the health and well-being of all students should not be left to local control. She said she has called all the schools in Anchorage and the data is analogous to national data, which shows that schools serving predominantly poor students and students of color grant less time for recess than their whiter and/or more well-off counterparts. There is a minimum, but charter schools with very high SES [socioeconomic status] with a low percentage of nonwhite students exceed the minimum time. Because the legislature is constitutionally obligated to ensure the quality

and equity of education, all Alaskan children deserve better safeguards.

DR. LESSENS said Senate Bill 200 did not require districts to schedule time for physical activity or specify that all activity should be of moderate to vigorous quality that the CDC recommends. For her daughter in second grade, the Anchorage School District offers legal guidelines of 100 minutes a week of recess and 90 minutes of PE. Her daughter's teacher must find 80 additional minutes to remain in those guidelines. The Anchorage School District scheduling requirements are so tight that teachers talk about not having enough time to send students to the bathroom. That they can find 80 additional minutes for physical activity is laughable. These totally legal guidelines mean that her daughter and her classmates receive 60 minutes less than the 150 minutes of PE recommended by the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services. Her daughter and peers also receive far less recess than peers Outside are starting to receive. Over the past two decades, researchers have figured out more recess leads to better results. Virginia passed legislation in 2018 saying up to 15 percent of the school day could be given to recess. Texas has had groundbreaking work with LiiNK, Let's Inspire Innovation 'N Kids. Those students get four 15-minute recesses during the day. Her daughter and her peers are not getting this. Recess and PE matter in Alaska because obesity is expensive to treat.

DR. LESSENS said recess and PE bolster academic outcomes, improve behavior, and make learning more efficient. She said she is testifying for own children, but as a historian, she thinks about the big picture and the social world kids have inherited. Mandating better minimums for everyone will make learning more efficient, more enjoyable, and more effective. Recess and PE are better for this than in-class brain breaks.

CHAIR STEVENS said the Department of Education would speak to the fiscal note.

[10:21:29 AM](#)

PAUL PRUSSING, Project Coordinator, Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), Juneau, Alaska, said the DEED fiscal note is zero.

CHAIR STEVENS asked if he had any comments about the bill.

MR. PRUSSING deferred to Mr. Brocious.

TODD BROCIIOUS, Health and Safety Administrator, Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), Juneau, Alaska, said the department is supportive of SB 56. The testimony highlighting the data about positive health impacts is accurate and similar to what the department has identified.

[10:22:37 AM](#)

SENATOR BIRCH asked what role the State Board of Education has in statewide policies such as this that impact schools.

MR. BROCIIOUS said the state board is not involved in this policy. Local school boards have the statutory authority to develop guidelines to comply with the statute.

SENATOR BIRCH asked if this is viewed as a local guideline and not something the state board would weigh in on.

MR. BROCIIOUS replied that is correct; those guidelines would be established locally.

SENATOR BIRCH asked, based on the testimony that SB 56 may deprive K-8 students of core curriculum instruction, if there would be an adverse impact on the ultimate mission and objectives of DEED.

MR. BROCIIOUS responded that the bill allows for creative insertion of physical activity during the day. He opined that much of the required time could be implemented during the class period as physical activity can be integrated into instruction. He said he listened to the testimony on SB 200 in 2016 and districts identified challenges and limits with time within the school day. He said he wanted to acknowledge and honor that.

[10:25:19 AM](#)

MR. PRUSSING described SB 56 as a straightforward bill. He said it changes the existing statute from "may" to "shall," adds a waiver for children who participate in afterschool activities like basketball, and it implements PLAAAY Day. These changes clarify and strengthen the existing statute.

[10:26:29 AM](#)

SENATOR BIRCH asked if K-8 students who participate in extracurricular athletic activities typically receive school credit for that.

MR. PRUSSING answered that local school districts can adopt those policies now.

SENATOR BEGICH, in response to Mr. Brocious' statement that the state board did not have any responsibilities in regard to the bill, he said Senator Begich cited AS 14.07.180, which is about board responsibilities regarding curriculum approval, and AS 14.07.175, regarding assessment and education laws and regulations. Thus, the state board does have responsibility for establishing curriculum statewide so SB 56 would clearly have an impact on statewide curriculum. He asked for an explanation for his statement.

MR. PRUSSING reviewed AS 14.08.021 that delegates to local school boards the authority to operate the public schools.

SENATOR BEGICH said his point is that for years, the State Board of Education has not taken on the duties it is statutorily responsible for, which includes approval of curriculum on a regular basis and reporting to the legislature on a regular basis. There are significant responsibilities the board is not exercising. He emphasized that it was time for the board to step up and do its job, which is everything from reviewing the budget to having the commissioner take responsibility for the budget. AS 14.07.168, the report to the legislature, AS 14.07.170, additional powers and duties, and AS 14.07.180, curricula approval, which is part of the pilot project that passed last year, all speak to the importance of the board taking an active role in identifying what should or should not be required at the local level. He said he wants the legislation to be integrated as part of the board's overall responsibilities.

MR. PRUSSING agreed that there are multiple statutes such as AS 14.07.050, the selection of textbooks as the responsibility of the local board, so it does fall under local responsibility. He added that work is being done to clarify the roles of the state board and local board regarding the selection of curriculum.

[10:31:29 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS opened public testimony.

[10:31:40 AM](#)

POSIE BOGGS, Member, Alaska Reading Coalition, Anchorage, Alaska, stated that the coalition supports SB 56 and does not see it as pitting reading instruction against play. She said everyone needs play and struggling readers need as much play time and brain boost time as possible because reading instruction can be intense for those struggling. She explained that some struggling readers have experienced an adverse

childhood event when learning to read that leads to posttraumatic stress syndrome for them. Data from adults who suffer from posttraumatic stress from reading instruction show they have anger and resentment toward their childhood teachers. She said the coalition feels that anything that decreases stress during reading instruction will reduce the emotional cost suffered by children who struggle. She said the coalition has a lot of confidence in the report that will come out of the reading task force. They anticipate that the recommendations in the report will lead to efficiency in reading instruction, meaning less conflict between play vs. academic time. She said the coalition would support extending the school day by 15 or 30 minutes or extending the school year to ensure a healthy environment for reading instruction and students who struggle. A large factor in that is being able to move around and use a brain boost to decrease stress in the moment. Reading is hard. It is not natural. It comes by instruction. She reiterated that the coalition supports play and SB 56.

[10:35:48 AM](#)

DOROTHY ORR, Executive Director, SHAPE Alaska, Anchorage, Alaska, stated support for the intent but not the language of SB 56. She expressed concern that the current language will not actually change what is happening in classrooms and could actually decrease the amount of physical activity for some children. She said SHAPE Alaska encourages participation in PLAAAY Day and believes the intent of the language is to recognize and participate in physical activity across the state but it does not require school districts to offer physical education for students in grades K-8 or deter teachers from withholding PE or recess for whatever reason. She concluded her comments saying that SHAPE Alaska supports the intent to bring opportunities for daily activity and movement into the school day. Healthy, active students are better students.

[10:41:28 AM](#)

MIKE COONS, representing self, Palmer, Alaska, supported SB 56. He said that America has some of the fattest people in the world. When he was a kid there was no need to push play. It was assumed children would want to play. Not having activity in classes creates problems. He is 110 percent behind this bill. Kids should be out there having fun during recess. He suggested that removing the pressure to teach advanced math would free up more time in the academic schedule.

[10:48:10 AM](#)

DAVID NEES, representing self, Anchorage, Alaska, stated support for SB 56 with some concerns. He said he likes the change from "may" to "shall" but worries that a mandate may take time from instruction. He suggested inserting language to ensure that local boards cannot shorten school-day instruction to accommodate increased physical activity. He highlighted that as written, the bill does not mandate a physical education component taught by a professional that does not take time from outdoor recess or academic instruction. Responding to Senator Birch's question, he explained that students can opt out of physical education beginning in about sixth or seventh grade if they participate in an activity outside of school hours. In high school, students can earn credit for such extracurricular activities. He summarized that he likes the concept but would like the implementation to be tightened.

[10:50:48 AM](#)

CHAIR STEVENS held SB 56 in committee.

[10:50:55 AM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Stevens adjourned the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting at 10:50 a.m.