

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 12, 2021

9:01 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Roger Holland, Chair
Senator Shelley Hughes
Senator Peter Micciche
Senator Tom Begich

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Gary Stevens, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION: "SCHOOL DISTRICT PERSPECTIVES ON EDUCATING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC."

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

KIM HANKINS, M.Ed., Superintendent
Lower Kuskokwim School District
Bethel, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on School District Perspectives on Educating During the COVID-19 Pandemic.

MIKE HANLEY, M.Ed., Superintendent
Chugach and Aleutian Region School Districts
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on School District Perspectives on Educating During the COVID-19 Pandemic.

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

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on School District Perspectives on Educating During the COVID-19 Pandemic.

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

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified on School District Perspectives on Educating During the COVID-19 Pandemic.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[9:01:41 AM](#)

CHAIR ROGER HOLLAND called the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Hughes, Begich, and Chair Holland. Senator Micciche arrived as the meeting was in progress.

PRESENTATION: "School District Perspectives on Educating During the COVID-19 Pandemic."

[9:02:25 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND announced the presentation School District Perspectives on Educating during the COVID-19 Pandemic and that the committee was planning to hear from four superintendents. He asked the superintendents to introduce themselves and their districts and to give an overview of how the pandemic has affected enrollment.

[9:03:00 AM](#)

KIM HANKINS, M.Ed., Superintendent, Lower Kuskokwim School District, Bethel, Alaska, said that the Lower Kuskokwim School District operates 29 schools in 24 locations over an area of 22,000 square miles, most of that roadless tundra, and Bethel is the hub. This is her first year as superintendent of LKSD. LKSD enrollment is usually around 4,000 students, 95 percent of whom are Alaska Native. The district has seen a decrease of 47 students in the ADM (Average Daily Membership) this year. Some have moved to Anchorage, some are opting for statewide home school programs, and some have moved to neighboring districts. The region is one of high poverty. Most families practice a subsistence lifestyle and live in multigenerational homes. All LKSD communities, with the exception of one, have been directly impacted by COVID.

DR. HANKINS said that the Yukon-Kuskokwim delta region has had the highest COVID rates per capita in Alaska for over four months and on and off, some of the highest rates in the nation. The rates have often averaged four-to-six times that of the next

most heavily impacted region in the state. In addition to high COVID rates, the region has a very limited and vulnerable healthcare system. The district lost two employees to COVID-19 and has had countless students and employees sick with COVID. The communities have moved in and out of lockdown as needed. The district opened the majority of schools in August at the medium risk level with a hybrid model. The five Bethel schools and four village sites opened the school year with remote learning. The Bethel schools have remained in remote learning with Bethel experiencing widespread community transmission since last fall. Student achievement and health and safety have certainly been the top two priorities this year.

DR. HANKINS said one of the positives this year is an incredibly dedicated staff who are going above and beyond to reach families. They have been highly innovative. The district still struggles with students and families who are not engaged, but the district uses many ways to reach students. The intranet system the district put in place this year is a positive. Another positive is the district has developed strong partnerships with tribal organizations as they navigate the challenges of COVID. Access to internet and internet equity are huge issues in rural Alaska. Only ten to 15 percent of students have internet at home. Getting the intranet system in place has been a challenge, but it is up and running.

DR. HANKINS said some students have struggled this year. The district is asking a lot of parents and families. It is a heavy lift. On the other hand, some students have been thriving with the flexibility of remote learning. That allows more time for families to do subsistence activities together. With COVID-19 cases declining, and with the healthcare provider providing excellent vaccine distribution in the region, the district is working to implement a phased reentry plan and looks forward to bringing students back into the buildings.

9:07:39 AM

MIKE HANLEY, M.Ed., Superintendent, Chugach and Aleutian Region School Districts, Anchorage, Alaska, said that both of his districts are remote. The Aleutian Region consists of two schools in Adak and Atka, far out in the Aleutian chain. The enrollment has remained steady, but it is the smallest school district in the state with an enrollment of less than 30 students. The Chugach School District is midsized for Alaska and decided to partner with the Aleutian Region School District to share services. The Chugach School District is the middle of the road for size in the state and has over 600 kids, most of them

in the home school program. It has three traditional brick-and-mortar sites out in Prince William Sound. Whittier is on the road system and Chenega and Tatitlek are on islands in the sound. The correspondence program enrollment increased by 30 percent.

[9:09:13 AM](#)

LARRY LEDOUX, Ph.D., Superintendent, Kodiak Island School District, Kodiak, Alaska, said the Kodiak Island School District (KISD) has five rural schools with enrollments than range from five to 29 and four large elementary schools, a middle school, a high school, and a comprehensive preschool program in Kodiak. The rural populations stayed static. The district population has been declining, which has nothing to do with the current COVID-19 challenges. The district was pleased not to lose students this year. The home school program has been robust for years. The district had 92 students in the program last year and this year it grew to 250. KISD constructed a completely remote K-12 school since many parents did not feel comfortable sending their students to school. It attracted 350 students and is staffed by teachers for each grade from every school in the district. It has worked well. The regular school system has 1,800 students. The remote school helped lower the pupil/teacher ratio in each classroom so that social distance could be maximized. In the summer, nine work groups tried to use everything learned last spring to construct the different programs and to communicate with families so they knew exactly what the district had to offer.

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At ease

[9:14:00 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND reconvened the meeting.

[9:14:07 AM](#)

BRIDGET WEISS, Ph.D., Superintendent, Juneau School District, Juneau, Alaska, said the district planned for 4,600 students this year. That was the enrollment a year ago in the normal October count. This fall the enrollment was 4,079 students. The district lost about 570 students and 400 students went from brick-and-mortar schools to the district home school program. Normally that program has 30-50 students; currently it has 430. The district had to think quickly on its feet. The district was grateful for those families that stayed with the district. The district is running a variety of programs. The district heard from families that they wanted distance learning but wanted to

stay with the neighborhood schools. The district is operating distance learning from the neighborhood schools as well as through the Homebridge program. The district currently has opened elementary schools with small cohorts for two half days a week and is looking at expanding that to longer days. The middle school students are attending at least one full day a week and will move soon to two days a week. High school is operating at three full days per week. The district has been rolling that in since January 11. The mitigation strategies are working well. There have been a handful of cases that have been present in the schools and zero spread. In Juneau, the health numbers are better than they have ever been.

SENATOR BEGICH said his question may be more relevant for LKSD and Chugach. Last night he talked to a principal from Wainwright on the North Slope where Quintillion has dropped free fiber optic cable. However, the principal talked about the phone company charging families up to \$1,000 per month for access to that cable. These rural areas are places of high poverty. Zoom classes have not been conducted because families cannot afford to access the internet, even though the cables were dropped for free. He asked if the superintendents have similar situations where monthly charges are barring families from accessing the virtual education the state is hoping to provide during these types of crises.

[9:18:11 AM](#)

DR. HANKINS said Bethel does not have fiber, but GCI provides internet. Average internet costs are \$200 to \$300 per month for limited access. Additional buckets of data have to be purchased. Ten to 15 percent of students have access to home internet. It really is cost prohibitive in rural Alaska. The district this year has built its intranet system. The district has been fortunate to work with engineers from Zoom. With the intranet system, the district provided modems for families in Bethel and a router and antenna to families in village locations. Families were responsible for installing those devices. This took a while, but once in place via a program called GlobalProtect, students at home can access the intranet. This gives students access to a learning management system. The district is using Moodle because it can host it on its system. Students can also use a program called Ensemble, which can host prerecorded lessons from teachers. Students have access to Zoom through the intranet. The district worked extensively with Zoom to provide that. Students and teachers are connecting that way. It does not solve the issue of access to the internet for students, but it

did provide an additional way to get materials into the hands of students and provide face-to-face connections.

SENATOR HUGHES asked if the superintendents could advise if the students have smart phones and if they don't have access to internet, whether they could create hot spots with the cellular data on their phones.

DR. HANKINS estimated that 50 percent of middle and high school students have smart phones but with limited data. It is easy to go through all the data in a short period.

[9:21:51 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND recognized Senator Micciche had arrived.

MR. HANLEY answered that in Adak and Atka internet is very expensive. In the spring when everyone was sent home the company allowed free access, but otherwise most families would not have access to the internet. Copper Mountain provides some services in Prince William Sound, but only half the families have adequate internet. It is not uncommon to see kids with smart phones hanging outside the school. This is common in rural communities. Kids hang out outside the school to access the internet because they don't have it at home.

DR. LEDOUX said Kodiak's experience is similar. His has been an iPad district for several years. In rural schools the district uses cellular iPads so they can be hooked up to telephones lines, which is very expensive. The district was surprised at the number of families in urban areas who do not have internet at home. That was particularly true in low-income families. Even in normal times the district is communicating a lot through the internet. In order to ensure that all students had access to internet, the district started picking up the bill. ACS and GCI provided free service, but where that was not available, the district paid. In some cases the district had to pay for past bills to hook families up to provide equity. In the town schools, the vast majority of kids have smart phones, but with the filtering and sophistication of the software used for instruction, students cannot use them. Even the iPads go through a filtering system. In the rural areas, the phones don't have the data plans to make them work.

DR. WEISS concurred with the previous testifiers. The district early on worked on providing families' access. One staff member worked solely on that. The district opened up internet support sites in churches, large spaces in schools, and in a

neighborhood community center so students could just go there. The district discovered it was not just access to internet. Some families with three or four kids could not all use the internet at the same time and used a lot of data. One solution didn't work because of the varied situations. The district had to have five or six different strategies. Most secondary students have cell phones, but phones have to have certain data plans to use as a hot spot. It is cumbersome for families to manage that. The families with the greatest needs have these types of challenges in accessing internet. For example, the district bought some hot spots for homes but that did not resolve the problem because there was such chaos in the family that the students needed more support than just internet. That is what led the district very early to create the internet support sites because the roadblock for families was more than just access to the internet.

CHAIR HOLLAND shared that the next topic would be monitoring and measuring student progress. He asked if the superintendents are seeing any effects on student performance measures or college preparedness or graduation rates.

9:27:47 AM

DR. HANKINS said the district is seeing impacts on student performance. In LKSD, about two-thirds of the students are English language learners. LKSD offers a strong, dual-language program at 19 of its schools, but without the face-to-face instruction and interaction in practicing language all day, there are learning gaps. The district expects to see lower scores on student performance measures. She hoped the graduation rates would hold steady; they did increase a little last year. The district is providing a lot of support this year for seniors. In terms of monitoring and measuring student progress, the district is using a lot of curriculum-based measures now. When students do return to school, it will be essential to administer diagnostics, especially in literacy and math, and then create learning plans for students based on individual needs. In addition, the district is offering tutoring at night and on weekends. The long-term plans include a robust summer school for recovery or acceleration, extended-day program, Saturday school, night classes, etc.

CHAIR HOLLAND asked the superintendents to include information about summer plans in their responses.

MR. HANLEY said that except for last spring, school has been occurring in the school buildings. The Whittier school was out for six weeks with some cases there. The other schools have been

out of the building less than a couple of weeks. But even so, the district is seeing the effects of stresses on the families at this time. The kids are coming with some heavy weight. All are required to wear masks, which is great, but there is this overarching sense of stress that is palpable in students and families. There is a sense of loss of learning, especially from last spring. It has been hard to just come back and pick up when this is still going on. He anticipates lower standardized scores without the progress the district has been aiming for the last few years. Like many districts, his districts use MAP (Measures of Academic Progress), a strong diagnostic assessment tool, at all sites for literacy and math. It is a formative tool that informs teachers and families about the strengths and weaknesses of students. The districts have incorporated Exact Path, which partners with MAP, to provide guidelines and lessons that students' families can do at home. A residential, variable school has not been open this year. The staff from that school is providing online tutoring for families at all sites. The districts are willing and able to provide summer school resources, but he is not convinced that staff, families, or children have the capacity for that after the experiences of this past year. People will need a health break from what this year has brought, but the districts will offer it. He doesn't know how many people will take advantage of it at this time.

[9:32:43 AM](#)

DR. LEDOUX agreed with Mr. Hanley that students are coming to school very traumatized. This is very difficult for them, not just because of the learning challenges with many kids at home trying to keep up without help with their lessons. The lunch and breakfast program that has been going since March and knowing that lunch is coming every day for them is the most stability that some students have. The stress and trauma of lost income affects students, too, in ways that are dramatic. Generally, when the district measures learning, the home school students are doing very well. Parents who have selected home school have the time and ability to work with their kids. The district uses FastBridge to measure the performance of students. The district compared data from last January to this January. The district is finding that it is literally maintaining the growth it normally would in elementary schools. Kodiak was just above the state average, but it is still there. The biggest challenge is in K-1 performance. That is where the district is most concerned because those are very critical instruction years for reading. The "preschools" are coming in without the skills they need to participate in preschool programs. The district will have to focus on those challenges for years. FastBridge designs

interventions for kids. The district expects the graduation rate to be unchanged. The district is finding that with remote learning, the middle school students are having difficulty focusing. The middle school is still carrying on a seven-period day. The high school program only does half the curriculum. The district has found that high school kids will not sit in front of a computer all day long. The summer program is called summer enhancement. The district uses science and art to encourage participation. The district data is showing that summer school has to blend completely into the changes the district will make in the fall.

DR. LEDOUX said the district was worried whether teachers wanted to work in the summer. A survey showed that 50 percent of its teachers and paraprofessionals are interested in summer programming. The best part of the summer school planning is that the district is not reacting anymore but looking to the future. That is an incredible boost for teachers and administrators to think about when they won't be dealing with this.

[9:38:11 AM](#)

DR. WEISS said the Juneau school board met earlier this week and the topic of the work session was indicators of success report. Nearly every indicator shows a loss of learning and performance. The seniors were the most adept. Graduation should be stable, but down the ranks, there are significant impacts. High school students are not as credit current compared to a year ago. English language arts and math performance in grades 3, 4 and 5 dropped. Fewer students are meeting standards now. It is not surprising at all. Dr. LeDoux spoke to that. Education is a subset of everything going on. The educational conduit does not operate in isolation of all the ripples the country is going through--stress from the economic impact, political stress, the conflict around racism, the loss of summer tourism and income in Juneau--it all lands. The social and emotional needs are as significant as the academic needs now for students. Pre-pandemic, the most vulnerable populations--economically disadvantaged, Alaska Native students, and English language learners--were already vulnerable. School districts are trying to rip open the box and find new ways to get at it. All the disadvantages hit those student groups the most. In Juneau, Bartlett Regional Hospital has been tracking data as well. That data for the three quarters prior to March 2020 compared to the next two quarters shows the numbers of Bartlett visits for suicide attempts and behavioral issues for adults and youth increased. The averages went up for adults and students.

DR. WEISS said this is not a short-term recovery and families will require multiple years of support. The district is excited about having robust summer programming for students and opportunities to take advantage of on Saturdays. She is hoping that the district could offer opportunities on Saturdays before the school year ends. The district is also looking at summer 2022 because summer 2021 will not be enough. So many of Juneau's classified staff work tourism jobs to make ends meet, but they will not have those jobs, so there should be additional support from classified staff. She is always surprised by the dedication of teachers. She knows that some of them will show up this summer. The district is approaching summer school from a holistic approach, both academic and social/emotional, thinking of how to reengage learners to fuel momentum for the fall. It is about reading and math, and kids cannot learn unless they are engaged and the risk of ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences) decreases. That often happens with relationships in the school system. The district is looking at a multiple-year recovery and the disadvantage is that the district was not meeting the needs of certain groups pre-pandemic. The district has a lot of work to do and has fiscal uncertainty at the same time.

[9:44:24 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND observed that the answers are wide ranging. He turned to funding. He asked if they have experienced any unexpected cost savings or expenses. He heard people talking about internet issues and picking up internet expenses for families, so those sorts of things.

DR. HANKINS said that her district has not seen substantial cost savings. Even during remote learning, the schools have been heated and powered for staff access and use. The district runs its own buses in Bethel and continued to use them for delivery of meals and materials to families. Some families couldn't make it to distribution sites, so the district provided home delivery with buses. The district has seen cost savings in travel since there has been no travel outside the district and a reduction in substitute teachers. The greatest expense has been the hardware and student devices for the intranet project and recurring fees with GCI. The district used CARES money for that.

CHAIR HOLLAND advised that some members may need to leave.

SENATOR MICCICHE said asked the superintendents not to take his departure as a sign that he is not interested, but the day is very busy. He is listening. He will come back and review the meeting. He appreciated hearing from both groups of

superintendents about the Armageddon the kids and their educators have gone through. He is also sensing optimism and excitement about how everyone will work together to climb out of this. This is what kids need to see when they are back in the classroom, to know that those loving faces are going to back them back up. His own kids are going through that, and so are thousands of kids around the state.

MR. HANLEY said his comments would echo Superintendent Hankins' in that the districts saved a fair amount of money on travel, but that came as a loss of services to kids. Kids usually come to the residential school in Anchorage for two-week intensives and have not been able to participate in that. Some special education services are delivered by traveling to sites. That has all been moved to online, but it is not the same as face-to-face. There is no change in the fund balance because those costs get rolled into additional training for staff to be able to teach online and getting additional technology for kids. There have been no real savings from moving online, but most students have been in school.

[9:50:42 AM](#)

DR. LEDOUX agreed that there were no cost savings. Every time there is a cost savings another expense pops up. KISD saved on travel, especially student travel, but it used the savings to buy uniforms and equipment that the district had not been able to buy. Superintendents get by because if money is not spent in one area they spend it where it is needed. The district saved money in heating costs, but on the other hand, air circulation had to be increased. Money saved on substitutes was used for staff training. Any savings are eaten up somewhere else. That is just the life of superintendent during tough times.

DR. WEISS said that the Juneau School District is scouring for any place it can save. It entered FY2021 with a very small fund balance. The district has to sign teacher contracts in May when the enrollment is unknown and that people are the largest percentage for all district budgets. There's not much budgeting beyond people. Some teachers retired in August and they were not replaced. The district supported its bus service contracts as much as possible because those are community members. Like other districts, they used buses for food distribution and other things. Juneau has little travel in its budget. The professional development budget went for training for all the new technology. The fund balance from \$213,000 and with some budget revisions that were possible is up to \$950,000, but that is well under board policy of 1.5 percent of the budget for the fund balance.

Even anticipating half of the students coming back, Juneau will take a \$1.6 million cut next year compared to FY21 with its enrollment projection.

CHAIR HOLLAND asked if their districts benefited from CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act funds.

[9:55:24 AM](#)

DR. HANKINS answered that LKSD received \$2.8 million from CARES. Of that, the district spent \$1.6 [million] on supplies and materials, including PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), hand sanitation supplies, and the intranet project. For ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund) II, the district will receive a bit more than \$13 million. A large part will be set aside to address learning loss with summer programs, extended days, Saturday schools, etc., in the coming years, teacher professional development, ongoing technology needs, PPE, and sanitation supplies. Air quality and ventilation in schools needs to be addressed and also mental health services for students.

MR. HANLEY said Chugach receive about \$83,000 in the first round of CARES Act funding. That was used for sanitation and cleaning supplies and technology. All those funds, including general funds, were used to take care of those needs. The next round of CARES funding will be a bit over \$150,000. Chugach will add air purifiers and address learning loss. The Aleutians Region School District is so small that each allocation was about \$5,000. That was used for supplies and a little bit of technology.

[9:57:41 AM](#)

DR. LEDOUX said that when the Kodiak Island Borough received its CARES money, it directly allocated to the school district \$1.5 million, which was used in much the same way everyone else described doing, from filtering systems to sanitation of buildings, curriculum, etc. KISD did not spend its CARES money because the borough gave it money. The borough had cut \$1 million from the school district during the budget crisis. Districts can use CARES money over multiple years. KISD is concerned because of the lack of operating funds to carry out its program that it will be difficult to fund the necessary interventions to help kids and wants to ensure it has the funds when needed. The CARES money will be used for summer programs and interventions. The biggest concern of his school district is that people will look at the COVID-19 money as replacing operations money and it doesn't. That is a big danger because people will say that with the COVID money the district doesn't

need as much to carry on operations. That is not the case. FY21 had a million dollar cut and a contribution from the fund balance of \$1.5 million, so the budget is tight. The borough gave the district extra money when all was said and done, but it is restricted to COVID uses, not operational funds.

DR. WEISS said the CARES funding was a lifeline. She does not know what the district would have done without it. The first round of CARES funds was about \$1 million. The City and Borough of Juneau received \$53 million and gave the district over \$2 million. Ventilation is a huge piece of this puzzle. The costs of mitigation is extraordinarily high. The district spent a lot of money to make sure that the classrooms and buildings have good ventilation. Running those air scrubbers will increase utility costs significantly, but without that, the district would have had a huge uphill battle to get people back into buildings.

10:01:30 AM

DR. WEISS said that because the CARES allocations are based on title, it is not always proportional. Funding is so often based on enrollment, but pandemic needs are a different ballgame. It is not just solely the high-needs students that create the costs for pandemic mitigation and response. It is a more universal cost that is not driven by enrollment. The whole system and all kids, even the top performing students, are affected. Every part of the organization is impacted, but the dollars are allocated in this odd proportion that doesn't always make sense. The \$2.4 million of CARES money sounds really helpful, but over the three years that it will be used, it is \$800,000 per year. If summer school serves 800 students, the cost for summer school will be over \$600,000. That is one effort and she has used up all the money for this year. That doesn't give her any more money for PPE and new filters for all the air scrubbers. With all the variants, mitigation for the next school year will be important.

CHAIR HOLLAND shared how much he appreciated hearing from the superintendents. Legislators cannot do their jobs well without hearing directly from those who live the issues they are trying to resolve. He asked superintendents for any final comments.

DR. HANKINS said the districts will experience the effects of the pandemic for years to come. They don't know all the challenges they will face yet. LKSD is hopeful that it will soon welcome students back into its buildings and then be able to get a grasp of what their needs are, which she expects to be extensive social/emotional needs, in addition to learning loss.

That is why the district is looking to set aside money for mental health services. Students and families have struggled this year. The LKSD staff have accessed the employee assistance program in numbers never seen before. The pandemic is impacting everyone, but LKSD feels hopeful moving forward.

MR. HANLEY said the committee is not hearing superintendents saying this is too much. They are all digging in to meet the needs of their kids. It is critical to meet the needs of their children first so they can meet the needs of their students. The social/emotional needs must be addressed so students can access their academic goals. The stressors they are experiencing cannot be ignored. The challenge will be great and ongoing, but he is confident that everyone can get out of this. It will not be a quick turnaround.

10:06:16 AM

DR. LEDOUX said that he learned as a high school principal that it is the responsibility of educators to carry the vision for kids until they can develop one themselves and to give them the skills and confidence to do that. Superintendents talk frequently and share ideas and take care of one another. He believes they are carrying the vision. He feels excited. He is honored to be facing some of the biggest challenges of his career. It is exciting to be part of it and wonderful to work with such great educators. The cooks and custodians are incredible people. He thanked the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) and commissioner for an incredible job providing help. Alaska has a great team. He appreciated being able to share with the committee on behalf of superintendents. There is so much they would like to tell the committee about the good things happening in the midst of all these challenges.

DR. WEISS appreciated the committee's attention. She was in the state of Washington as a teacher and administrator for 26 years. While she had great career opportunities there, she has been back in Alaska for 11 years. Alaska is an amazing place to be an educational leader. The Alaska Superintendents Association (ASA) has provided so much support, along with DEED Commissioner Johnson. ASA meets weekly, monthly, and has regional meetings and informal groups. The work superintendents can do because of how they work together and the fact that the legislature is asking them in this early to ask questions are signs of that. She has a huge sense of urgency and a huge sense of hope because she does believe they can do things differently in Alaska and they can get different results. Part of that is because of the intimate leadership in the state. They have good access to each

other and DEED and to the legislative body. That should all come together for some amazing things. Superintendents need the hope. She appreciated the governor and his medical team supporting educators getting vaccines. Superintendents appreciate the state leadership to get them to this point with vaccines. If they work together, have long-term stability in funding, they will get better results than they are getting today. She appreciated the committee listening to them and they want to continue sharing the brilliant things that are happening in pockets across the state.

CHAIR HOLLAND said it is inspiring to see the dedication and determination and motivation that they are seeing this morning and on Wednesday.

[10:12:12 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES shared that this conversation has been relevant. She appreciates their transparency. She is grateful that these superintendents are at the helm to help their districts and students navigate the rough waters. On Wednesday the committee heard that it might take three to five years to catch some of the students up from the loss. The state is trying to close achievement gaps and now there is a catch up situation. She hoped that somehow this catch up timeline can be reduced globally.

CHAIR HOLLAND welcomed other districts to send comments to ed.king@akleg.gov.

[10:14:12 AM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Holland adjourned the Senate Education Standing Committee at 10:14 a.m.