

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

March 2, 2022

8:31 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Senator Roger Holland  
Senator Gary Stevens  
Senator Shelley Hughes  
Senator Tom Begich

HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Representative Andi Story  
Representative Harriet Drummond  
Representative Ronald Gillham  
Representative Mike Cronk  
Representative Mike Prax  
Representative Grier Hopkins  
Representative Tiffany Zulkosky

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Senator Peter Micciche

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

ANNUAL REPORT: Alaska State Board of Education & Early  
Development (DEED)

- HEARD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

JAMES FIELDS, Chair  
State Board of Education and Early Development  
Glenallen, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Co-presented the State Board of Education and Early Development Annual Report and answered questions.

SANDY KOWALSKI, Second Vice Chair  
State Board of Education  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Co-presented the State Board of Education and Early Development Annual Report and answered questions.

BOB GRIFFIN, Member  
State Board of Education and Early Development

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Co-presented the State Board of Education and Early Development Annual Report.

SALLY STOCKHAUSEN, Member  
State Board of Education and Early Development  
Ketchikan, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Co-presented the State Board of Education and Early Development Annual Report and answered questions.

LORI VAN DIEST, Member  
State Board of Education and Early Development  
Palmer, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Co-presented the State Board of Education and Early Development Annual Report.

DR. KEITH HAMILTON, First Vice Chair  
State Board of Education and Early Development  
Soldotna, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Co-presented the State Board of Education and Early Development Annual Report.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[8:31:58 AM](#)

**CHAIR ROGER HOLLAND** called the joint meeting of the Senate and House Education Standing Committees to order at 8:31 a.m. Senate members present at the call to order were Senators Stevens, Hughes, Begich, and Chair Holland. Representative members present at the call to order were Representatives Hopkins, Zulkosky, Prax, Cronk, Gillham, Co-Chair Drummond, and Co-Chair Story.

#### **ANNUAL REPORT: ALASKA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION & EARLY DEVELOPMENT**

[8:32:58 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND announced the consideration of the State Board of Education's annual report. This hearing satisfies the statutory requirements set forth in AS 14.07.168.

[8:33:46 AM](#)

JAMES FIELDS, Chair, State Board of Education and Early Development, Glennallen, Alaska, said he would provide a summary of the annual report and each committee chair would speak on their committee. The report is a look back over the year, and the committee presentations are a look forward.

[8:34:49 AM](#)

At ease.

[8:35:12 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND reconvened the meeting and asked the presenter to proceed.

[8:36:18 AM](#)

MR. FIELDS read slide 3:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Our Mission - An excellent education for every student every day.

Our Purpose - DEED exists to provide information, resources, and leadership to support an excellent education for every student every day

Our Vision - All students will succeed in their education and work, shape worthwhile and satisfying lives for themselves, exemplify the best values of society, and be effective in improving the character and quality of the world about them.

-Alaska Statute 14.03.015

[8:36:50 AM](#)

MR. FIELDS read slide 4:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Our Strategic Priorities: Alaska's Education Challenge  
Five Shared Priorities:

1. Support all students to read at grade level by the end of third grade
2. Increase career, technical, and culturally relevant education to meet student and workforce needs
3. Close the achievement gap by ensuring equitable educational rigor and resources
4. Prepare, attract, and retain effective education professionals
5. Improve the safety and well-being of students through school partnerships with families, communities, and tribes

[8:37:17 AM](#)

Read slide 5:

[Original punctuation provided.]

#### Board Action Highlights

- > Adopted regulation changes updating Alaska's Early Literacy Guidelines.
- > Adopted updated regulations regarding the assessment of English language learners, exit criteria for English learners, and updated English language proficiency standards.
- > The board approved the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) Teacher Preparation Program.
  - The approval of the program is a continuation of approval and follows the program receiving Council of Accreditation of Educator Program (CAEP) accreditation for initial licensure level and advanced level programs in Spring 2020. The board's approval of the UAS program is valid through June 30, 2025.
- > Sent three sets of regulations out for public comment. The regulations include teacher certification, assessment participation guidelines, and Native languages.
  - The public comment period closed on January 26, 2022. The board will accept oral testimony on the three items in its March 2022 meeting.

[8:38:23 AM](#)

MR. FIELDS moved to slide 6 and stated that the Alaska System of Academic Readiness (AK STAR) would be Alaska's new assessment.

[8:38:32 AM](#)

MR. FIELDS read slide 7:

DEED Significant Steps: Assessments

> 2021 Assessments

- Administered assessments in 2021; no blanket waivers from the U.S. Department of Education.
- > DEED cautions against comparing 2021 PEAKS data to previous years at the statewide level.

> Development of an Innovative Assessment System - AK STAR

- Selected NWEA as the vendor to develop the assessment system, called the Alaska System of Academic Readiness, or AK STAR.
- For the 2021-2022 school year, AK STAR is comprised of three interim assessments and one summative assessment.
- Beginning with the 2022-2023 school year, the third interim assessment and summative assessment will be combined into one test.

[8:39:20 AM](#)

MR. FIELDS read slide 8:

[Original punctuation provided.]

DEED Significant Steps: Advancing Tribal Compacting and Culturally Relevant Education

> In July 2021, DEED announced a grant to the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) to scope tribal compacting of education in Alaska.

> In October 2021, DEED announced a grant to Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC) to conduct an analysis and identify strategies for developing culturally relevant curriculum, programs, and school partnerships for Alaska Native and American Indian students.

[8:39:52 AM](#)

MR. FIELDS read slide 9:

## DEED Significant Steps: Improving Teacher Retention and Recruitment

- > In April 2021, the Governor's Teacher Retention and Recruitment (TRR) Working Group released the survey results, along with a TRR Action Plan.
  - Six essential areas for practical, professional, and policy recommendations: enhancing recruiting efforts; strengthening working conditions; restructuring retirement options; developing leadership; creating paraprofessional pathways; and streamlining certification.
  
- > In October 2021, DEED awarded a contract to Adams Analytic Solution LLC.
  - Throughout Winter 2021-2022, the contractor will implement work outlined in the TRR Action Plan.
  - DEED expects a finalized Implementation Timeline in September 2022.

[8:40:43 AM](#)

MR. FIELDS said that some committees, like tribal compacting and reading, have done more work and have greater priority than others, so they may take longer to present.

[8:41:47 AM](#)

At ease.

[8:42:19 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND reconvened the meeting.

[8:42:25 AM](#)

SANDY KOWALSKI, Second Vice Chair, State Board of Education, Fairbanks, Alaska, stated she was the chair of the Tribal Compacting Committee. Tribal compacting is the reason she joined the board. Tribal compacting and conversations surrounding it are not new. It came to the board through a long-engaged stakeholder process that created the Alaska Stakeholder Challenge. She wanted to ensure that the state board was engaged, supportive, and moving the tribal compacting portion of the challenge forward. She stated she did not want future barriers to be created for tribal compacting. She helped create Nikaitchuat Ilisagviat, a tribally run preschool in Kotzebue that has been operating for twenty-five years. There has been discussion on expanding it to be a charter school so older

children can attend. She opined that a charter school is not what Alaska Native families want for their children's education.

[8:44:20 AM](#)

MS. KOWALSKI said that the committee decided to form a mission statement in October. Since she began the position three years ago, stakeholders have requested compacting, but it is complex. Tribes have federal recognition, and the federal government has a federal trust responsibility for tribes in the area of education. There are also issues at the state and tribal levels. Charter schools would be easier than compacting. There are some charter schools in Alaska that teach Native language and culture. However, the committee's mission statement was to support tribal compacting by identifying and developing regulations that support the efforts of tribes throughout Alaska. It was determined that regulations need to support teacher pathways into tribally compacted schools. Operating an indigenized school requires a unique skill set, different from current teacher certification requirements. The committee and Joel Isaak, a project coordinator for DEED, have been working to determine teacher preparation pathways that might support tribally compacted schools once they are formed. From her involvement with Nikaitchuat Ilisagviat, she learned that immersing children in their culture is beneficial. It grounds them in who they are. She opined that as a younger parent, she should have immersed her older boys in the Inupiaq culture. She taught her younger sons to read in Inupiaq first, which made learning to read in English easier. She thanked DEED for its scoping work and the legislators for being responsive to it. She looks forward to learning how tribal compacting can provide fiscal and cultural leverage for Alaska Native students. She opined that no one is more invested in accountability for their children than Alaska Native parents because they have struggled to see them succeed. She looks forward to a meaningful and engaging education system as tribal compacting is patiently moved forward.

[8:50:59 AM](#)

MR. FIELDS said it is encouraging to see the Senate and House tribal compacting bills moving forward. It is also encouraging to see Senator Steven's bill merge with AFN findings. Organizations are coming together to develop and move the bill forward for Alaska's students. He said that Joel Isaak explained aspects of a Native language that were insightful.

[8:52:36 AM](#)

BOB GRIFFIN, Member, State Board of Education, Anchorage, Alaska, stated he was the Reading Committee Chair and the board had focused heavily on reading. On slide 13, the first goal of Alaska's Education Challenge was to "Support all students to read at grade level by the end of third grade." Alaska's NAEP scores are disappointing and there has been criticism of scoring and analysis. Currently, there is no better tool for determining how Alaska's students do relative to other states on an apples-to-apples comparison. Overall, Alaska students were about 16 points behind the US average. Ten points equals approximately one year of achievement, which means Alaska trails behind the US average achievement level for nine-year-olds by more than a year. This places Alaska at 51st in the country, including the District of Columbia, for low- and middle-income students. Alaska has been trending in the wrong direction with standards falling from 2003 to 2019. This decline impacts future learning, including math.

[8:55:40 AM](#)

MR. GRIFFIN read slide 16:

[Original punctuation provided.]

#### Reading Improvement Assets

- > State Board of Education and DEED Focus
- > Alaska K-12 System Well Funded
- > Broad Bipartisan Support for Reading Reform
- > State Poverty - Below U.S. Average
- > Examples of Excellent Outcomes Already
- > Strength of Our Diversity

[8:57:03 AM](#)

MR. GRIFFIN shared slide 17:

[Original punctuation provided.]

#### Committee Priorities

- > Regulations Development with DEED
  - Focus on Science of Reading (SoR)
  - Anticipate Statute Changes
    - > Sensitive to Alaska Specific Cultural Needs
  - Teacher Quality
    - > Measurable Proficiency in SoR
      - Initial Licensure
      - Professional Development/Renewal

- Data Focused Support for Schools/Teachers

8:58:49 AM

MR. GRIFFIN read slide 18:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Why We're Optimistic

- > Compared to any other state:
  - Our kids are just as bright
  - Our teachers are just as dedicated
  - Our parents love their kids just as much
  - We enjoy exceptional public support
- > Policy Choices Make a Difference

8:59:14 AM

MR. GRIFFIN said that Alaska is one of a few states without a statewide reading policy. He showed a map of the states with reading policies and said in 2002 Florida was the first state to adopt a policy. He compared Alaska versus Florida in NAEP Standings in 2003.

**NAEP Test Results Alaska 2003 - 40th in US**

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>US Ranking</u>
8th	Math	Free or Reduced Lunch	29th
8th	Math	Non-Free or Reduced Lunch	31st

**NAEP Test Results Florida 2003 - 30th in US**

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>US Ranking</u>
8th	Math	Free or Reduced Lunch	40th
8th	Math	Non-Free or Reduced Lunch	37th

Skip forward to 2019, Alaska slipped in its rankings primarily due to other states' scores improving, although Alaska's scores dropped slightly. The following is a comparison of Alaska versus Florida NAEP Standings 2003 and 2019. Bold font indicates the areas that Alaska previously scored higher than Florida:

**NAEP Test Results Alaska**

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>US Ranking</u>	
			2003	vs 2019
4th	Reading	Free or Reduced Lunch	49th	51st
4th	Math	Free or Reduced Lunch	36th	50th
4th	Reading	Non-Free or Reduced Lunch	44th	51st
4th	Math	Non-Free or Reduced Lunch	39th	49th

8th	Reading	Free or Reduced Lunch	49th	50th
<b>8th</b>	<b>Math</b>	<b>Free or Reduced Lunch</b>	<b>29th</b>	<b>46th</b>
8th	Reading	Non-Free or Reduced Lunch	47th	49th
<b>8th</b>	<b>Math</b>	<b>Non-Free or Reduced Lunch</b>	<b>31st</b>	<b>45th</b>

**NAEP Test Results Florida**

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>US Ranking</u>	
			<u>2003</u>	<u>vs 2019</u>
4th	Reading	Free or Reduced Lunch	28th	1st
4th	Math	Free or Reduced Lunch	30th	1st
4th	Reading	Non-Free or Reduced Lunch	15th	4th
4th	Math	Non-Free or Reduced Lunch	18th	11th
8th	Reading	Free or Reduced Lunch	38th	5th
<b>8th</b>	<b>Math</b>	<b>Free or Reduced Lunch</b>	<b>40th</b>	<b>25th</b>
8th	Reading	Non-Free or Reduced Lunch	40th	19th
<b>8th</b>	<b>Math</b>	<b>Non-Free or Reduced Lunch</b>	<b>37th</b>	<b>31st</b>

MR. GRIFFITH said states that focused on the Science of Reading (SoR) experienced the greatest gains with students from low-income, minority groups, students with disabilities, and students with limited English proficiency. Miami Dade County Public School District's student population is three times larger than Alaska's entire student population. It consists of 60 percent free or reduced lunch, 60 percent do not speak English at home, and 93 percent are ethnic minorities. Its 2019 NAEP test scores for reading were 4 points higher than white Alaskan students. He opined that the Board of Education and DEED's focus on reading is right for Alaska.

[9:02:06 AM](#)

SALLY STOCKHAUSEN, Member, State Board of Education, Ketchikan, Alaska, stated she is Chair of the Effective Educators Committee with James Fields and Sandy Kowalski as committee members. The committee's mission statement comes from the work that the Teacher Recruitment and Retention task force did last year. The mission statement is, "In order to grow and attract effective educators, we will remove barriers and increase articulated pathways that will meet the immediate and future demands of the state's historic teacher retention and recruitment demands." The committee members set the following three goals for the committee:

- Identify and Remove Barriers
- Investigate and Facilitate Paraprofessional Pathways
- Investigate and Facilitate Alternative Certification Pathways

[9:03:07 AM](#)

MS. STOCKHAUSEN said that the committee has been gathering information for six months. DEED gave presentations on statute and regulation updates to address Alaska's barriers. All the certification pathways in Alaska are for assisting people to earn four-year degrees. Districts have varying programs around the state, but access is not universal and depends on district resources. The committee would like to change this. For example, Lower Kuskokwim School District (LKSD) has an outstanding program that supports paraprofessionals in earning a four-year degree. The committee would like to find a way for all districts to offer this support. She said the committee asked the United States Education Commission to present what is being done around the nation and found that most pathways are either accelerated pathways to a bachelor's degree or financial assistance for paraprofessionals to earn a bachelor's degree. She said the committee is interested in investigating alternative certification pathways for paraprofessionals. As a special education teacher she has worked with outstanding paraprofessionals for 20 years. They were stellar people invested in their community, who knew the kids, the school and community culture, and were the solid force in the school for the young teachers who came from out-of-state and did not stay. It is the paraprofessionals who hold down the fort but due to time and resources have difficulty earning a four-year degree. The committee would like to find pathways to help them get their degrees. The TRR taskforce identified that recruitment and retention continue to be significant issues for Alaska. Investing in paraprofessionals must happen to improve recruitment and retention. Strong teacher candidates exist within Alaska, but they need assistance to become teachers. She insisted that the committee does not want to sacrifice quality for quantity. It wants to put the best teachers in front of Alaska's children and understands the need to be cautious in the establishment of alternative pathways to certification.

[9:06:33 AM](#)

LORRI VAN DIEST, Member, State Board of Education, Palmer, Alaska, stated she, along with Jeffrey Erickson and Keith Hamilton, serve on the Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Cultural Education Committee. Initial committee meetings were educational, with DEED staff providing instruction on terminology and funding central to career and technical education programs in Alaska's school districts. Districts provide CTE programs of study to students, and this training is responsive to local, regional, and state job demands. The programs of study move students from general career exploration

and employability skills to job-specific technical skills. The programs of study lead to post-secondary recognized credentials and credit. The programs culminate with a capstone course that is work based. She read the definition of Work Based Learning from the Work Based Learning Guide developed by DEED staff and the Department of Labor:

“Work-based learning is a coordinated effort between school districts and employers in the Alaska workforce and refers to learning that results from work experience. It is an opportunity for our high school youth to see firsthand some of the various work environments, to experience some of the job duties for a brief period while receiving classroom credit.”

Through workplace learning, district CTE programs connect with employers, businesses, and industries.

[9:08:37 AM](#)

MS. VAN DIEST moved to slide 27 and stated that outreach is needed to address the sponsorship and student workplace concerns of industries and businesses. This prompted the committee to establish the following goals:

[Original punctuation provided.]

#### CTE and Cultural Education Committee Goals

- > Sponsor a resolution promoting Work-Based Learning (WBL)
  - Promote statewide awareness and encourage business/industry stakeholders to sponsor high school students in WBL opportunities.
  - Outreach to the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Alaska Work Force Investment Board and other policy stakeholders to remove barriers to placing K-12 students in WBL opportunities.
- > Multi-District Collaboratives
  - Recognize the success of CTE programs working across multiple districts to incentivize cross district collaboration grants using federal COVID Relief Funds.

MS. VAN DIEST stated that small and rural districts could use limited Perkins CTE funds to provide CTE experiences for multi-district partnerships. The committee would like to incentivize cross-district collaboration grants using federal COVID relief funds.

[9:10:10 AM](#)

DR. KEITH HAMILTON, First Vice Chair, State Board of Education, Soldotna, Alaska, stated that the members of the Safety and Well-Being Committee are Jeffrey Erickson and Lorri Van Diest. He is the Chair. He moved to slide 29 and said that for the past few years, the committee has been working on short- and long-term goals:

[Original punctuation provided.]

#### Safety and Well-Being Committee Goals

> Increase the value of mandatory eLearning programs by improving educator engagement.

MR. HAMILTON added that e-learning courses empower educators to support the safety and well-being of students across Alaska. The program could be used more to be of greater value. There are over 30,000 significantly different users across Alaska, and the e-learning catalog is an excellent resource for its users. Therefore, the committee suggested implementing support to increase participant attentiveness.

> Work with teacher preparation programs to develop trauma-engaged schools framework in both the program's instruction and environment.

MR. HAMILTON stated that it is becoming recognized as a very promising best practice for all educators statewide. The committee hopes that partnering with teacher prep programs will ensure future teachers graduate with the knowledge of how trauma influences student learning in general and in Alaska-specific situations. The goal is to make trauma-engaged training mandatory for new and renewed certifications. There are five mandatory trainings: alcohol and drug-related disabilities, sexual abuse awareness and prevention, dating violence and awareness prevention, suicide awareness and prevention, and blood borne pathogens.

> Provide support to school districts who do not have counselors, nurses, or social workers.

MR. HAMILTON made two recommendations for accomplishing this short-term goal. He suggested changing an allotted DEED position to a permanent PCN. Second, he proposed funding in FY 24 that would consider how every Alaskan school could access a counselor, nurse, or social worker.

[9:13:23 AM](#)

MR. FIELDS stated the remaining slides are supplemental information and are not part of the presentation.

[9:13:54 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CRONK thanked the board for its work and mentioned past connections to three board members. He stated there is current legislation that addresses reading by third grade. Regarding retirement, he recommended that the board talk with James Kaufman about options.

REPRESENTATIVE CRONK opined that he lives in one of the poorest areas on the Eastern Interior road system, where there is some mining development. He asked how education is affected by the socio-economic aspect of job availability in a poor community; for instance, has the prospect of working at the Red Dog mine increased interest in being a better student and having better test scores. He stated he is experiencing some pushback on mining and wants to understand if there is a correlation.

[9:15:29 AM](#)

MS. KOWALSKI replied that she did not have a solid answer. Red Dog has a road from the mine to the port that provides some revenue to the school system through Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA). It is concerning when a community does not have the resources to meet basic needs. Socio-economic influences affect communities and families. It can affect a student's ability to arrive at school ready to learn, so schools must be responsive and understanding in working with students from diverse backgrounds. It takes teacher training, staff development, and resources to support students and their unique needs. Every community must address what its resources are and what can be put into place to benefit its people and students.

[9:17:31 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE CRONK expressed thanks and wished there was more time for discussion.

[9:17:45 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND asked if the Alaska System of Academic Readiness (AK STAR) would replace the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and how it would improve it.

[9:17:57 AM](#)

MR. FIELDS answered that AK STAR would replace the previous summative assessment, Performance Evaluation for Alaska's Schools (PEAKS). Many school districts are using the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment because it is a formative test used throughout the year, which is what teachers want. NAEP testing will continue to be used because it is a federally required test.

[9:18:45 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY referred to the bullet point "Alaska K-12 System Well Funded" on page 16 of the presentation. She recommended the board listen to a presentation by Dr. DeFazio from the Institute for Social and Economic Research. Dr. DeFazio's calculations show that Alaska is funded with around \$12,000 after adjusting for cost of living and geographic cost differentials. This puts Alaska just below average compared to other states. Dr. DeFazio's comments were thought-provoking and informative. She recognized that today's meeting focused on reading but mentioned that the number one out-of-school factor for kids thriving was support from family. In-school factors were teacher relationships, knowledge base of the teachers, and paraprofessionals. She asked what the state board was doing to support teachers' growth.

[9:21:03 AM](#)

SALLY STOCKHAUSEN replied that she was speaking from the heart of a teacher, and it was exciting to watch the committees merge goals through discussions on the Science of Reading. The board wants to do everything possible to provide support for teachers. She stated that the support for reading merges with tribal compacting as it is taught through a cultural lens. In the 1990s, whole language was taught in colleges. She recalled having no idea how to teach reading once she was in the classroom. She stayed in education because she felt supported when a principal invested time and money into training her in the Science of Reading. She opined teachers quickly leave when they feel frustrated from not getting the results they want. Teachers would feel supported as reading legislation, the Science of Reading, and tribal contracting progress.

[9:23:14 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY responded that she was asking at a systemic level if the department was doing professional development with teachers. She asked how the committee focused on embedding place-based cultural learning or other topics through teacher development.

[9:24:18 AM](#)

SALLY STOCKHAUSEN said that over the last 20 years, there had been greater awareness of the need. It was encouraging that professional development and place-based learning were part of discussions much more now than before.

[9:24:52 AM](#)

MS. KOWALSKI replied that she heard two questions, and as a teacher and Native parent, she would provide her opinion. She has spoken with non-indigenous members of her community that are interested in indigenous culture and language being taught because it would ground their children in the place where they are learning. Tribal compacting would allow Alaskan communities to have a school that is of, for, and through the people on that land. The cultural relevance and grounding for Alaska Native and non-Native students at a compact school would be profound. Through the presentation, the board wanted to offer assurance that support and progress were being made.

[9:25:59 AM](#)

MS. KOWALSKI said that tribal compacting does more than ensure cultural responsiveness. It helps with professional development at a systemic level. At yesterday's State Education Board meeting, it was discussed that being culturally responsive is adapting to things you do not have right now. Tribal compacting provides an opportunity to have it right the first time by having curriculum and teacher training that is of, through, and by the people it serves. She opined that would make a very profound difference.

Furthermore, systemic teacher support would occur through the AK STAR assessment system. Formative assessment means having an opportunity to get snapshots of students' learning of standards throughout the year. The previous system held testing at the end of the year. She compared the two types of assessment to weight loss. A person who regularly weighs themselves, tracks their food, and adjusts accordingly has better results than a person who weighs and receives information only once a year. She stated that having been an administrator and teacher, she knows that when teachers see how students are responding to instruction, they are fueled to make adjustments because they want students

to be successful. She opined that formative testing enables teachers to adapt and experience success, which is a system of support. Teachers feel like they have done their job when students are learning. The AK STAR system points in the right direction as far as looking at systemic change.

[9:28:22 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND added that AK STAR is the right type of feedback to help teachers figure out how to help students.

[9:28:33 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX said there are over 200 tribes in Alaska that have cultural and regional differences. There are also non-Native cultural communities in Alaska. He asked how Alaska would accomplish providing for its various culturally diverse communities and how success would be measured. He asked if tribal compacting would have individual plans for the various cultural and regional communities.

[9:29:39 AM](#)

SANDY KOWALSKI replied that diversity is not a reason to back away from tribal compacting. There are a lot of culturally and geographically diverse tribes across the state. The legislation being considered is seeking a demonstration project that would help illuminate how it could be organized. She stated her belief that diversity is not a complexity that will slow down, complicate or be a barrier to tribal compacting. Having people from other cultures participate in tribal compacting is not challenging because it is an inclusive framework of being grounded where you are.

[9:31:13 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX responded that he agreed with the concept of driving control down. It was the idea behind homeschooling and charter schools. It is the reason he homeschooled two sons. At the legislative level, it becomes difficult to figure out how to pull it all together statewide. Ultimately, the state measures success in statistics. He opined that tribal compacting is on the right track but is he concerned about measuring success.

[9:32:06 AM](#)

MR. FIELDS replied that the specific way success is currently measured would not change, but there would be an enhancement. What the enhancement looks like has yet to be determined because a pilot program is still being put together. The current legislation would enable further discussions on how to measure success. The enhanced measurement for success would not be the

same for every tribe or organization. He said that while measuring success is a legitimate concern, it is premature in the tribal compacting process.

[9:33:17 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND commented that the more we talk about tribal compacting, the less it seems we know because there are so many questions to be answered.

[9:33:25 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS said he has found the board's presentation to be valuable. Two issues that stand out are tribal compacting and alternative certification. To answer concerns, the AFN offered to help tribal compacting succeed by suggesting a pilot program before opening to numerous schools since there could be failures. He opined that a demonstration project is a right choice. With the demonstration project, the number of schools participating can be determined, and federal monies would be available. He expressed appreciation for the board and said the legislature would become more involved in doing what is right for the project as it develops. Regarding alternative certification, he expressed concern that there not be a loss in teacher quality. He asked about the problems facing alternative certification and how the legislature can help solve them.

[9:35:02 AM](#)

SALLY STOCKHAUSEN said that alternative certification is like tribal compacting because it is not being done yet. Therefore, problems remain unknown. As a classroom teacher, it would be essential to know that a paraprofessional could manage a classroom, teach reading, and do all things that are not necessarily tied to a four-year degree. She asked if there was a way to support school employees becoming classroom teachers. She questioned not supporting paraprofessionals who are invested in their community and have run classrooms for new teachers that only stay a year or two. By statute, a four-year degree is required to be a classroom teacher. She suggested that the state help paraprofessionals earn a four-year degree or find ways to give them experience credit by working with the university. She opined that to fix teacher recruitment and retention focus should be on paraprofessionals because they will stay in a remote area of Alaska, unlike teachers from other states who stay about five years and then leave.

[9:37:10 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS said that he is aware of wonderful paraprofessionals in the village of Old Harbor who would like to

become certified teachers but cannot leave their families. Discussions with the university have been supportive and provided hope that they could be part of the solution for paraprofessionals to become certified teachers.

[9:37:57 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH stated that there is legislation supporting reading, tribal compacting, and alternatives to certification. He asked if the board would be willing to move forward and act on the ideas through regulation if the legislature fails to do its job.

[9:38:35 AM](#)

Mr. FIELDS replied that the short answer was yes. The board will do what it can through regulations.

[9:38:51 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND said that teacher turnover is a huge problem, and that teachers in rural areas stay about five years and then leave. She opined that new teachers leave because they do not have a defined benefit retirement system. Alaska is the only state that does not provide a dignified retirement. Paraprofessionals are invested because they are likely from Alaska. New teachers and other employees who came to Alaska for work are leaving in droves. Alaska school districts spend at least \$35 million a year on recruitment. She said Alaska would not retain the teachers it pays to recruit until basic benefits are changed. All work in education is good. However, she opined that without a good teacher retirement program, Alaska's well-funded teacher training program will be benefiting other states because teachers will leave Alaska.

[9:40:25 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS noted that the legislature has also been working on Pre-K and early childhood education. He mentioned the university's proposal for a four-year bachelor's degree in early childhood education. He asked how the board plans to move the legislation forward to ensure Alaska has credentialed teachers for its early childhood education programs.

[9:41:15 AM](#)

MR. FIELDS stated that there was a proposal to move forward with the Pre-K certification program at the University of Alaska Anchorage. It was put on hold because there was a public comment concern. The concern has gone through the reading committee and appears to have been satisfied. The Pre-K certification program is on the board's agenda today and a motion is anticipated.

[9:42:02 AM](#)]

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY said she appreciates the support for tribal compacting in education. Native students live in urban areas of the state that are culturally and linguistically diverse. She asked what other initiatives and efforts are being pursued in cultural place-based education for all Alaska students. She asked to hear more about what is being done to address student achievement gaps and what is being pursued outside of tribal compacting to ensure students are reflected in the curriculum, instruction, and assessments they are given.

[9:43:27 AM](#)

SANDY KOWALSKI replied that when the board looks at regulations or initiatives, it applies a lens of cultural relevance and seeks inclusion for all Alaska students. Tribal compacting would be a game changer for many communities. Students living in urban centers may not have the opportunity to attend a tribal compact school. Alaska Native students are one of her strongest interests, and she would not be supportive of any action that further alienated or moved them to the back of the parking lot. She has voiced concerns to the state board on efforts to improve reading, and the members listened. The board has been very open to hearing concerns and conversations. To avoid inadvertent errors, the board follows department processes and involves stakeholders. She said suppose the board has a future initiative that is put in place, such as reading intervention programs. The board would track data to make sure the program is not further impacting, as a system, how students are doing in any demographic.

[9:45:43 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY said the House Health and Social Services Committee heard from Ph.D. education researchers and Ph.D. Alaskan Native educators who understand a system was designed absent community involvement; it was not a system of, for, and through the people. So, systemic issues undoubtedly contribute to the singular data points provided by test scores. She asked, beyond single testing data points, what system changes the board has discussed to set students up for success.

[9:46:56 AM](#)

MR. FIELDS replied that the board is trying to educate itself on tribal compacting, what systemic problems there may be, and how to look at policy and change it if needed. There have not been specific discussions yet. A lot has been learned. It is an

educational process that he finds enlightening. The board is learning so it can work towards resolutions.

[9:48:10 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY said it was good to meet and she would suggest meetings on Zoom and in smaller groups or committees to discuss areas of interest further. She followed up by saying the state has focused on the NAEP assessment to indicate how Alaska schools are doing, which is a data point. She said she would like other types of assessments because good things happen daily in schools. Getting out and seeing what is happening in schools is encouraging. Other Alaskans need to know what those things are so Alaskans feel optimistic about their schools. She encouraged the board to share the work that has been done to revitalize Alaska Native languages from Pre-K thru high school and in local communities.

[9:50:00 AM](#)

MR. FIELDS said the board is very invested in the students of Alaska. It has two in-person meetings yearly, whereas it used to be four. He asked for support in returning to four in-person meetings. The board has two full-day meetings by Zoom and tries to get as much done as possible. Having four in-person meetings would allow members to dig deeper into the issues discussed and allow for the transfer of information from DEED.

[9:51:02 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND thanked the board members for providing the annual report. He mentioned that HB 164 and SB 111 are referred to as the Reads Act. A bill by Senator Stevens on tribal compacting will be released, and a bill by the Senate Education Committee on paraprofessional pathways, teacher residency programs, and teacher certification will be forthcoming. However, the true work occurs in classrooms. The legislature is interested in giving teachers and students the tools they need to be successful and compete on a national scale.

[9:52:16 AM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Holland adjourned the joint Senate Education Standing Committee and House Education Standing Committee meeting at 9:52 p.m.