

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

March 9, 2022

9:04 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator Roger Holland, Chair  
Senator Gary Stevens, Vice Chair  
Senator Shelley Hughes  
Senator Tom Begich

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Senator Peter Micciche

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

SENATE BILL NO. 225

"An Act relating to a paraprofessional training program; creating a teacher resident certificate; creating a teacher residency program; relating to requirements to issue a teacher certificate; relating to subject-matter expert limited teacher certificates; relating to limited teacher certificates; creating a teacher registered apprenticeship program; and creating a teacher registered apprenticeship program fund."

- HEARD & HELD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: SB 225

SHORT TITLE: TEACHER REGISTERED APPRENTICE PROGRAMS

SPONSOR(s): EDUCATION

03/04/22	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/04/22	(S)	EDC, L&C, FIN
03/07/22	(S)	EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205
03/07/22	(S)	Heard & Held
03/07/22	(S)	MINUTE (EDC)
03/09/22	(S)	EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205

**WITNESS REGISTER**

AMY VINLOVE, Director

School of Education  
University of Alaska, Fairbanks  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Presented a PowerPoint from the University of Alaska College of Education Consortium titled Working Together to Prepare High Quality Educators for Alaska.

SCOTT MACMANUS, Superintendent  
Alaska Gateway School District  
Tok, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions on SB 225.

SONDRA MEREDITH, Teacher Certification Administrator  
Teacher Certification Section  
Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)  
Juneau, Alaska,

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions on SB 225.

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[9:04:04 AM](#)

**CHAIR ROGER HOLLAND** called the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Hughes, Begich, and Chair Holland. Senator Stevens arrived shortly thereafter.

#### **SB 225-TEACHER REGISTERED APPRENTICE PROGRAMS**

[9:04:40 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND announced the consideration of SENATE BILL NO. 225 "An Act relating to a paraprofessional training program; creating a teacher resident certificate; creating a teacher residency program; relating to requirements to issue a teacher certificate; relating to subject-matter expert limited teacher certificates; relating to limited teacher certificates; creating a teacher registered apprenticeship program; and creating a teacher registered apprenticeship program fund."

[9:05:00 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS arrived.

[9:05:26 AM](#)

AMY VINLOVE, Director, School of Education, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Fairbanks, Alaska, stated she also has the title of Chair of the University of Alaska College of Education Consortium. She is a lifelong Alaskan who attended the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. She has an undergraduate degree

in Education Studies and Public Policy. She decided to be a teacher and completed a year-long post-baccalaureate program to become a certified elementary school teacher. In addition to substitute teaching, she taught for eight years. She was one of the first people in Alaska to become nationally board certified in middle child education and has received a Milken Educator Award. She has worked at UAF in elementary teacher preparation for over 20 years. She has worked all over the state with interns. She has a doctorate through the University of Alaska in Education and Policy. She mentioned various other educational accomplishments.

[9:08:48 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS asked for a brief description of the consortium.

MS. VINLOVE replied that the consortium is the University of Alaska's education program array working collaboratively to ensure the needs of the state are being met. The consortium is comprised of two council members from each university and Paul Layer, Vice President of Academics, Students & Research. The consortium meets every two weeks.

SENATOR STEVENS: asked when the organization was established.

MS. VINLOVE replied that it began in July 2021.

[9:10:29 AM](#)

SCOTT MACMANUS, Superintendent, Alaska Gateway School District, Tok, Alaska, said he is a lifelong Alaskan and has been with the school district for 24 years. He graduated from UAF's education certificate program and has a degree in political science. He taught across the state and was excited to hear about the new education programs at the University of Alaska.

[9:11:51 AM](#)

MS. VINLOVE began the presentation on slide 2 which provided the following definitions:

[Original punctuation provided.]

**Initial preparation programs vs advanced preparation programs:** Initial preparation or licensure programs provide someone with their first license to teach. Advanced preparation programs provide an additional endorsement or certification area. This is a key distinction of our accrediting body, CAEP.

**CAEP: Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation:**

CAEP is one of two accrediting bodies for educator preparation programs in the U.S. It is by far the larger of the two (currently 431 CAEP accredited programs vs. 57 accredited by AAQEP). All three UA Schools of Education are currently CAEP accredited at either the initial or advanced program level, or both.

**GYO program:**

GYO programs recruit and train teachers from within local communities. There are many versions of GYO programs across the US from high school programs to paraprofessional-to-teacher programs.

**Prepared to Teach:**

Prepared to Teach is a national learning network based at the Bank Street College of Education that helps districts and universities collaborate to create sustainable systems for fully funding high quality teacher preparation. More on this later!

[9:14:07 AM](#)

MS. VINLOVE advanced to slide 3 to discuss the University of Alaska's pathways to becoming a teacher. Becoming a teacher can be viewed as one main pathway that can be entered at many different points, thereby creating many pathways. It is recognized across the nation that to be a teacher a person must have graduated high school, received a four-year degree, and had clinical fieldwork experience. Students can follow a traditional approach or an innovative pathway, such as a middle college program, career change, or post-bachelorette program.

[9:14:57 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH asked where an apprenticeship would fit and where else should Alaska focus attention given its immediate need for teachers.

[9:15:31 AM](#)

MS. VINLOVE said that an answer to the second question would be forthcoming, but an apprenticeship would typically be associated with a final internship. Internship, apprenticeship, and residency are three terms that refer to a year-long approach to certification by spending time in a classroom under the supervision of a highly certified teacher. UA refers to them as internships, but they are synonymous with an apprenticeship

program and the term residency. Apprenticeships can take more than a year but typically take one year.

[9:16:22 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH stated his belief that the committee envisions an apprenticeship that taps into paraprofessionals and is more extended.

[9:16:39 AM](#)

MS. VINLOVE turned to slide 4 and said that the University of Alaska (UA) offers early childhood, elementary, secondary, and special education licensure programs, and there are 31 different permutations of initial pathways within these content areas.

[9:17:29 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH asked if there is flexibility in the time and means by which programs are offered.

MS. VINLOVE said there are many versions of the various programs. For example, in the final year of UAF's elementary program internship there are three different calendars. They align with the Anchorage and Fairbanks school district calendars and the distance delivery calendar across the state. Coursework and teaching are typically interwoven and occur during the day. The university receives feedback from students for both day and nighttime classes. Student preference is for daytime; however, some programs align with the needs of people who work full-time during the day.

[9:19:17 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS remarked that the information presented was important and asked if the number of students in the programs would be given.

MS. VINLOVE replied no, but she could provide it.

[9:19:37 AM](#)

At ease.

[9:19:58 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND reconvened the meeting.

[9:20:06 AM](#)

MS. VINLOVE said that UA also offers advanced education programs for certified teachers who want additional endorsements or certificates. There are 17 different permutations of the various advanced pathways.

[9:20:36 AM](#)

MS. VINLOVE moved to slide 6, which provided an overview of the university's many recruitment and marketing efforts to attract people to its programs. Teachalaska.org is a single unified website that helps students identify programs and career pathways in education available to them. The university employs system-wide search engine optimization, so UA's educational programs appear in response to relevant searches. There is also a system-wide social media and marketing approach to recruitment and a local campus social media marketing campaign. Traditional marketing methods such as radio are also used. Recruitment efforts also target different points of entry.

MS. VINLOVE said that Educators Rising, dual enrollment programs, and middle college programs are used to recruit high school students. In contrast, paraprofessional-to-teacher programs, recruitment from other majors, and ladder degree progression pathways are recruitment methods for people with more life experience.

[9:24:15 AM](#)

MS. VINLOVE advanced to slide 7 and stated that there is a teacher shortage across the United States. Teacher preparation program enrollment has declined since 2010 and was made worse due to COVID. She said that 53 percent of students in their last year of teaching reported being actively dissuaded from entering the teaching profession. She stated that the pie graph shows many reasons for discouragement, but finance was the primary reason.

[9:25:38 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH asked if the university is doing anything to allay financial costs for students entering the teaching program. He said that the Alaska student loan program offered forgiveness in the past.

MS. VINLOVE said that financial assistance would be discussed on an upcoming slide.

[9:26:48 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND asked if there was a known reason for the decline in teachers starting from 2012 to 2015.

[9:27:02 AM](#)

MS. VINLOVE stated she would need to review the study but esteem and financial constraints are primary concerns faced by the teaching profession.

[9:27:38 AM](#)

MS. VINLOVE said that slides 9-12 provide profiles of four students and the various barriers and pathways they took to become teachers.

[9:32:30 AM](#)

MR. MACMANUS said that the Alaska Gateway School District (AGSD) worked with UA and, in January 2022, held a meeting to discuss a program that would allow school staff and people in the community who have worked with students to become teachers. He reported that 18 people attended the meeting and are now in teacher pathway programs; the first to become a teacher will graduate in spring 2022. He described the students' various circumstances and the pathways they were using. He said that teaching is one of the better jobs available in rural Alaska, and pathway programs provide opportunities for residents to improve their family situation, which previously was financially or logistically difficult.

MR. MACMANUS stated that partnering with the university has led to recruitment success for his district. When he began as a superintendent in 2016, the employee turnover rate was 50-60 percent of certified instructional staff. For the past three years, retention has been 90 percent. He qualified that this was intentional retention because 34 out of 38 contracts were returned within one week. He said that local teachers from the program would fill two of the four positions needing to be filled. He opined that recruitment success does not come by focusing on the 20 percent who have decided they do not want to be teachers. It comes from broadening the scope of people who know they want to be teachers and providing a path so it is possible, not easier. Alaska wants quality certified teachers who are committed, engaging, and understand students' needs.

[9:37:25 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES said that student teaching is like a residency program for physicians. She said resident physicians are paid and asked whether teachers in the mentor program receive any type of stipend and whether they pay tuition to student teach.

[9:38:44 AM](#)

MR. MACMANUS said the district's mentorship program covers travel to Tok, housing, and non-certified substitute pay. The

university that the Alaska Gateway School District (AGSD) worked with did not want the student to be paid or expenses covered, so an agreement had to be reached. AGSD required the student to stay the entire semester, attend in-service training, take university classes and teach. AGSD did not pay for university courses.

MR. MACMANUS agreed with Senator Hughes that students are working and should be paid. He said the cost to the school district was minimal, and although he does not have unlimited funds, he plans to accept additional students in the future. AGSD is working on a similar program with UAF. He opined that mentorship programs need at least one semester, preferably an entire school year. He said the district is committed to helping the teaching profession; people should be paid for their work.

[9:41:22 AM](#)

MS. VINLOVE jumped to slide 24 and stated high quality teacher education is critical, but affordability is key. Aspiring teachers cannot work for free and learn how to teach well. The Prepared to Teach National Learning Network is trying to help facilitate and support conversations, planning and co-construction programs between universities and districts to figure out how to create sustainable braided funding streams for high quality teacher preparation.

MS. VINLOVE said data shows that yearlong residencies result in better teacher preparation and retention. Funding yearlong residencies requires a look at reallocation, reduction, and reinvestment of funds between the universities and school districts to create sustainable systems of funding for high quality teacher preparation.

[9:42:57 AM](#)

MS VINLOVE turned to slide 27 and said teacher turnover is a huge cost driver in Alaska's schools and drives inequity in the education of students. The pathways that teachers take directly affect retention. Schools that have a yearlong embedded residency find teachers remain working for the school district longer. It also increases the diversity of the candidate pool. However, money is the barrier to universal residency because it is difficult for candidates to work for free. It also creates inequitable access to quality preparation because of the costs. Fast-track programs that put candidates into a classroom before being prepared can create reverse incentives for the system.

[9:43:50 AM](#)

MS. VINLOVE turned to slide 28 and said that a system redesign is what universities and school districts are working toward. She then spoke about the following principles for system redesign:

[Original punctuation provided.]

1. Mutually beneficial partnerships braid resources across the system
2. Redesign of school roles pays residents for instructional supports
3. Access to financial aid and streamlined coursework reduces candidate costs
4. Equalizing pay with fast-track programs incentivizes enrollment
5. Investing in learning networks spreads promising practices.

[9:45:23 AM](#)

MS. VINLOVE offered the University of Wisconsin's teaching program as an example of university redesign. Students who graduate receive loan forgiveness for teaching in Wisconsin following graduation. She said UA is working on an exciting collaborative model of redesign. Various organizations want to support students in becoming teachers, but coordinating is difficult. Therefore, UA is working with school districts and external organizations on a collaborative model to help students identify funding streams based on their student profiles. Apprenticeships through the Department of Labor are another potential source of system redesign funding.

[9:47:42 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH noted that the Begich scholarship was listed as a funding source and disclosed that he received no monetary benefit from the presentation. He asked if state law would need to be changed for a loan forgiveness program like Wisconsin's to be possible in Alaska.

MS. VINLOVE replied the program is within the University of Wisconsin's system. She stated she does not know if the program would function internally within the University of Alaska or externally with the state.

SENATOR BEGICH stated that the Lower Kuskokwim School District (LKSD) spends about \$5.5 million on energy costs. LKSD must divert money from operating expenses to pay for energy, which is

the case for most rural schools. He asked how schools struggling to pay energy bills will redesign system funding. He opined that diverting funds will benefit urban schools more than rural schools.

[9:49:18 AM](#)

MS. VINLOVE responded that she could not speak to every school district. However, LKSD ran numbers and determined a couple of years ago that the school district was better off allocating out-of-state recruitment funds to internships due to the high turnover rate of out-of-state hires.

[9:49:59 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS asked why the university was resistant to AGSD providing a stipend to its intern.

[9:50:33 AM](#)

MR. MACMANTUS said he and a former colleague with ties to the university developed the idea of an internship at AGSD. The university's Department of Education was resistant to paid student internships because student teaching historically does not receive pay. He convinced the department that the internship position should be compensated. He stated that as a student teacher at McKinley Alternative in 1987, he was required by the school to teach for a year unpaid, which he could afford. Teaching for an entire year prepared him to enter the teaching profession. Not all students can afford a year without pay, and students who enter teaching unprepared are likelier to leave the profession. A passion for making a difference is the number one reason given for being a teacher, not money. He opined that it is up to the legislature, the university, and school administrators to prepare teachers so they will stay and make a difference.

[9:54:06 AM](#)

MS. VINLOVE moved back to slide 13 and stated that UA's initial licensure program integrates coursework and fieldwork, then follows up with assessments. The next three slides show the coursework and fieldwork components of various pathways for licensure.

[9:56:18 AM](#)

MS. VINLOVE turned to slide 17 and said the university created ladder degree progression pathways to help students take incremental steps to achieve a bachelor's degree. Students first work towards receiving a certificate. The certificate credits

count towards credits needed for an associate degree, which then roll into the required credits for a bachelor's degree.

[9:57:18 AM](#)

MS. VINLOVE said teachers are taught how to facilitate learning that fosters 21st-century skills, along with how to teach academic content. The learning cycle model provides four sequential steps to become proficient: introduce, prepare, enact, and analyze. She offered an example of each step from a course she previously taught.

[9:59:00 AM](#)

MS. VINLOVE advanced to slide 19 and stated that UA has strict accreditation requirements for monitoring candidate progress. The assessments must be valid and reliable. Accreditation standards for assessments are:

- Content validity established with P-12 stakeholders to ensure the right things are being assessed
- Established and documented inter-rater reliability
- Multiple evaluators to triangulate data
- Articulated criteria for program progression at program transition points
- Alignment with established standards

There are four key assessments used throughout the final year of preparation in UA's initial licensure programs, with specific criteria that must be met:

[Original punctuation provided.]

**Field-based assessment**

The Skills of Teaching Observation Tool is utilized throughout the final year of preparation by mentor teacher, supervisor, faculty and student self assessment

**Professional characteristics**

Candidates are assessed at multiple points by multiple people on their dispositions relative to those of practicing teachers

**Culminating performance assessment**

All programs employ a culminating performance based assessment that evaluates candidate planning,

implementation, assessment and impact on student learning through evidence and video

**State certification exams**

Praxis, basic competency exams

Subject or district specific assessments Vary by pathway or partnership

MS. VINLOVE moved to slide 20 and said the university's Department of Education must also have a robust quality assurance system to demonstrate that it is engaged in a continuous improvement process. She provided an example of the process and said UAF has a quality assurance hub website. CAEP accreditation standards also require constant improvement and quality assurance through external advisory committees, review meetings, and tracking improvement and data changes. Graduates are also evaluated in the workplace through graduate surveys, employer surveys, and case studies.

[10:04:44 AM](#)

MS. VINLOVE stated that evidence shows that people are happy with the preparation at UA. She said the university receives consistent positive feedback on its programs from students, graduates, alumni and employers. Ninety-six percent of surveyed in-service teachers say the rewards of teaching are worth the effort of their teacher education program.

[10:05:12 AM](#)

MS. VINLOVE said the table on slide 22 provides a broad overview of program costs. She mentioned that tuition and fees vary depending on lower and upper-division credits. Also, a one or two-year program is much cheaper than a four-year pathway.

[10:05:39 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS stated he knows there are differences between education programs at UA's campuses and recognizes that pathways broaden the entrance to the teaching profession. He asked for an explanation for why the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) has a two-year program but the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) and University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) have a four year requirement.

MS. VINLOVE replied that the programs at the top of the chart are bachelor programs while the bottom are two-year programs for people who already have bachelor's degrees. Almost all of the two - year programs can be completed in one year if a student aggressively pursues the coursework.

[10:06:57 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS asked if the programs are producing quality teachers.

MS. VINLOVE replied that the two-year programs are high quality and are based on a yearlong internship. The programs require some coursework to be completed the summer before the internship starts. The student becomes a licensed teacher at the end of the year and can elect to pursue a master's degree by taking additional credits.

[10:07:34 AM](#)

MS. VINLOVE said that barriers to the preparation and graduation of high-quality teachers for Alaska's schools are money and difficulty with basic competency exams.

[10:08:09 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH referred to slide 23 and asked what it means to re-think standardized basic competency exams.

[10:08:26 AM](#)

MS. VINLOVE advanced to slide 35 and replied that the Praxis core exam is a barrier to becoming a certified teacher for many students. No correlation exists between the ability to pass the test and effective teaching in the classroom. Students taking the exam have already completed a four-year degree program. The exams are used for diagnostic purposes to identify areas where school administrators could offer additional training for teachers. The exams have been shown to keep the wrong people out of the profession. Black, Latino, and Alaska Native students' pass rates are lower than White peers, resulting in fewer candidates of color and stymied efforts to diversify the teaching workforce. During COVID, students were not required to take the Praxis tests to graduate. Instead, they were issued emergency certificates, but they will need to take the Praxis tests once their emergency certificate expires. She said this gives the state an opportunity to collect data and evaluate how effective these teachers are in the classroom based on teacher evaluations before knowing their ability to pass the exams.

MS. VINLOVE moved to slide 36 and shared stories of Alaskans impacted by the testing requirements.

[10:12:47 AM](#)

MS. VINLOVE said in 2019, the Washington State Legislature removed the requirement to meet a minimum passing score but will

still use the test results in teacher preparation programs as a formative assessment of academic ability in determining readiness.

[10:13:14 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH stated he took the PSAT test in high school and did not do well because of anxiety. He said he could not pass the Praxis algebra test, so he could not teach. He opined that the tests are significant barriers for teachers who want to teach a particular subject but cannot pass a different subject area of the required test.

CHAIR HOLLAND said that is what happened to the student Ms. Vinlove described earlier in the presentation. The student wanted to be a second-grade teacher but could not pass the algebra portion of an exam and, therefore, could not teach.

[10:14:11 AM](#)

MS. VINLOVE returned to slide 25 and said that higher quality teacher preparation leads to higher professional retention rates. The university works with Prepared to Teach and partners with the Alaska Gateway, Anchorage, and Fairbanks school districts. It is also continuing partnerships with the Bering Strait and Lower Kuskokwim school districts to look towards braided funding streams providing sustainable systems that financially support teacher education candidates with tuition and living costs. Living costs account for up to two-thirds of a student's educational expenses but are seldom defrayed through scholarships like tuition.

[10:15:17 AM](#)

MS. VINLOVE moved to slide 30 and said the university envisions Alaska using a market-based collaborative model. Different programs at all three UA locations would partner with various school districts to create and ensure braided funding streams that meet the financial needs of students. The partnerships would also create preparation programs that are deeply tied to the needs of specific school districts. It is envisioned that a school district would work with several UA teacher programs to fill its needs. She provided an example of Tennessee working with Austin Peay State University's undergraduate pathway program.

[10:17:30 AM](#)

MS. VINLOVE turned to slide 31 and said the Department of Labor could potentially be a funding stream for education students. The teaching profession is an apprenticeable profession by

federal regulation. If Alaska made teacher apprenticeships possible, over a billion dollars in unused federal workforce funding could be tapped for individuals to become teachers. In contrast, the federal government spends \$100 million on Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) grants. More federal money is expected to flow into the Department of Labor specifically for teacher apprenticeships. Slide 33 provides a graphic depicting the roles and relationships of the US Department of Labor, schools, and higher education institutions in creating a teacher apprenticeship program.

MS. VINLOVE said partnerships need to mobilize to capitalize on the opportunity and ensure apprenticeships are high-quality accessible paths to teaching. Slide 34 provides requirements for residency apprenticeships.

[10:19:15 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES opined that, from her experience, student teaching appeared to be more about checking off boxes to receive credit than learning to teach. The school district also did not appear to be invested in ensuring the student teacher became a great teacher. She asked if there was a way to combine the concept of student teaching with an internship so that it would be more meaningful and enable students to receive a stipend. She asked if the residency program would follow a year of student teaching.

MS. VINLOVE indicated that the residency would be the year of student teaching.

SENATOR HUGHES said that a year of residency is good because she can see how a student might finish the degree but never enter a classroom to teach. She mentioned that she and her husband returned to Alaska after graduating because of student loan forgiveness. She said the requirement to work first and then receive forgiveness was integral to staying in Alaska and is something the university should consider.

[10:21:49 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH stated his belief that the Finance Committee would be open to hearing about teacher apprenticeships. Senator Bishop mentioned his desire to find ways to access unspent federal Department of Labor funds when SB 111 was being discussed.

[10:22:26 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS said the state was shocked when UAA lost its accreditation for its school of education. He asked how the loss affected students entering UAA and does UAA plan to work toward accreditation.

[10:23:02 AM](#)

MS. VINLOVE replied that UAA is accredited under CAEP for advanced program pathways. Initial licensure pathways recently received approval from the State Department of Education to open a four-year degree program. UAA faced a chicken and egg-situation because students were needed to pursue accreditation, but permission to enroll them was necessary before accreditation could be sought. Now that UAA has permission, it will have the opportunity to apply for initial licensure accreditation a few years after the degree pathway begins. In the meantime, UAF has faculty that live and work in Anchorage and offers face-to-face courses in all its initial licensure pathway programs. UAS also offers initial licensure programs through distance delivery and has faculty based in Anchorage. There has never been a gap at UAA in the ability for students to receive initial licensure through the University of Alaska. UA marshaled its forces and worked collaboratively, making it possible for students from UAA to graduate without having to move from Anchorage.

[10:25:12 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH stated that it is important to note that the decline in the number of teachers nationally corresponds with the decreasing number of education graduates at UA. While UA was faulted for the decrease, it appears the drop reflects a national trend. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the legislature to figure out a way to change that trend.

[10:25:58 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES said Alaska's score requirements for the Praxis competency exam are lower than other states. She understands that students with English as a second language may have difficulty with the reading assessment. In SB 111, different pathways for assessment were allowed to accommodate testing issues such as anxiety and language. However, it is important to establish competency. She asked if alternative testing has been investigated to ensure teachers are adequately competent in their field.

[10:27:31 AM](#)

MS. VINLOVE replied that teachers must take a basic competency and content area-specific exams. A teacher wanting to teach secondary school chemistry would need to take a content area-

specific exam to demonstrate competency or have a major in chemistry. Praxis II tests are different from Praxis core. She clarified that it is the basic competency test that some students have difficulty passing.

[10:28:26 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES asked if the department is suggesting getting rid of competency exams. She wondered whether alternatives are being developed to ensure teachers are competent at a core level.

[10:28:51 AM](#)

MS. VINLOVE replied that there are alternative pathways for the basic competency and content area exams. However, all alternatives for basic competency involve a standardized timed test.

[10:29:07 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND asked Sondra Meredith to comment.

[10:29:21 AM](#)

SONDRA MEREDITH, Teacher Certification Administrator, Teacher Certification Section, Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), Juneau, Alaska, replied that in Washington state, universities have been given the ability to develop alternative pathways for proving teacher proficiency when a candidate has difficulty passing the basic competency exam. Alaska could choose to use a similar mechanism.

[10:30:22 AM](#)

MR. MACMANUS stated he appreciates the committee's time and is excited about the possibility of teacher apprenticeships using funds from the Department of Labor. He also thanked the university for its role and leadership in finding solutions to putting quality teachers in Alaska's classrooms. He is glad to be a part of finding those solutions.

[10:31:21 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND asked Mr. Macmanus if he believes teacher apprenticeships are possible in rural areas through remote access.

[10:31:46 AM](#)

MR. MACMANUS replied that persistence is a useful trait, and he believes it is possible because he has seen it done. There is value in meeting teachers and students face to face. Still, there is also the reality that some students are forty years old with families to support, making attendance at university

campuses difficult. Opportunities exist for these individuals. He especially likes the hands-on component of internships in the classroom.

[10:32:43 AM](#)

MS. VINLOVE expressed that it is an exciting time to pursue opportunities that strengthen connections between universities and school districts. Schools are at a critical point in history. If Alaska's agencies, school districts, and universities do not work together, schools will not have teachers. A lack of teachers incentivizes a much deeper level of collaboration and mutually beneficial partnership.

[10:33:26 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND asked where the website location is for people interested in educational opportunities.

MS. VINLOVE replied the website is teachalaska.org.

[10:33:49 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND held SB 225 in committee.

[10:33:56 AM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Holland adjourned the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting at 10:33 a.m.