

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 15, 2023

8:01 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Jamie Allard, Co-Chair
Representative Justin Ruffridge, Co-Chair
Representative Mike Prax
Representative CJ McCormick
Representative Tom McKay
Representative Rebecca Himschoot
Representative Andi Story

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT

Representative Alyse Galvin

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION(S): ALASKA ASSESSMENT REPORT

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

KELLY MANNING, Deputy Director
Division of Innovation and Education Excellence
Department of Education and Early Development
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented a PowerPoint, titled "Statewide Assessment and FY2022 Assessment Results Overview."

ELIZABETH GRENINGER, Assessments Administrator
Division of Innovation and Education Excellence
Department of Education and Early Development

Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented a PowerPoint, titled "Statewide Assessment and FY2022 Assessment Results Overview."

LACEY SANDERS, Deputy Commissioner
Department of Education and Early Development
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Joined via teleconference during the PowerPoint, titled "Statewide Assessment and FY2022 Assessment Results Overview," to discuss AK STAR and answer questions.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:01:07 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR JAMIE ALLARD called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:01 a.m. Representatives Story, Himschoot, McCormick, Ruffridge, and Allard were present at the call to order. Representatives Prax and McKay arrived as the meeting was in progress.

The committee took an at-ease from 8:01 a.m. to 8:03 a.m.

PRESENTATION(S): Alaska Assessment Report

[8:03:23 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD announced that the only order of business would be the Alaska Assessment Report presentation.

[8:04:02 AM](#)

KELLY MANNING, Deputy Director, Division of Innovation and Education Excellence, Department of Education and Early Development, informed the committee she will begin by walking through the statewide assessment results and provide an overview. She continued to slide 2 in the PowerPoint, titled "Mission, Vision, and Purpose," [hard copy included in the committee packets], and reiterated in the purpose that the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) exists to provide information, resources, and leadership to support an excellent education for every student every day. She emphasized DEED's assessment team serves to help districts in administering assessments, as well as in understanding the use and purpose of them.

MS. MANNING continued on slide 3, titled "Strategic Priorities: Alaska's Education Challenge," where she explained with the five strategic priorities there are a number of areas in which assessment data informs the priorities and the projects that result; the assessment information drives policy priority. She continued on slide 4, titled "Purpose of Assessment," and explained the statewide assessments are one piece of assessment information that districts and educators use, and there are different levels of assessment featured on the slide - formative, interim, and summative - all which she synopsized. She noted assessment is a part of classroom instruction and part of the cycle of learning that every educator uses. She explained she would walk the committee through the next slides [5 through 8] titled "Statewide Assessments." Featured on the slides are types of assessments, their content area(s), and the grade ranges of students the assessments cover. In addition, those students with significant cognitive disabilities fall under the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) assessment.

[8:10:13 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD asked if parents could opt out for their children to take the assessments.

MS. MANNING answered parents do have the option per statute to opt out of any statewide assessment. She explained there are accountability requirements that encourage higher levels of participation with the goal being 95 percent participation - and in a typical year, the goal is often met.

CO-CHAIR ALLARD questioned if the results would be skewed if parents opt out.

MS. MANNING replied DEED had not evaluated the populations of students where parents are opting out, so it is hard to know how the statistical analysis would be affected.

CO-CHAIR ALLARD asked if there are certain questions that trigger a parent to want to opt out.

MS. MANNING responded that the assessments do not include questions about demographics; that is something the districts collect. The questions asked are standards-based, and there are a number of activities DEED does to ensure the questions are appropriate for Alaska students. She added the questions do not consist of "controversial subjects."

[8:12:46 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RUFFRIDGE was curious to know how many students are taking the AK Star [Alaska System of Academic Readiness] assessment on a regular basis.

MS. MANNING responded that the information is shown on the slides. She explained the drop in assessment participation rates following the COVID-19 pandemic, but noted that in previous years it had been close to that 95 percent. She also explained Ms. Greninger [who would be joining via teleconference] could comment further on participation rates.

[8:14:27 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked if the "Alaska Assessment" was comparable to national standards.

MS. MANNING responded DEED builds the assessment off of state standards, and when they were developed, they were done so with considerations of national standards, but were adjusted to reflect Alaska context.

[8:17:50 AM](#)

MS. MANNING summarized the types of assessments on slides 5 through 8, titled "Statewide Assessments" [original punctuation provided]:

Assessment/Content/Students

Alaska System of Academic Readiness (AK STAR)/English language arts and mathematics/Grades 3-9

Alaska Science Assessment/Science/Grades 5, 8, and 10

Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM)/English language arts, mathematics, and science/Students with significant cognitive disabilities in grades 3-9: ELA and math, grades 5, 8, and 10: science

ACCESS for ELLs, Alternate ACCESS, and Kindergarten ACCESS/English language proficiency/All EL students in grades K-12

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)/Varies by years, but most commonly math and

reading/A Sample of students across Alaska from grades 4, 8 (and sometimes 12)

Alaska Developmental Profile (ADP)/13 goals and indicators in five domains from Alaska's Early Learning Guidelines/All kindergarten students and any first graders who did not attend kindergarten.

mCLASS with DIBELS 8th Edition/Early literacy skills as aligned to the requirements of the Reads Act/Students in grades K-3

[8:20:39 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD asked if the "early literacy" [on slide 8] was already implemented in the state before The Alaska Reads Act came onboard.

MS. MANNING responded it is a new addition added as a statewide requirement for screening to identify where students are at in their reading skills.

REPRESENTATIVE RUFFRIDGE questioned if there are statutes that require or mandate these assessments, and if so, which ones they are.

MS. MANNING confirmed DEED can provide all the statutes; the assessments are all statutorily mandated.

[8:22:27 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY offered her understanding that when kids are coming into kindergarten, 80 percent are not on grade level with the Alaska developmental profile, and only 20 percent are kindergarten ready.

MS. MANNING responded that she does not have the exact data today but could confirm the numbers at a later date.

CO-CHAIR ALLARD asked if the numbers could be provided through DEED's staff today.

[8:23:19 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:23 a.m. to 8:24 a.m.

[8:24:08 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked for confirmation that no district pays for any of these assessments because they are funded by the state.

MS. MANNING responded that is correct.

[8:24:49 AM](#)

ELIZABETH GRENINGER, Assessments Administrator, Division of Innovation and Education Excellence, Department of Education and Early Development, joined via teleconference and explained she would provide more detail specifically to the AK STAR assessment and results and invite questions from the committee.

[8:25:42 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY reiterated the question on the Alaska development profile results, regarding her understanding that only 20 percent of kids are kindergarten ready.

MS. GRENINGER responded she does not have the data in front of her but can provide it to the committee after she presents. She further explained all results from the 2021/2022 assessments are available and are posted to DEED's assessments website. She continued the presentation on slide 9, titled "AK STAR," featuring the AK STAR summative assessment and Map [Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM)] growth interim assessment - the goal being to bring together the best of summative and interim assessments. She continued to slide 10, titled "AK STAR - A Connected Approach," which she described as a holistic system. The goal here, she explained, is to help have more information actionable to influence what is happening in classrooms, to inform teaching and learning processes.

[8:30:56 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY questioned how the cut scores are set for low proficiency, and who sets them.

MS. GRENINGER described some of the process to establish the cut scores. The process is typical for new assessments: new stakeholders are brought in, and a process called standard setting is established - this being where the data and item content is brought together so that educators ultimately decide where cut scores should be set. She noted there are continued leadership discussions around this.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY inquired about a vendor, NWEA, and if it has Map scores for other students in other states and if that also plays into setting the cut scores.

MS. GRENINGER responded that the question ties into the next piece. She further explained that in the initial review of the scores last year, only AK STAR performances were evaluated, but the process this year will involve a review of the Map growth component, and DEED will engage in a validation process that will help set the cut scores.

[8:36:14 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RUFFRIDGE brought up the structure of the adaptive portion of AK STAR and questioned how it can be used to measure achievement and growth for students if no student is taking the same exam.

MS. GRENINGER replied that creating adaptive assessments is a complex process; she offered to point out different documents that help illustrate this process in more detail than she will explain here. For the time being, she pointed out that a "test blueprint" that can be found on DEED's website depicts how the assessment brings together both the summative and growth component.

[8:41:40 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RUFFRIDGE asked if the different categories within each area are broken down for schools and districts, and if Map data can be "cohorted" so students can be followed over time.

MS. GRENINGER responded that DEED always had reporting categories, but they have been broad. One of the goals in moving to the next vision of AK STAR is to include that level of information and, with the Map growth component, a RIT [Rasch Unit scale] score is revealed. She further explained Alaska is one of the first states using Map growth as the statewide assessment, and DEED is pushing on the system to do some of the things being asked. Although Map does currently have a measure of growth, it is not for an individual student. The transient population of the state was also mentioned as resulting in districts having difficulty measuring a cohort.

[8:48:27 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked if the state is paying for the interim assessments for districts to have fall and winter access.

MS. MANNING confirmed DEED is paying for Map growth.

[8:50:30 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD commented on the value of some committee members also being school board members and the added perspective it brings.

MS. GRENINGER returned to the presentation on slide 11, titled "Assessments Results - Spring 2022." She noted it is a quick snapshot that is available on the DEED website and was distributed in the committee packets. She informed the committee she will highlight some areas that will be featured on slides to come.

[8:54:05 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked what percentage of the total student body takes advantage of correspondence courses.

MS. MANNING replied she did not have this information here but will provide it to the committee at a later date.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX stressed the information is needed if 75 percent are correspondence schools.

CO-CHAIR ALLARD questioned why they [DEED] are lacking in answers.

MS. MANNING responded that the DEED staff present are prepared to present on the data on the assessments. She also verified there is a staff member who oversees correspondence schools but is not part of the assessment team.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY confirmed it is about 16 percent of students who attend correspondence schools.

MS. GRENINGER brought attention to slide 12, titled "Achievement Levels."

REPRESENTATIVE RUFFRIDGE returned to the material on slide 11 and asked if there is a possibility of finding out student participation rates in NAEP and ADP.

MS. GRENINGER confirmed the participation rates will be provided for said assessments at a later date.

[8:59:06 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RUFFRIDGE asked whether NAEP testing is a random sample and how it is selected for testing.

MS. GRENINGER responded that NAEP is a random stratified sample, meaning there are specific demographic features it is trying to obtain to assess students within that population; this becomes a challenge in Alaska because there are often pockets of community types or student groups, and while selected randomly, they are often selected each time.

REPRESENTATIVE RUFFRIDGE asked for clarification on NAEP and whether it is within a specific demographic, and who decides what that demographic is year after year.

MS. GRENINGER responded there is a NAEP state coordinator who is well-versed in stratified sample, and she will provide the connection to the committee.

[9:04:42 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD commented that a result showing low participation with the correspondence students could be the result of targeting demographics. She noted that "a lot of people don't like that."

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT questioned if the NAEP descriptor was the same, and what was included in the NAEP result.

MS. GRENINGER responded that they are not the same performance descriptors. She said NAEP assesses in a different way than AK STAR, so students are evaluated at or above basic, and at or above proficient.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked why Alaska does not participate in the NAEP science test.

MS. MANNING replied that is a policy decision made by a previous administration and she offered to get background on why this is.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT commented that given the state's higher performance in science, adding the NAEP science test would be valuable.

[9:07:52 AM](#)

MS. GRENINGER continued on slide 12, titled "Achievement Levels," and she drew attention to those performance levels that have changed in the last year. She explained the non-proficient achievement level included "Approaching Proficient (AP)" and "Needs Support (NS)" - both being new titles.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked where the standards are set regarding the phrase, "student meets standards," and if there is a way to compare Alaska to national standards.

MS. MANNING replied the standards are set based on Alaska standards. In response to a follow-up question, she explained the Alaska standards were developed by a group of Alaska educators and stakeholders who drew from similar national standards, but the distinctions for Alaska are to align the standards to the context of Alaska and to students that are more remote/rural who have different living experiences.

[9:13:43 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD requested information that compares Montana, Wyoming, and Idaho with Alaska.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT pointed out that those states contain rural areas, but Alaska has remote areas; there is a distinction.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCORMICK argued that Hawaii is a good example, as well.

[9:15:32 AM](#)

MS. GRENINGER continued on slides 13 and 14, titled "AK STAR English Language Arts Achievement Level Percentages," with slide 14 also containing grades 3-9, and relayed that all information here is available on DEED's website.

REPRESENTATIVE RUFFRIDGE noticed the chart on slide 14 showing a dramatic change between grades 6 and 7 and asked for any thoughts as to why.

[9:18:20 AM](#)

MS. GRENINGER replied she could not provide an opinion on what she thought it meant, but the role of the assessment team is to produce the results and share them wisely within the department and districts, and that the deeper analysis happens on other teams.

REPRESENTATIVE RUFFRIDGE alluded to a potential problem with the questions being asked to seventh graders, and he questioned if there might be an "assessment to the assessment."

MS. MANNING replied the chart reflects the first year DEED administered AK STAR. There will be a review of these proficiency levels in a validation study this summer, and she explained that two years of data will give a much better picture.

[9:23:31 AM](#)

MS. GRENINGER continued on slides 15 and 16, titled "AK STAR Mathematics Achievement Level Percentages," similar to previous slides, but focused on mathematics. She summarized the breakdowns across grades 3-9 on slide 16 and similarly, there are shifts in performance at certain grade levels. She proceeded to slides 17 and 18, titled "Alaska Science Assessment Achievement Level Percentages," and reminded the committee this is a different assessment now - Alaska's own science assessment. She explained that grades 5, 8, and 10 are represented, and 62 percent of students in these grades are non-proficient in science. The individual grade percentages are broken down on slide 18.

[9:27:03 AM](#)

MS. MANNING rejoined the presentation on slide 19, titled "Responding to the 2022 Assessment Results," and she explained DEED takes the data internally, and other teams then look at the data to see how resources can be allocated in the department to address needs arising from the results. Ms. Manning concluded the presentation on slide 20, titled "Stay Connected," that featured contact information for herself, and Ms. Greninger.

[9:29:40 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD invited questions from the committee and noted that if they cannot be answered here, the committee aide would make note of them for future responses. She stated preference for the questions to be direct and concise.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked if DEED had compared Alaska's system of assessment or Alaska's system of education with high performing systems internationally.

MS. MANNING replied there is no study currently of that kind.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX commented on the sciences, and asked if the one test can accurately measure proficiency in any branch of science.

MS. MANNING explained that the science standards do cover a range across the sciences.

[9:32:14 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RUFFRIDGE asked how much it costs the state for all assessments.

MS. MANNING responded that she would get the exact numbers - both what the current numbers are and what is historically typical.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCORMICK requested a "picture" of what each assessment looks like for a student.

MS. MANNING offered her understanding that most assessments were computer based but asked Ms. Greninger to confirm.

MS. GRENINGER expanded on the answer and explained the shift in paper-based assessments to online occurred over the past several years.

[9:36:20 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCKAY said he assumed the tests were administered to all 54 school districts in the state, and therefore should provide data showing what schools have the higher scores and can serve as models.

MS. MANNING confirmed the data is broken out by districts and schools, but she stressed that the context for districts varies across the state. However, part of DEED's school improvement

process is to look at successful practices and assist schools that are struggling.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked where the districts keep the "snapshot" of what impacts each district and where response is needed.

MS. MANNING responded that some of the information is collected in different ways but is all pulled together and provided on the DEED website that shows demographic information and state assessment results on different districts and schools.

[9:40:46 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCORMICK asked if there is a mechanism for students to provide feedback on the assessments.

MS. MANNING replied that the department has an assessment advisory panel for students and parents, but not a survey for students on how they feel about the assessments.

REPRESENTATIVE RUFFRIDGE asked why the assessment stops at grade 9.

MS. MANNING explained that assessing grades 3 to 9 is the practice of DEED, and it is not required by the U.S. Department of Education beyond that point.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked what drives the early April testing date - being that there are nine months of school, and tests are administered in early April resulting in two missing months of academic time.

MS. MANNING replied that the school calendars differ widely across the state, and the window begins late March/early April and closes the end of April - this is the window that best aligns to the range of calendars. She further explained that most districts test earlier in this window so they can get to their end-of-year activities and wrapping up the school year.

[9:45:29 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD invited the committee to provide final comments.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY indicated she understood why The Alaska Reads Act has early learning in it being that 80 percent of students are classified as "not being ready," and her hope is to

invest money earlier than what is in the fiscal plan to help catch students up.

REPRESENTATIVE MCKAY believed the sciences are essential, but we also need to focus and get back to the essentials of reading, writing, and arithmetic.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCORMICK expressed concern that some test scores are not reflective of where students are at; if a student does not like the "system", they will not do well. He stated there is work to be done.

[9:49:26 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE RUFFRIDGE commented that education can't be measured fully by assessments; what makes things interesting to the children needs to be taken into consideration.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX reflected on testing being difficult in general, and computer testing being an obstacle. He opined that as a state, Alaska needs to go back to basics such as English and mathematics.

[9:53:18 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT mirrored the commentary on the basics - reading, writing, math needing to happen in the schools, but the point of these areas is to do science and understand social studies; kids must have the tools to enjoy exploring these areas.

CO-CHAIR ALLARD expressed her desire to keep parents, students, and educators informed and involved in what is happening in education. She conveyed that the House Education Committee is here to serve the public.

[9:56:31 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:56 a.m.