

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 27, 2023

8:00 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 Dan Ortiz

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION(S): STATE OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

LISA PARADY, Executive Director
Alaska Council of School Administrators
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented a PowerPoint, titled "State of PK-12 Education in Alaska."

BRIDGET WEISS, Superintendent
Juneau School District
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented a PowerPoint, titled "State of PK-12 Education in Alaska."

BRENDAN WILSON, President
Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented a PowerPoint, titled "State of PK-12 Education in Alaska."

JOSH GILL, Principal
Ayaprun Elitnaurvik Elementary School
Bethel, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented a PowerPoint, titled "State of PK-12 Education in Alaska."

YODEAN ARMOUR, President
Alaska Association of School Business Officials
Klawock, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented a PowerPoint, titled "State of PK-12 Education in Alaska."

ANDY RATLIFF, Past-President
Alaska Association of School Business Officials
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented a PowerPoint, titled "State of PK-12 Education in Alaska."

DOUG GRAY, Professional Development Director
Alaska Staff Development Network
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented a PowerPoint, titled "State of PK-12 Education in Alaska."

SAM JORDAN, Grant Director
Alaska Council of School Administrators
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented a PowerPoint, titled "State of PK-12 Education in Alaska."

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:00:52 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR JAMIE ALLARD called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. Representatives Prax, McKay, Himschoot, Allard, and Ruffridge were present at the call

to order. Representatives McCormick and Story arrived as the meeting was in progress. Also present was Representative Ortiz.

PRESENTATION(S) : STATE OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS

8:01:34 AM

CO-CHAIR ALLARD announced that the only order of business would be the State of School Districts presentation.

8:02:17 AM

LISA PARADY, Executive Director, Alaska Council of School Administrators, began the PowerPoint presentation, titled "State of PK-12 Education in Alaska [hard copy included in committee packet]. She provided a brief background of the Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA) and provided information on leaders who would join the discussion. She explained there are 54 school districts in Alaska, and most are represented here in Juneau this week; however, she said she saw this as one state and the ACSA advocates for all students. She informed committee members that in their packets, they have the joint position statements, which would be cross-referenced throughout the presentation.

8:05:56 AM

BRIDGET WEISS, Superintendent/President, Juneau School District, provided a brief background, and proceeded to slide 7, titled "Leadership, Unity, and Advocacy for Public Education," which showed the Alaska Superintendents Association 2022-2023 Board of Directors. She moved to slide 8, titled "Priority Funding for Public Education," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

The State of Alaska must provide timely, reliable, and predictable revenue for schools, funding the actual cost of education in all districts and providing full and equitable funding for all initiatives, laws, and mandates that require additional resources. Early notification of funding and predictable funding are crucial to sound financial management, as well as recruitment and retention of quality educators.

Policymakers must recognize that continued flat funding coupled with historic 40 year high inflation creates a loss of purchasing power that schools cannot

sustain while keeping achievement high and meeting legislative requirements.

MS. WEISS continued to slide 9, titled "Flat Funded BSA vs. Inflation," which showed a pencil chart with Alaska K-12 funding, BSA fiscal year 2012-2023.

[8:08:13 AM](#)

MS. WEISS moved on to slide 10, titled "Education is Accountable," and briefly summarized the following layers of accountability, shown on the slide as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Special Education Audits
- State Monitoring of Federal Programs
- DEED Report Card Shared with the Public
- Other Alaska Student ID System (OASIS) Reporting
- Attendance and Achievement Data for Indian Education Grants
- Program Audits

MS. WEISS added that another form of accountability is the financial reporting done each year with the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED). She continued to slide 11, titled "District Expenditures: District Administration," which showed the "big five" districts in the state and what percentage of funding goes to district administration. She said there would be further discussion on this. She moved to slide 12, titled "Educator Turnover," which showed pictures of superintendents and those no longer in their positions. She stressed the instability that results in this turnover. She continued to slide 13, titled "New Superintendent Induction and Support Program," which is a new cohort, she explained. The program provides profession learning and mentorship to new superintendents in the state for two years. She opined this strategy, along with adequate funding, would slow leadership turnover.

[8:10:56 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE circled back to slide 12, which showed superintendents, and asked whether they went somewhere else within the state.

MS. WEISS affirmed that was true.

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE asked how many superintendents on the slide had to be brought in for the position versus moving into a different position within the district.

MS. PARADY estimated about half and half. Since 2014, she said, there have been almost full turnovers.

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE observed municipality positions lasting only four to five years and asked whether it was similar in the superintendent field.

Ms. PARADY replied that it had become similar. She added that the positions used to be career positions, but it has become a short tenure.

[8:14:39 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD, considering the state has 54 school districts, questioned why the state should support such a large fiscal challenge with the huge turnover.

MS. WEISS acknowledged Co-Chair Allard's sentiments and pointed out that Alaska had far fewer districts than many other states. She emphasized the importance of taking in the context of Alaska and its communities where school districts are at the heart of these communities and provide support, as well as being the economic driver.

[8:17:10 AM](#)

MS. PARADY added that in addition to the local decision making and being responsive to respective cultures, and the fact schools are the largest employer in most districts, in many different areas throughout the state there are unique sets of issues. In reference to cost savings, a study on district consolidation had been done, and she encouraged the committee to look into it.

[8:18:59 AM](#)

MS. WEISS continued on slide 15, titled "What our schools could look like...." She explained that as educational leaders, they ponder the challenges of what is and what could be. She added that many students are excelling despite the challenges of the past few years.

[8:20:56 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCKAY reflected on Ms. Weiss stating that state aid is not timely, and he pointed out that there is no organization in the state budget that gets a more definite amount of money than the education system. The foundation formula allots how much money will be given; therefore, he said he did not understand how she could say it is not timely or reliable.

MS. WEISS commented that the Juneau School District (JSD) does not always know what the legislation is going to do for their budget. She said this year's plan is \$30 and JSD is facing a \$4.5 million deficit, so the district is having to make programmatic decisions based on a dollar amount that could change.

REPRESENTATIVE MCKAY suggested to Ms. Weiss to assume what the district is going to get is in the current equation and not base the budget on what may not happen.

[8:24:04 AM](#)

BRENDAN WILSON, President, Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals, joined the presentation and a short video was played. He proceeded to slide 18, titled "Alaska's Education Leaders," which showed the Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals 2022-2023 Board of Directors. He said being part of the group was an honor for him, and on the group's behalf, he asked the committee to make this session about education. He continued to slides 19 and 20, titled "Preparing, Attracting and Retaining Qualified Educators." He stressed staffing shortages were one of the biggest challenges in recruiting and retention. Salary and especially benefits, he said, was a big factor due to a loss of a solid retirement system.

[8:28:26 AM](#)

MR. WILSON moved to slides 21 and 22, titled "School Safety." He stated that safety is directly impacted by the base student

allocation (BSA), but he is not asking the legislature to pass any legislation about school safety because safety in school is provided by a supportive environment; therefore, safety is directly impacted by the BSA in that regard. He stated he liked slide 22, as it provided student voice. He related that there are educators in the room who have dealt with serious school safety issues. He then related a story about a student and her artwork.

[8:31:13 AM](#)

MR. WILSON quickly moved through slides 24 to 26 that encompassed the work being done for the statewide mentoring program for principals called the Alaska School Leadership Academy.

[8:32:18 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD asked what the reason was that test scores have gone down in every subject.

MR. WILSON responded that the COVID-19 pandemic created situations where data is not reliable the last few years.

CO-CHAIR ALLARD asked Mr. Wilson if he was saying that prior to the pandemic, test scores and students were where they should be.

MR. WILSON replied that he is not expressing that, but it is something that is always being worked on.

[8:34:06 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE asked Mr. Wilson his opinion on vaping in schools and a bill last session that would have increased the age of purchasing tobacco products to 21.

MR. WILSON replied that he thought it would be a symbolic gesture to show that the state is aware and concerned about it. One of the challenges with vape pens is that they are hard to see and detect, he said.

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE referred to page 6 in the position statements and the slides on the subject of attractive pay for teachers, and he asked Mr. Wilson how Alaska compared with starting teacher salaries in Washington, Oregon, and California.

MR. WILSON replied he did not have the numbers, but they could be provided at a later date. He added that Alaska used to rank much higher in terms of pay but is now falling behind.

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE asked what the barrier is regarding raising the starting wages.

MR. WILSON replied that the finance people speaking next could give a more detailed answer. In short, he said, it is the budget crisis districts are facing across the country, operating on 2016 dollars.

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE stated that if the BSA were raised, it would be the intention to raise the amount of starting salary for teachers.

MR. WILSON responded, "We are going to have to."

[8:38:22 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD commented that the Anchorage School District (ASD) was at a \$68 million deficit two years ago but continued to spend money.

MR. WILSON said one example of what schools might look like is what is being considered in Anchorage, as well as to reimagine what it means to be a secondary school student, and to partner with local businesses and universities.

CO-CHAIR ALLARD asked how many students left Begich [Middle School].

MR. WILSON replied that it shrunk by about 100 kids. He added that fewer kids equate to fewer teachers.

CO-CHAIR ALLARD asked if the school let the teachers go.

MR. WILSON said they did not have to "pink slip" employees.

CO-CHAIR ALLARD asked if the significance of a position was a factor in cuts.

MR. WILSON said the reduction in Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) affects the whole building.

[8:42:32 AM](#)

JOSH GILL, Principal, Ayaprun Elitnaurvik Elementary School, provided an introduction shown on slide 28.

[8:43:27 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX commented on an effort to increase broadband coverage and asked whether that would be advantageous for the school district.

MR. GILL responded that would be addressed on the following slides. He proceeded to slide 29, titled "Alaska Association of Elementary School Principals," which showed the executive board with statewide representation. He continued to slide 30, titled "Early Childhood Education," where he stressed that teaching reading was very difficult, and preschool would be an option to help with that.

[8:45:20 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD asked Mr. Gill if he had scientific data that confirmed being in preschool helped a student by the time they entered the third grade.

MR. GILL said he would get the data but did not currently have it. He moved to slide 31, titled "Early Childhood Education." He explained the chart on the left showed a long-term risk factor due to lack of quality early childhood programs. He added there are many challenges kids have before they even reach school that may impact their outcome. The graph on the right, he said, showed that early childhood programs could have a monetary value on communities in the long term. He continued on slide 32, titled "Social, Emotional and Mental Health," and he reiterated the need for additional training, funding, and staffing in order to meet all student needs. He proceeded to slides 34 and 35, titled "Increasing Bandwidth in Underserved Areas." He explained that the graph on slide 35 showed national data during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Alaska, he said, some areas have a major bandwidth issue, which can also affect educators.

[8:49:37 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX said there was a considerable amount of federal money coming down the pike that has not been figured out how to be spent. Assuming it gets implemented, he asked Mr. Gill whether that may enable some relief from the problem caused by lack of teachers and high student:teacher ratio.

MR. GILL gave an example of a time in 2007 when he had 35 kids K-12, and he was not able to provide highly qualified teachers for every subject, especially math. He said broadband would make things more powerful because it could connect students from community to community for collaboration.

[8:51:41 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX brought up floppy discs and said that using them at home helped his sons catch on to certain programs. He asked if anything similar is being offered at homes or in districts.

MR. GILL explained families do not have the Internet, computers, or books at home.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX pointed out the lack of parental involvement in responsibility, and he expressed concern about not making significant improvements until that problem is addressed.

MR. GILL pointed out that public schools do not have the luxury of choosing who and what they deal with. Each child is accepted no matter what their background is, and they are given the best education possible. He gave examples of the hardships parents face just to provide for their children.

[8:53:43 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked whether it was common for a school center to provide Internet to use off-hours and not just for academics.

MR. GILL replied that often, schools and staff act beyond teaching kids. He added that he proctors general education development (GED) courses, helps people file taxes, and as the hub of all the rural communities in the area, provides Internet access and consulting.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT requested to hear from Ms. Parady.

MS. PARADY referred to the "Federal Infrastructure Act," which has brought tremendous resources in terms of bandwidth and connectivity to the state. She shared that the legislature had supported education by raising broadband to 25 megabits per second from 10 megabits per second and now connectivity can be built out.

[8:57:48 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE acknowledged the dedication and passion to schools in rural Alaska and sought to hear more about the social and emotional health of kids.

MR. GILL replied that the Lower Kuskokwim School District (LKSD) is a unique place to live. He related the hardships kids are experiencing and how badly they [the school system] need the help.

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE asked Mr. Gill for his estimation of what the professional need is and how many staff it would take.

MR. GILL stated he ultimately wanted to prepare kids to read and write. In addition, he said professionals who can deal with social-emotional issues are needed. In response to a follow-up question, he said he would need to double his staff. He further noted that the need for professionals is not just a rural problem.

[9:03:34 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX questioned if the strategy is to write off adults, focus on the children outside the family, and "write off a generation."

MR. GILL responded that he would give up on no child, especially one that does not have the support at home. He said his job is to advocate for those who cannot vote and children who have needs.

[9:05:30 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX stated he got the "cold question" of who will be written off to help someone else.

[9:06:19 AM](#)

[A video was shown with a Bartlett High School graduate, featured on slide 36].

[9:07:44 AM](#)

YODEAN ARMOUR, President, Alaska Association of School Business Officials, provided an introduction while slide 38, titled "Alaska Association of School Business Officials," was shown.

[9:08:08 AM](#)

ANDY RATLIFF, Past-President, Alaska Association of School Business Officials, provided a brief personal and professional introduction.

[9:08:39 AM](#)

MS. ARMOUR continued to slide 39, titled "Priority Funding for Public Education." She stressed the importance of predictable and inflation proof funding to ensure schools can continue to use COVID-19 relief funds to address the academic and social-emotional needs that are present. She proceeded to slide 40, titled "Education Funding Overview," which showed the combined 54 district budgets and demonstrated instructional and non-instructional expenditures.

[9:09:41 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT referred to the end of COVID-19 relief funding and "the fiscal cliff" and sought understanding of the timelines and when the district budget is due to the municipal assembly or council.

MS. ARMOUR replied that for Klawock, the deadline was July 15th. She added the district is currently working on next school year's budget.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked when the Anchorage budget is due.

MR. RATLIFF replied it was recently passed by the board, and the assembly will approve it in March.

[9:11:30 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 9:11 a.m. to 9:13 a.m.

[9:13:47 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked Mr. Ratliff whether programs would need to be cut and then later reinstated after the budget is submitted.

[9:14:23 AM](#)

MR. RATLIFF explained that if additional state funding is received, it would go through the same process as developing the budget where the superintendent and board have a say in what is added back. He added it is dependent on how the money comes back, such as whether it is one-time funding.

[9:15:24 AM](#)

MR. RATLIFF continued to slide 41, titled "Instructional (Functions 100-400) = 74%." He summarized each of the points on the slide, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Instruction
- Special Education Instruction
- Special Education Support
- Support Services - Student
- Support Services - Instruction
- School Administration (Principals)

MR. RATLIFF moved to slide 42, titled "Non-Instructional (Functions 450-780)=26%", which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- School Admin Support
- District Administration
- District Admin Support
- Operations & Maintenance
- Student Activities
- Community Services

[9:18:41 AM](#)

MR. RATLIFF proceeded to slide 43, titled "Transportation Funding," which he described as another joint position

statement, and pointed out that transportation had not been adjusted since 2016.

[9:20:09 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE asked Mr. Ratliff about the budget for ASD and whether it was taken from general funds, and if so, how much.

MR. RATLIFF replied not this year or next year; however, the district received tax levies from the assembly to be able to support transportation.

CO-CHAIR ALLARD asked Mr. Ratliff if COVID-19 relief funds were used for transportation costs.

MR. RATLIFF said a small slice for recruitment and retention was used, but not for ongoing contracted costs.

CO-CHAIR ALLARD sought clarification whether COVID-19 relief funds were used for bonuses or wages.

MR. RATLIFF affirmed the full-time equivalent (FTE) was paid for, but there were no bonuses using COVID-19 relief funds.

[9:22:20 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCKAY noted a document he handed out to the committee that could also be found on the ASD dashboard regarding COVID-19 monies. He quoted that 62 percent was spent on salary and benefits. He asked whether Mr. Ratliff was cautioned by the federal government that that should not be done.

MR. RATLIFF explained that about 480 teachers were hired. In response to a follow up question, he said it was DEED's guidance to try to not use that money.

[9:24:01 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCKAY pointed out that the legislature fully funded education, and he noted that he paid his property taxes fully throughout the pandemic. He observed that Mr. Ratliff had tax money to handle and used COVID-19 money on top of that. Now, he said, there is the big push to increase the BSA to cover these recurring expenses.

MR. RATLIFF replied when the state fully funds education, it does not account for inflation. He added that the state has to pay staff and increases, and when there is no additional revenue, shift into COVID-19 monies.

[9:25:59 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD pointed out there was \$68 million in deficit, and questioned acquiring more.

MR. RATLIFF said the funding had not changed since 2017. He reiterated that the deficit just keeps growing without having the BSA reset.

[9:26:52 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked about the teachers' bargaining unit agreement and, in addition, what kind of increases they received over the years.

MR. RATLIFF replied there was a 3 percent increase the first year, a 1.5 percent overall increase the second year and then a 2 percent increase.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT inquired as to the level of inflation at the time of the 1.5 percent increase.

MR. RATLIFF said he would go back and look.

[9:28:21 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY referred to the third bullet under transportation funding [on slide 43] and sought further clarification where it stated that "transportation should be adjusted to match actual costs."

MR. RATLIFF said there was a per student amount in Anchorage which was fully reimbursable. The cost of transportation would be submitted to DEED to get paid. He said DEED have moved away from this due to more stable and predictable funding on the state side. He proceeded to the chart on slide 44, titled "Statewide Transportation Revenue and Expenditure History," which showed expenditures and revenue from fiscal year 2013 (FY 13) to FY 21. He said the chart displayed the experiences with transportation.

[9:31:10 AM](#)

MR. RATLIFF summarized slide 45, titled "Education is Accountable," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- DEED Approved Budgets Publicly Published
- Annual Financial Audits
- GEER/ESSER Reporting Requirements through DEED for COVID Expenditures
- TRS/PRS Audits
- Title I comparability reporting
- Program Audits

[9:32:01 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCKAY sought clarity on a previous comment about the state approving COVID-19 expenditures.

MR. RATLIFF replied that the state is aware of expenditures that are submitted and what money is being spent on. He confirmed that DEED approved the expenditures shown on their COVID-19 dashboard.

[9:32:41 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked whether federal law prohibited the use of those funds.

MR. RATLIFF replied it was DEED's recommendation; however, federal law allowed them to use the money for salaries.

[9:33:16 AM](#)

MS. ARMOUR rejoined the presentation on slide 46, titled "What our schools could look like...." She said as business officials, the association must rely on timely, predictable, and inflation proof funding so it can issue contracts to staff and continue to be good stewards of public dollars.

CO-CHAIR ALLARD commented about hiring more teachers during the pandemic and expressed concern about educators who did not show

up online. She asked how spending more money is justified being that educators were not present.

MR. RATLIFF explained they did not hire more teachers but kept the staff they had. It was the funding source that changed, he said.

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE asked what the total yearly budget for ASD was.

MR. RATLIFF replied it was \$850 million including all funding sources.

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE asked how much of the COVID-19 funds of \$180 million had been expended.

MR. RATLIFF replied \$20 million was expected to remain by the end of the year.

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE asked how many fiscal years COVID-19 relief funds have been used.

MR. RATLIFF replied the first allocation was received in March 2020 and has been used through FY 24.

[9:36:31 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD asked whether other areas to cut back on were considered.

MR. RATLIFF responded that the plan is for the \$20 million to support teachers.

[9:37:20 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE asked whether it was an accurate statement that COVID-19 funds accounted for about 7 percent of all school district funding over the last three fiscal years.

MR. RATLIFF replied he could get the exact numbers for Co-Chair Ruffridge.

[9:38:37 AM](#)

DOUG GRAY, Professional Development Director, Alaska Staff Development Network, joined the presentation on slide 47 with his introduction. He moved to slide 48, titled "Alaska's

Statewide Resource for Professional Development," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Our Mission: To provide Alaskan educators with multiple pathways to refine instructional practice and maintain certification.

Annually we:

- Host over 5,000 overall professional learning registrations
- Serve over 2,000 with online classes. We Offer 70 self-paced, high-quality professional development courses.
- Offer 8 webinar series with national education experts that serve over 700 Alaskan educators
- Host the largest K-12 professional development conference in Alaska with 1 in 10 Alaskan educators in attendance

[9:40:24 AM](#)

MR. GRAY continued to slide 49, titled "Alaskan Education Conferences," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Annual RTI / MTSS Effective Instruction Conference

- Served over 1,000 Alaskan educators from 44 districts in 2023
- Largest statewide PK-12 Conference in Alaska
- Cost savings for districts to stay in-state

MR. GRAY added that the highlight of the conferences were to hear the research that had been conducted in the Lower 48 with national presenters and speakers, which he said was a great opportunity.

[9:41:49 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE referred to the professional development resources and asked how many are attached to The Science of Reading or The Alaska Reads Act implementation.

MR. GRAY replied that the Alaska Staff Development Network offered a Science of Reading webinar to presenters who were highly skilled in the Alaska Reads Act and will offer it again.

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE asked what the feedback on the webinars and exit poll were.

MR. GRAY replied it was about 90 percent positive.

[9:44:08 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked whether a credit was given for classes so that teachers meet the requirements in the Alaska Reads Act. In addition, she inquired about a fee.

MR. GRAY stated that most are tied to a credit whenever it can be done. In response to a follow up question, he replied that it is dependent on what pay system is used, but one credit is \$75.

[9:45:18 AM](#)

SAM JORDAN, Grant Director, Alaska Council of School Administrators, joined on slide 50 with his introduction, and moved on to slide 51, titled "ASCA District Partnerships," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Federal and State grants portfolio
- Help school districts extend their ability to provide professional learning and instructional opportunities
- Examples of innovative projects:
 - Performance-Based compensation models
 - Support for National Superintendent Certification cohort
 - Support for National Board Certification cohort
 - College and career preparation for rural students/families
 - Indigenous language assessment
 - Computer science instruction in rural and correspondence schools

[9:48:47 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE requested more information about the performance-based compensation models.

MR. JORDAN explained that the U.S. Department of Education has grant programs that focus on innovative ideas such as performance-based compensation models. He added that financial incentives would be provided to educators to "up their game" and

work on professional development. It is a three-year grant, he said.

CO-CHAIR RUFFRIDGE asked what the performance metrics are.

MR. JORDAN replied that it differs and there is a lot of choice involved from a district perspective. It depends on what values the districts wish to incentivize, he said.

[9:50:56 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD commented that the committee is in their favor, and she offered her support to move the state forward. She acknowledged the current fiscal "dire straits" in the state, and that the committee must address the hard questions and issues.

[9:52:18 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked how funds are targeted to do what is in the Alaska Reads Act, referring to the \$30 funding from last year.

MS. WEISS replied that the \$30 equates to about \$250,000 for JDS. She added that for a number of years, the priority and part of the strategic plan had been around reading. She explained that JDS attempted to use some of its Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds to lower PTR which means lowering class sizes while trying to compensate for the \$4.5 million deficit.

[9:55:24 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCKAY asked how many principals there were in Alaska.

MS. PARADY replied 419.

REPRESENTATIVE MCKAY asked what happened with bus drivers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

MR. RATLIFF confirmed that bus drivers did not lose their employment.

[9:57:01 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX inquired about the future promotion of reading and if what is currently being done is enhancing

reading. In addition, he asked if there would be additional expense involved.

MS. WEISS responded that there is a need to do supplemental work regarding the Alaska Reads Act. In response to a follow up question, she related that JSD has trimmed away things it can get by without.

[9:58:42 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked Ms. Weiss which programs might be cut when the budget is submitted to the assembly. She also inquired what programs might be reinstated if the legislature produced an increase.

[9:59:56 AM](#)

MS. WEISS replied that when staffing force must be reduced, and later the district receives funds, the pools are gone, which makes it difficult to fill positions.

[10:00:50 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD entertained comments from the committee.

[10:11:12 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 10:11 a.m.