

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

March 15, 2023

8:32 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

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

SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Senator Löki Tobin, Chair
Senator Gary Stevens, Vice Chair
Senator Jesse Bjorkman
Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson

MEMBERS ABSENT

HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

All members present

SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Senator Jesse Kiehl

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION: ALASKA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE.

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

JAMES FIELDS, Chair
State Board of Education
Glennallen, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented the State Board of Education Report to the Legislature.

SANDRA KOWALSKI, Member
Board of Education
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented the State Board of Education Report to the Legislature.

BOB GRIFFIN, Member
State Board of Education
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented the State Board of Education Report to the Legislature.

SALLY STOCKHAUSEN, Second Vice-Chair
State Board of Education
Ketchikan, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented the State Board of Education Report to the Legislature.

LORRI VAN DIEST, Member
State Board of Education
Palmer, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented the State Board of Education Report to the Legislature.

DR. KEITH HAMILTON, Member
State Board of Education
Soldotna, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented the State Board of Education Report to the Legislature.

FELIX MYERS, Student Advisor-Elect
State Board of Education
Sitka, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided commentary about the board report.

MAGGIE COTHRON, Student Advisor
State Board of Education
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided commentary about the board report.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:32:53 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR JAMIE ALLARD called the joint meeting of the House and Senate Education Standing Committees to order at 8:32 a.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Stevens, Bjorkman, Gray-Jackson, Chair Tobin; and Representatives Prax, McCormick, McKay, Himschoot, Story, and Co-Chairs Allard and Ruffridge.

PRESENTATION(S): Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development

[8:33:48 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD announced the consideration of the State Board of Education Report to the Legislature.

[8:34:05 AM](#)

At ease

[8:34:44 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD reconvened the meeting.

JAMES FIELDS, Chair, State Board of Education, Glennallen, Alaska, provided the 2022 Annual State Board of Education Report to the Legislature. He presented the annual abbreviated report. He hoped to give the committee ample time to interact with the board members during the joint meeting.

[8:36:07 AM](#)

MR. FIELDS asked the state board members to introduce themselves for the record.

[8:36:32 AM](#)

KEITH HAMILTON, Member, State Board of Education, Soldotna, Alaska, introduced himself.

MAGGIE COTHON, Student Advisor, State Board of Education, Anchorage, Alaska, introduced herself.

FELIX MYERS, Student Advisor-Elect, State Board of Education, Sitka, Alaska, introduced himself.

[8:36:52 AM](#)

BOB GRIFFIN, Member, State Board of Education, Anchorage, Alaska, introduced himself.

[8:37:01 AM](#)

LTC JAMES FOWLEY, Military Advisor, Member, State Board of Education, Eagle River, Alaska, introduced himself.

JEFFREY ERICKSON, Member, State Board of Education, Unalakleet, Alaska, introduced himself.

[8:37:13 AM](#)

LORRI VAND DIEST, Member, State Board of Education, Palmer, Alaska, introduced herself.

[8:37:25 AM](#)

SALLY STOCKHAUSEN, Second Vice-Chair, State Board of Education. Ketchikan, Alaska introduced herself.

[8:37:35 AM](#)

MR. FIELDS affirmed that he is the Regional Educational Attendance Area (REAA) representative, serving his tenth year on the State Board of Education. He began his presentation titled, "State Board of Education Report to the Legislature" with slide 3, "Mission, Vision and Purpose."

Mission

An excellent education for every student every day.

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

Purpose

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

[8:38:16 AM](#)

MR. FIELDS moved to slide 4, "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.

[8:38:49 AM](#)

MR. FIELDS continued with slide 5, "Board Action Highlights."

- COVID-19 Relief Funding: Supporting Efficacy & Transparency
- Reading: Strategic Support and Implementing the Alaska Reads Act - House Bill 114 (Chapter 40, SLA 22)
 - Academic Support Team
 - Alaska Science of Reading Symposium
 - Strategic Reading Plan
- Advancing Tribal Compacting and Culturally Relevant Education
- Improving Teacher Retention and Recruitment

[8:39:12 AM](#)

MR. FIELDS moved to slide 6, "Other Department Functions."

- Mt. Edgecumbe High School (MEHS)
- Alaska State Council on the Arts (ASCA)
- Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums (LAM)
- Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC)

[8:40:29 AM](#)

MR. FIELDS continued with slide 7, "School and Student Data."

- Graduation and Dropout Rates
- National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

[8:41:04 AM](#)

MR. FIELDS moved to the committee reports, which comprise the bulk of the presentation.

CO-CHAIR ALLARD asked committee members if they had questions.

[8:41:35 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY appreciated Mr. Fields' decade of commitment to the Alaska State Board of Education. She asked

about school and student data. She understood that the new Every Child Succeeds Act would influence growth rates for the students.

MR. FIELDS replied that the board was using a new assessment tool for growth rates. The board was currently using two distinct types of assessments, so the data was not yet available.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked if the board would have two years of data in next year's report.

MR. FIELDS assumed that would be the case.

[8:42:21 AM](#)

SANDRA KOWALSKI, member, Board of Education, Fairbanks, Alaska, provided an update on tribal compacting. She referred to slide 9, "Tribal Compacting Committee Mission and Goals."

- **Mission Statement**
 - Support tribal compacting by identifying and developing regulations that support the efforts of tribes throughout Alaska
- **Goals**
 - On-going - Continued learning; Identify barriers
 - This Year - Develop additional teacher pathway
 - Mid-Range - Identify what supports look like for Tribes, districts, and DEED
 - Long-Term
 - Identify areas that need further development
 - Develop regulations with input from Tribes
 - Explore oversight and reporting (i.e., regional individuality, learn from Health System compacting in Alaska)

MS. KOWLASKI explained that tribal compacting does not currently exist in Alaska's education system. She noted that tribal compacting does exist in other states. She explained that the Tribal Compacting Committee focused on learning and identifying barriers to tribal compacting and working on methods to address the barriers. She affirmed that the state has vehicles to offer choice around schools. She spoke to the ability of tribes to create support and sustain school systems.

[8:47:21 AM](#)

MS. KOWLASKI moved to slide 10, "Tribal Compacting." She highlighted the passage of SB 34, which required an open application period for tribes. The tribes can submit applications to engage in a period of learning and barrier identification. She explained that SB 34 initiated the ability for the state board to submit a request for applications from tribes. She divulged that five tribes applied to join the negotiations related to the tribal compacting process.

MS. KOWLASKI mentioned the upcoming March board meeting to consider the five tribal entity applications for approval. An application from the Ketchikan tribe was under review. She mentioned another application from a consortium of tribes. She added that the tribes will meet with the department and board to conduct negotiations. The groups will also consult with school districts and unions throughout the process as required by SB 34. The Tribal Compacting Committee sought to provide a legislative report in January 2024 related to the process outcomes.

MS. KOWLASKI affirmed that the department works to understand tribal compacting. She highlighted listening sessions conducted statewide by Mr. Joel Isaak, a project coordinator from the department. The listening sessions engage and teach about the tribes' vision for education. She highlighted the Tribal Compacting Committee's interest in teacher pathways that support tribally operated schools. Goals include ensuring that teachers have solid pathways to provide classroom instruction and to retain teachers and meet the needs of the students.

[8:52:29 AM](#)

MS. KOWLASKI shared the names of the five tribal entities who submitted applications in December. The first was the Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope (ICAS). The second application was from the Solomon and King Island tribes, who applied together. The third application was submitted by the Tlingit and Haida tribes. The committee hoped to receive a diversity of applications from tribes across the state.

[8:55:16 AM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN praised the Tribal Compacting Committee for receiving five applications. She understood that the university collaborates with the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative and the Alaska Native Knowledge Network. She asked about collaboration between the Tribal Compacting Committee and the other entities.

MS. KOWLASKI replied that one state school board committee had consistent representation from the university. The university was seeking the state board's perspective about teacher pathways and preparations. She noted that the Tribal Compacting Committee has not engaged with the university yet. She stated that the teacher pathway preparations held priority. She acknowledged the existence of resources and programs that might prove valuable to the effort.

[8:56:54 AM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN promoted the university program that she and Mr. Joel Isaak attend.

[8:57:03 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT only heard four of the five entities who provided applications.

MS. KOWLASKI stated that the fifth application was received from the Knik Tribal Council.

[8:57:36 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS expressed pride in the State Board of Education. He expressed concern about the cost and assistance involved in tribal compacting. He assumed that school failure was the worst possible outcome. He stressed the importance of minding the details as the process unfolds. He looked forward to the report next January. He expressed initial trepidation about the cost of the program, but the Alaska Federation of Natives made a commitment to seek federal funding. He asked about federal assistance enabling the five applicants' success.

[8:58:48 AM](#)

MS. KOWALSKI respected Senator Stevens' concern about resources. She reported to the joint committee that the program was not yet accessing federal funding. She furthered that the department expertise must grow rapidly. The conversation has been active within state board meetings.

[9:00:15 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX wondered about interior region participation in tribal compacting.

[9:00:42 AM](#)

MS. KOWALSKI acknowledged that the committee did not receive applications from the interior region. She declared that tribes are interested in the outcome of the work, but not all tribes

have the capacity to apply. She added that the Knik tribe is part of the diverse Athabaskan family.

[9:01:56 AM](#)

MR. FIELDS commented on the diversity presented in the applications. He expressed that he was impressed with the quality of applications received.

[9:03:39 AM](#)

BOB GRIFFIN, Member, State Board of Education, Anchorage Alaska introduced himself. He explained that the Reading Committee was the top priority for the state board. He moved to slide 12, "Reading Committee Mission and Goals."

- **Mission Statement**
 - Support all student to read at grade level using evidence-based and culturally relevant practices
- **Goals**
 - Successful implementation of the Alaska Reads Act
 - Successful implementation of Alaska's Strategic Reading Plan

[9:05:23 AM](#)

At ease

[9:05:46 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD reconvened the meeting

[9:06:03 AM](#)

MR. GRIFFIN moved to a presentation titled, "Reading Committee Report" He began with slide 2, "Reasons to be Optimistic About Future Results."

2022 NAEP Results
Success of Other States
Alaska Advantages and Challenges for Improvement

[9:06:34 AM](#)

MR. GRIFFIN moved to slide 3, "2022 NAEP - Alaska One of the Lowest Covid Learning Loss States."

- Ranking Gains
- Low-Income 4th Grade Reading Only 1 Point Behind

- One of Only a Few States to See Some Small Gains

[9:07:38 AM](#)

MR. GRIFFIN moved to slide 4, "Better Trends." The slide detailed ranking improvements in NAEP from 2019. He noted improvement seen in five categories. He felt encouraged with the improvement.

[9:08:17 AM](#)

MR. GRIFFIN moved to slide 5, "Success in Other States Florida and Mississippi Passed Legislation Similar to Alaska Reads Act 2002 and 2014."

Mississippi #2 in the US in Low

- Income 4th Grade Reading
- Long-term Impact Beyond Early Literacy:
 - Both FL and MS - Significant Gains in 8th Grade and Math scores since 2003
 - 2020 Florida - 34% High School Graduates Passed at Least One AP Test With 3 or Higher
 - o 14% in Anchorage

[9:09:39 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD asked when Florida and Mississippi implemented their version of the reads act.

MR. GRIFFIN replied 2002 and 2014. He communicated that he had a slide later in the presentation detailing Florida and Mississippi.

[9:10:13 AM](#)

MR. GRIFFIN moved to slide 6, "Fourth Grade Reading Scores." The slide depicted a graph of National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth grade reading scores for low-income students. Low-income students were the focus of the slide because they have the greatest need for improvement. He highlighted Florida's progression, and the red arrow illustrates the year that Florida passed the equivalent of the Alaska Reads Act. The second red arrow illustrates the year that Mississippi passed their version of the Alaska Reads Act.

[9:11:29 AM](#)

MR. GRIFFIN moved to slide 7, "Fourth Grade Reading Scores." He pointed out that Oregon offered all students free and reduced lunch for 2022. He remarked that students in Florida,

Mississippi and Massachusetts outperformed all students in Oregon in fourth grade reading scores.

[9:11:58 AM](#)

MR. GRIFFIN moved to slide 8, "Florida and Mississippi Kids with Greatest Gains."

Low-Income Students
Minority Students
Students with Disabilities
Students with Limited English Proficiency

MR. GRIFFIN moved to slide 9, "Miami Dade Public Schools (MDPS).

- 55% Free or Reduced Lunch
- 59% English Not the Only Language at Home
- 94% Ethnic Minorities
- 90.1 % Graduation Rate
- MDPS Advanced Placement Success - 2021
 - 51,910 MDPS Juniors and Seniors
 - 32,602 AP Tests Passed 3 or Higher
- 4th Grade NAEP Reading Scores 6 Points Higher than Upper/Middle Income 4th Graders in Alaska

[9:13:24 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD referenced slide 9 and demographics. She asked if Alaska contained the greatest diversity in our school districts.

MR. GRIFFIN replied that future slides address her question.

[9:13:57 AM](#)

MR. GRIFFIN moved to slide 10 "2022 NAEP fourth grade reading." He detailed the graph that illustrated low versus upper/middle income fourth grade reading scores. He pointed out the Miami Dade public school scores inserted into the upper/middle income graph. The school scored six points higher than children in Alaska who do not qualify for free or reduced lunch.

[9:14:39 AM](#)

MR. GRIFFIN moved to slide 11, "2021 K12 Spending per Student in Average Daily Attendance, Adjusted for Price Parity." He described the two charts and stated that Alaska was highlighted with the red bar indicating Alaska's relative cost of living. He explained that the chart on the right was adjusted for the cost of living in Alaska.

[9:15:51 AM](#)

MR. GRIFFIN moved to slide 12, "One Bedroom Apartment Rents." He shared that Florida had seven cities in the top one hundred and only one state had apartment rents lower than Anchorage.

[9:16:18 AM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN understood that Alaska has 54 school districts with local control. She asked how many school districts Mississippi had. She asked if Florida and Mississippi had the same constitutional provisions around local control, specifically key control spending. Alaska offers a diverse set of programs to allow the school districts local control.

MR. GRIFFIN replied that the diversity of programs in Mississippi and Florida are comparable if not greater than what we have available in Alaska.

CHAIR TOBIN opined that education systems are unique. She was accustomed to seeing comparisons between Alaska and Hawaii and with the size of Alaska, the comparison is not accurate.

[9:17:52 AM](#)

MR. GRIFFIN moved to slide 13, "K-12 Spending Increase 2004-2022." He stated that Alaska funding has been flat. The per student funding on K-12 education is hovering near the national average. He pointed out that Florida and Mississippi did not have the advantage of funding increases to improve their reading scores.

[9:18:42 AM](#)

MR. GRIFFIN continued with slide 14, "Free or Reduced Lunch Rates." He noted that Alaska is one of the lower poverty rate states and Florida and Mississippi have much greater rates of students eating free or reduced lunch.

[9:19:06 AM](#)

MR. GRIFFIN moved to slide 15, "People of Color by State." He celebrated the state's diversity as the father of two mixed-race children. He spoke to the idea that the percentage of people of color in Alaska present a significantly greater challenge. He noted that Florida and Mississippi have a substantially larger percentage of people of color.

[9:20:07 AM](#)

MR. GRIFFIN moved to slide 16, "Students of Color by State" He furthered that the percentage of students of color is greater

than the overall population. He pointed out the melting pot effect that happens as fewer people self-identify as one particular race.

[9:20:30 AM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN asked about languages. She stated that she does not believe that a person's self-identity determines education outcomes. She wondered how education was impacted for people who were not English language learners. She asked to see the language statistics comparisons.

[9:20:59 AM](#)

MR. GRIFFIN moved to slide 17, "Rural Alaska Leading Performance- 14 Highest Performing Districts." He countered the idea that rural Alaska drags down Alaska's test scores. The slide depicted the top 14 ranked school districts in the state, and each was a rural district. He recalled comments attributing poverty rates to lower test scores, however variations in the graph complicate the theory and question the correlation.

[9:22:01 AM](#)

MR. GRIFFIN moved to slide 18, "Anchorage Poverty/Diversity."

- 71st Largest US City
 - 147th in Overall Diversity
 - 182nd in Language Diversity
- Of the 100 Largest US Cities:
 - Anchorage - 9th Lowest Poverty Rate
 - Miami - 16th Highest Poverty Rate

[9:22:54 AM](#)

MR. GRIFFIN moved to slide 19, "Anchorage vs. United States." He detailed the pie chart comparison showing results of research done in 2015. The charts depict the proportions of ethnic minorities in the Anchorage area. He explained that the charts depict an equal distribution of ethnic minorities.

[9:23:34 AM](#)

MR. GRIFFIN moved to slide 20, "Alaska Reads Act Challenges."

- Cultural Sensitivity
 - Attentive to Parents and Communities Desires and Choices
 - Four Native Language Families, 20+ Language, 231 Tribes
 - Tribal Compacting Long-term Mitigation
- Poor Resource Allocation

- o Robbing Resources from Classroom Operations
- Huge Gender Gap
 - o Girls do much better in Alaska

[9:25:14 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD noted the time.

[9:25:27 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT assumed that schools would feed hungry children despite the fact that not every family applies for free or reduced lunch. She wondered where the upper/middle income data came from. She understood that low income data was categorized when families registered for food assistance, but she wondered about data from upper/middle income students.

MR. GRIFFIN replied that the upper/middle income data are calculated for students who do not qualify for free or reduced lunch.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT questioned the assumption that a student was classified as upper/middle income because they did not register for free or reduced lunch.

MR. GRIFFIN confirmed the assumption that a student was classified as upper/middle income because they did not participate in a free or reduced lunch program.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked about the data related to Mississippi and Florida. She asked how the two states funded their reading act laws in 2002 and 2014.

MR. GRIFFIN requested clarification about the funding question.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT clarified her question. She asked if Mississippi and Florida funded laws passed in 2002 and 2014 through their states' general operating budgets.

MR. GRIFFIN assumed that the laws passed in Mississippi and Florida were funded by the individual states' general funds.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked about English Language Learners (ELL). She noted that a child fluent in one language can quickly become fluent in another language. Fluency in two languages becomes a strength.

MR. GRIFFIN agreed with the statement.

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT stated that a child growing up with an absence of their first language in school does not do well with the second language. She provided an example of a child whose heritage language is not an academic language. She asked about the ELL populations in Alaska. She spoke specifically about Native people who lost their first language. She explained that the academic use of a language is different from the social. She asked how many ELLs in Alaska are Native Alaskan.

[9:29:18 AM](#)

MR. GRIFFIN expressed broad agreement about the premise. He offered to research the subject thoroughly.

[9:29:36 AM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN asked about the data presented today. He wondered the state board or department requested the data as they were presented today.

MR. GRIFFIN replied that the data were not collected at the request of any one person. He explained to the joint committee that the information presented was simply information he chose to highlight. He expressed familiarity with the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) analysis. He opined that the state depends on ISER for many important reasons, but he opined that the ISER analysis lacked crucial information. He stated that his analysis provided data from the National Education Association who performed the analysis without a vested interest in framing Alaska in either positive or negative light. He trusted that the resource and the data presented were accurate.

[9:31:23 AM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN clarified that Mr. Griffin presented information this morning with the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development logo on it. He posited that Mr. Griffin's independent analysis was offered through his own personal lens. He asked if his assumption was correct.

MR. GRIFFIN confirmed the assumption.

[9:31:50 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked about the difference between people of color who are immigrants and those who are Indigenous learners. She recalled analysis of South Dakota and Oklahoma and other states with primarily Indigenous groups. She spoke about the value of investing in early learning. She highlighted the growth rate of Oklahoma's indigenous population compared to other states.

MR. GRIFFIN agreed with Representative Story's premise.

[9:33:25 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD thanked Mr. Griffin for the good and accurate information.

MR. FIELDS introduced the Effective Educators Committee.

[9:34:02 AM](#)

SALLY STOCKHAUSEN, Second Vice-Chair, State Board of Education, Ketchikan, Alaska, continued the original presentation, "State Board of Education Report to the Legislature." with slide 15, "Effective Educators Committee Mission and Goals."

- Mission Statement
- 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
- Goals
- Identify and Remove Barriers
- Investigate and Facilitate Paraprofessional Pathways
- Investigate and Facilitate Alternative Certification Pathways

[9:35:56 AM](#)

MS. STOCKHAUSEN moved to slide 16, "Effective Educators." She stated that the committee heard from the Education Commission of the States and their research group. She cited the area of paraprofessional pathways data showing that 23 states had established financial pathways. The pathways aid paraprofessionals to complete their bachelor's degree. She mentioned another presentation from the Education Commission of the States discussing teacher residencies. She acknowledged that the state offered similar opportunities on a small scale.

MS. STOCKHAUSEN continued that the university system works to remove barriers by allocating funding to tuition and living expenses for students while providing distance learning opportunities for paraprofessionals. Some districts have pathways for students to begin working on their degrees when they begin the work. She stated that other districts have scholarships and reimbursement programs as paraprofessionals further their education. Some districts partner with out-of-

state colleges to support paraprofessionals as they work toward their degrees.

MS. STOCKHAUSEN furthered that the committee supports a statewide apprenticeship program accessible to everyone. The goal is to create a competency based program. The committee envisions a program that complies with existing statutes and regulations and incorporates best practice for creating quality teachers. She clarified that the committees intention was to initiate changes slowly and wisely. The apprenticeship program would train paraprofessionals to be optimal teachers.

[9:39:04 AM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN understood that Alaska employs approximately 1000 paraprofessionals in the school districts. She wondered if the number was accurate today.

MS. STOCKHAUSEN stated that she would seek the accurate number of paraprofessionals and report back to the committee.

CHAIR TOBIN wondered about a potential pathway for reading teachers. She affirmed that districts require high quality, culturally relevant, locally influenced reading teachers. She wondered about providing a pathway for paraprofessionals to teach reading.

MS. STOCKHAUSEN stated that the committee expressed a similar goal. She shared a story from her time collaborating with a team of paraprofessionals in the Copper River School District. At the time, she was a certified teacher and often found herself seeking advice about reading education from the group of trained paraprofessionals.

[9:40:19 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked about other states utilizing similar financial incentives or apprenticeship programs.

MS. STOCKHAUSEN replied that the committee explored a similar program offered in Tennessee.

[9:40:52 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked if teacher apprenticeship programs were similar to the teacher mentoring programs that are no longer funded.

MS. STOCKHAUSEN replied that the apprenticeship program would also have a strong mentoring component, but the committee was

seeking a new competency based program. The proposed apprenticeship program is designed for people without a bachelor's degree. The prior mentoring program was accessible for people holding a bachelor's degree and seeking alternative certification.

[9:42:01 AM](#)

MR. FIELDS commented that there were 32 classroom teachers with certification waivers. He requested the data from the department delineated by test scores for certified versus uncertified educators.

[9:42:45 AM](#)

MR. FIELDS introduced the Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Cultural Education Committee.

[9:42:59 AM](#)

LORRI VAN DIEST, Member, State Board of Education, Palmer, Alaska, resumed the presentation with slide 18, "CTE and Cultural Education Committee Mission and Goals."

- Mission Statement
 - Support school districts and workforce partners to cultivate the potential in our students by integrating rigorous classroom instruction with relevant, work-based experiences that inspire, guide, and empower them for post-secondary training, college, and careers
- Goals
 - Develop awareness of CTE programs, practices, and processed in Alaska
 - Explore equity issues that may exist with smaller districts.
 - Connect CTE to other programs

[9:44:31 AM](#)

MS. VAN DIEST moved to slide 19, "CTE Cultural Education." She highlighted the committee's recent participation in the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development conference in February. The conference allowed for interaction with district CTE staff and community partners. A portion of the conference was set aside to identify action steps for moving CTE forward in Alaska.

MS. VAN DIEST advocated collectively for a long term investment to put well-trained career guides back in schools. She mentioned a position that helps connect students with post-secondary opportunities. She stated that she was unsure about the source

of funding for the mentioned position. She spoke to the value of recruiting and training instructors through an aligned and cooperative education system.

[9:47:29 AM](#)

MS. VAN DIEST explained that supporting work based learning covers a wide range including work release programs moving into apprenticeships. The committee will be vital for work based learning opportunities. She stated that the state board must support and enable partnerships. She stated that dual credits are important to students and would apply to college transcripts.

[9:50:16 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked for examples of workforce partners.

MS. VAN DIEST replied that a program in Bethel partnered with the local health consortium. The program helped 30 students with summer paid internships. The partnership existed between the educator and the health consortium.

[9:51:46 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD apologized for starting the joint committee meeting at 8:30 versus 8:00.

[9:52:04 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT understood that the committee struggled to find enough teachers for CTE. She asked how the committee addressed the problem.

MS. VAN DIEST replied that the teacher retention committee was working on the issue. She spoke about certification pathways where industry partners participate.

[9:53:08 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY asked about the priority of career technology and culturally relevant education. She asked to know more about those points of emphasis. She asked about culturally relevant curriculum.

MS. VAN DIEST replied that the group did not look at culturally relevant curriculum specifically, but she knew culturally relevant CTE classes were available. She recalled a district with such a program teaching students about making and selling local art.

[9:54:38 AM](#)

MR. FIELDS introduced the Safety and Well-Being Committee.

DR. KEITH HAMILTON, Member, State Board of Education, Soldotna, Alaska introduced himself and began with slide 20, "Safety and Well-Being Committee."

[9:55:12 AM](#)

MR. HAMILTON continued with slide 21, "Safety and Well-Being Committee Mission Statement and Goals."

- Mission Statement
 - Improve the safety and well-being of students through school partnerships with families, communities, and tribes.
- Goals
 - Increase the value of mandatory eLearning programs by improving educator engagement
 - Work with teacher preparation programs to develop trauma-engaged schools framework in both programs instruction and environment
 - Provide support to districts who do not have counselors, nurses & social workers

[9:58:02 AM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN reported that she serves on the Health and Social Services Standing Committee where the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) informed the committee about behavioral health and over institutionalizing of Alaska's children. She recalled the first recommendation on the report involved increasing access to school counselors. She asked for a report detailing data about school counselors throughout the state. She asked what the legislature might do to ensure students have access to the basic level of counselling intervention.

[9:58:35 AM](#)

MR. HAMILTON responded that his committee had the data. He stated that December was the end of the reporting period. He would request the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development provide the requested data to the joint committee.

[9:58:54 AM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN wondered if the board had specific safety-related policy suggestions for legislative statutory goals.

DR. HAMILTON replied that his committee was working to define potential solutions to relay to the legislature. He expected

changes leading to a better engaged student. He shared that he is an educator and believes that the classroom teacher makes an invaluable difference in a child's life.

[10:00:12 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HIMSCHOOT asked if Dr. Hamilton referred to academic or mental health counselors.

[10:00:35 AM](#)

DR. HAMILTON replied that counselor is an umbrella term. He shared that he asked the same question to his committee and the department and learned that the term counselor pertained to career counselors, mental health counselors and academic counselors.

[10:01:02 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked for elaboration about mandatory electronic learning programs.

DR. HAMILTON replied that every teacher is provided with a library of online learning resources.

[10:01:45 AM](#)

MR. FIELDS responded to Senator Bjorkman's comment. He explained that the Copper River School District established a partnership with the Copper River Native Association. The native association provides mentoring and mental health care. He expressed his belief that the tribal compacting effort was critical. He stated that the partnerships between school districts and tribal communities are invaluable.

[10:03:22 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD asked the joint committee members for further questions.

[10:03:34 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE STORY referenced the state board's report. She wondered about regulations to change the assessment cut scores.

[10:03:56 AM](#)

MR. FIELDS replied that the effort involved educators reviewing the assessment cut scores. He asked the department staff to come forward with the data. He affirmed the annual review of the assessment cut scores.

REPRESENTATIVE STORY understood that the assessment cut scores provide data about proficiency. She asked if the board suspects that the assessment cut scores were set too high.

MR. FIELDS replied that educator opinions influence the assessment cut scores, which are reviewed periodically on a schedule.

[10:05:04 AM](#)

SALLY STOCKHAUSEN, Second Vice-Chair, State Board of Education, Ketchikan, Alaska explained that the development of the new test required an assessment of cut scores.

[10:05:31 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCORMICK requested an opportunity for the student advisors to provide introductions and testimony.

[10:05:47 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ALLARD asked if Mr. Jeffrey Erickson had anything to add to the conversation. Hearing no from Mr. Erickson in the audience, Co-Chair Allard expressed appreciation to LTC James Fowley for his service to our country and asked him if he wished to participate in the joint hearing. Hearing no from LTC James Fowley in the audience, she asked the student advisors if they wished to contribute to the presentation.

[10:06:33 AM](#)

FELIX MYERS, Student Advisor-Elect, State Board of Education, Sitka, Alaska, introduced himself. He relayed that he was unsure about the parameters for the testimony.

CO-CHAIR ALLARD supposed that committee members had questions for the student advisors.

REPRESENTATIVE MCCORMICK stated that he did not have a question for the student advisors, but he opined that the advisors' opinions mattered to the board and the legislature.

CO-CHAIR ALLARD provided Mr. Myers an open parameter for discussion.

MR. MYERS addressed recent legislation introduced by the governor, HB 105, related to parental rights. He offered his opinions about the proposed legislation from a student's perspective. He recalled conversations with fellow students who identify with the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer and or questioning (LGBTQ) community who see issues with the proposed

legislation. He addressed the legislation's conversation around gender identity and permission to discuss gender identity in the classroom setting. He argued that teaching about historical figures is difficult without mentioning gender identity. He asserted that gender identity was a vague term.

MR. MYERS addressed the proposed legislation's requirement that parents provide permission to officially recognize name or pronoun changes in the public school setting. He stated that the suicide rate among transgender students is 7.6 times higher than non-transgender students in the United States. If a student is unable to express themselves with respect, they are at greater risk. He stressed that transgender students face dangerous situations and many do not feel comfortable in their own home. The students affected by the mandate for parent permission, are in the greatest danger. He highlighted the board's goal to provide a high-quality education to every single student and believed that HB 105 would diminish students' experience. He stressed that the proposed legislation was dangerous to students.

[10:10:14 AM](#)

MAGGIE COTHORN, Student Advisor, State Board of Education, Anchorage, Alaska, echoed the comments of Mr. Myers. She opined that the purpose of education was to provide quality education to all students. She believed that an aspect of quality education involves feeling safe and accepted in a school community. She expressed concern and fear about HB 105. She reported having friends who hide aspects of themselves because they do not feel safe. She opined that the proposed legislation may have unpredictable negative consequences. She agreed with Mr. Myers statement that the board's mission was to provide an excellent education for every student including the LGBTQ community. She spoke about the Alaska Association for Student Governments implementing gender neutral bathrooms and behaving with greater inclusivity. She commented on the importance of remaining mindful and respectful of all people. She appreciated the privilege of sitting on the board.

[10:12:04 AM](#)

MR. FIELDS concluded the presentation.

[10:12:34 AM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Co-Chair Allard adjourned the Joint meeting at 10:12 a.m.