

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 14, 2025

8:03 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Rebecca Himschoot, Co-Chair
Representative Andi Story, Co-Chair
Representative Maxine Dibert
Representative Ted Eischeid
Representative Jubilee Underwood
Representative Rebecca Schwanke
Representative Bill Elam

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 105

"An Act relating to mental health education."

- HEARD & HELD

PRESENTATION(S): STATEWIDE AND STANDARDIZED ASSESSMENT TOOLS

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 105

SHORT TITLE: PUBLIC SCHOOLS: MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) GALVIN

02/14/25	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/14/25	(H)	EDC, FIN
03/14/25	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE ALYSE GALVIN
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As prime sponsor, presented HB 105.

DAVID JIANG, Staff
Representative Alyse Galvin
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: On behalf of Representative Alyse Galvin, prime sponsor, read the sectional analysis and gave a PowerPoint presentation to HB 105.

JASON LESSARD, Former Board Member
Alaskan Psychiatric Institute
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony on HB 105.

JAMES BIELA
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, Alaska Chapter
Bethel, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony on HB 105.

ANN RINGSTAD, Executive Director
NAMI Alaska
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave invited testimony on HB 105.

DR. ROY GETCHELL, Superintendent
Haines Borough School District
Haines, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave a presentation titled "Statewide and Standardized Assessment Tools".

ANJI GALLANOS, Principal/Superintendent
Kake City Schools
Kake, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave a presentation titled "Statewide and Standardized Assessment Tools".

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

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions on the presentation titled "Statewide and Standardized Assessment Tools"

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:03:20 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR ANDI STORY called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:03 a.m. Representatives Eischeid, Story, Himschoot, Underwood, Dibert, Schwanke, and Elam were present at the call to order.

HB 105-PUBLIC SCHOOLS: MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION

[8:04:15 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 105, "An Act relating to mental health education."

[8:05:02 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ALYSE GALVIN, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, presented HB 105. She began by reading the sponsor statement for HB 105 [included in the committee packet] which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Sponsor Statement: House Bill 105
Mental Health Education

HB 105 represents a significant effort to address the mental health challenges facing our youth. This legislation recognizes that mental health education is a vital component of a comprehensive K-12 curriculum and aims to ensure it is treated with the same level of importance as physical health education.

To achieve this, the bill directs the Board of Education & Early Development to work alongside the Department of Health, the Department of Family and Community Services, regional tribal health organizations, and both national and state mental health experts. This collaborative effort will ensure that mental health instruction is developed with input from a broad range of professionals, leading to a well-rounded and effective curriculum.

Acknowledging the essential role of parents in their children's education, HB 105 includes a provision requiring schools to notify parents or guardians at least two weeks before introducing any mental health instruction. This measure promotes transparency, strengthens trust between schools and families, and encourages parental involvement in their child's learning experience.

By revising existing health education laws, this bill guarantees that mental health receives the same priority as physical health in Alaska's K-12 education system. The Board of Education will be responsible for creating clear, age-appropriate guidelines to integrate mental health instruction effectively into classrooms.

To maintain oversight and accountability, HB 105 requires the Board of Education to submit a report to the Legislature within two years of the law's enactment. This report will outline the established mental health education guidelines and detail the process used in their development, ensuring lawmakers stay informed on its progress and implementation.

The bill also allows for a two-year transition period, providing sufficient time for careful planning, stakeholder input, and curriculum preparation before mental health instruction is fully implemented in schools.

HB 105 is a proactive measure designed to equip Alaska's students with the knowledge and resources they need to understand and manage their mental well-being. By fostering collaboration among education and health professionals, this legislation lays the foundation for a healthier, more resilient generation. I encourage my colleagues to support this critical initiative.

[8:09:14 AM](#)

DAVID JIANG, Staff, Representative Alyse Galvin, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Alyse Galvin, prime sponsor, read the sectional analysis and gave a PowerPoint presentation to HB 105. He began by reading the sectional analysis for HB 105 [included in the committee packet] which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

HB 105: Mental Health Education
Sectional Analysis - Version A

Section 1- Adds a new section to 14.03.016(a)

Legislative Intent: It is the intent of the legislature that the board of Education and Early Development develop guidelines for instruction in

mental health in consultation with the Department of Health, the Department of Family and Community Services, regional tribal health organizations, and representatives of national and state mental health organizations.

Section 2- Adds a new subsection to 14.03.016(a)- A parent's right to direct the education of the parent's child.

(7) Provides for notification of parents or guardians no less than two weeks before a class or program may provide mental health instruction a child.

Section 3- Amends AS 14.30.360(a) Health education curriculum; physical activity guidelines. Amended to add mental health to the K-12 Health education curriculum, putting mental and physical health equal weight.

Section 4- Amends AS 14.30.360(b)- Health education curriculum; physical activity guidelines. Amended to include board establishment of guidelines for developmentally appropriate instruction in mental health. In developing these developmentally appropriate guidelines the state board shall consult with the Department of Health (DoH), the Department of Family and Community Services (DFCS), regional tribal health organizations, and national and state mental health organizations.

Section 5- Adds a new section to AS 14.30.360(b),
Report to the Legislature: Two years after the effective date of this Act, the state Board of Education and Early Development shall submit a report to the Senate and House and notify the legislature that the report is available. The report must

(1) include a copy of the guidelines for developmentally appropriate instruction in mental health developed by the Board as required under AS 14.30.360(b), as amended by sec. 4 of this Act; and

(2) describe the process the Board used to develop the guidelines. Section 6- Adds a new section to AS 14.30.360(b) Transition: The state Board of Education and Early Development shall develop the mental health guidelines required by AS 14.30.360(b), as amended by sec. 4 of this

Act, within two years after the effective date of this Act

8:12:37 AM

MR. JIANG began the PowerPoint presentation for HB 105 on slide 1, which described the legislative intent of HB 105 and moved to slide 2, which displayed a graph that highlighted the higher-than-average suicide rates among Alaska's youth. He continued to slide 3, which displayed a map of the United States that highlighted specific states which have already adopted any type of mental health education curriculum. He moved to slide 4, which explained how HB 105 would allow school districts to implement programs unique to their own district under the guidelines established by the proposed legislation. He concluded the presentation on slide 5, which emphasized HB 105's goals to synthesize mental health and well-being in Alaska's youth as well as reduce the shame surrounding mental health conversations.

8:19:27 AM

JASON LESSARD, Former Board Member, Alaskan Psychiatric Institute, gave invited testimony on HB 105. He emphasized that "mental health is health" and the fact that 75 percent of all lifetime-persisting mental health conditions begin by age 24. He said that early intervention is key with regards to mental healthcare and explained that the aim of HB 105 is to help schools and school districts have more direction in both the destigmatizing of conversations surrounding mental health and the delivery of mental health care. He emphasized that HB 105 would not mandate any of its proposed policies and said that HB 105 would only create a series of guidelines for school districts to follow.

8:25:45 AM

JAMES BIELA, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, Alaska Chapter, gave invited testimony on HB 105. He shared that many students in Alaska are unable to seek health because they do not understand how to seek or ask for help. He said that HB 105 would help to reduce stigma surrounding mental health and emphasized that mental health is "central to students wellbeing." He said that HB 105 would recognize the need for parental involvement in the delivery of mental health care to youth and said that education and awareness are vital in

addressing the mental health challenges that face Alaska's youth.

[8:30:36 AM](#)

ANN RINGSTAD, Executive Director, NAMI Alaska, gave invited testimony on HB 105. She said that one in six youth are affected by a mental health condition, yet only half of them receive any care for that condition. She said that 62.9 percent of Alaskans who were affected by depression in the previous year have not received care for their condition. She said that there are often long delays in treatment for youth mental health conditions, which can lead to a worsening of the condition and further consequences, whether they be financial, legal, or lethal. She said that the identification of mental health conditions earlier in a person's life would equip them with vital knowledge of their own mental health and allow them to rise above their condition and triumph over their condition.

[8:34:30 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE UNDERWOOD asked Representative Galvin if she had any data regarding the impacts of mental health curriculum.

REPRESENTATIVE GALVIN answered that the State of Washington has a mental health curriculum that is often regarded as the "gold standard" and explained that data is often varied in its effects.

MR. JIANG added that he would follow up with more specific data regarding the outcomes of mental health curriculum.

[8:37:34 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ELAM asked how broad the proposed policies of HB 105 would be and asked what kind of privacy parameters would surround any curriculum and mental health care being given. He asked who would provide the specific mental health instruction and asked what the proposed mental health curriculum might look like.

REPRESENTATIVE GALVIN answered that the parameters of HB 105 do not include "anyone diagnosing anyone" and said that the proposed legislation's intent is to elevate the conversation of mental health in an age appropriate way that would allow parents, students, and school districts to have more options in how they choose to address the mental health of youth. She

answered that the curriculums proposed by HB 105 would likely fall under the teachings of a school district's health class.

[8:44:13 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE asked if there is any idea of how many school districts in Alaska that have already implemented mental health curriculums similar to the one mentioned in HB 105.

REPRESENTATIVE GALVIN answered that school districts in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau have implemented policies similar to the ones proposed by HB 105.

MR. JIANG added that there are about 20 school districts in Alaska that have already implemented mental health curriculums and emphasized that HB 105 would simply give school districts guidelines on how to create a mental health curriculum.

[8:48:21 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT shared an anecdote of a school counselor in her home school district that helped to intervene with a child who was experiencing a mental health crisis and said that it is "incredibly important to think of mental health and physical health has the same thing." She asked if HB 105 would set any specific guidelines of mental health instruction specific to each level of education.

REPRESENTATIVE GALVIN replied that the proposed legislation does not include any language regarding specific instruction curriculums, rather it includes guiding language that explains to school districts how they might establish a mental health curriculum.

[8:55:26 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY announced that HB 105 would be held over.

PRESENTATION(S) : Statewide and Standardized Assessment Tools

[8:55:55 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY announced that the final order of business would be a presentation titled "Statewide and Standardized Assessment Tools" by the Department of Education & Early Development (DEED).

[8:56:42 AM](#)

DR. ROY GETCHELL, Superintendent, Haines Borough School District, gave a presentation titled "Statewide and Standardized Assessment Tools". He began on slide 2, which highlighted the history of education assessments and compared how the measurement of a student's success has changed over the years. He moved to slide 3, which outlined the four main types of assessments that are administered in education today.

[9:03:08 AM](#)

ANJI GALLANOS, Principal/Superintendent, Kake City Schools, gave a presentation titled "Statewide and Standardized Assessment Tools". She picked up the presentation on slide 4, which further detailed the four main types of assessments that are administered in education today.

[9:05:10 AM](#)

DR. GETCHELL resumed the presentation on slide 5, which described the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and how its results and implementation differ among the countries it is administered in. He moved to slide 6, which displayed an image of the score that one might obtain from a "bubble test" and continued to slide 7, which highlighted the Northwest Evaluation Association's Measures of Academic Progress (MAPS) test and its impacts and implementation throughout schools in Alaska.

[9:08:24 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY asked Dr. Getchell to explain how the previous commissioner of the DEED helped to reduce the amount of standardized assessment occurring in Alaska public schools.

DR. GETCHELL answered that it would be "best practice for learning" to have a minimum number of standardized assessments during a school year and explained the process and purpose of standardized testing in public schools.

[9:10:02 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ELAM asked if there are any specific standards or testing measures that are referred to when Alaska's testing scores are compared to the rest of the country.

DR. GETCHELL answered that most of the country adopted the "Common Core" standards of assessment and Alaska uses the "Alaska" standards of assessment.

[9:11:30 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY asked how many school districts across the United States use MAPS.

DR. GETCHELL answered that MAPS is by far the most common assessment tool used in the United States.

[9:12:15 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE UNDERWOOD asked if the AK STAR test is different or the same as the MAPS test.

DR. GETCHELL replied that both tests are created by the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) and emphasized that the MAPS and AK STAR tests are different from each other in their methodology and content.

[9:13:50 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT commented that Alaska has paid for and administered four different statewide tests and said that she would like to see if the State could determine one specific test to be administered.

DR. GETCHELL shared his agreement with Co-Chair Himschoot's remarks.

[9:15:44 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE commented the relief that came to students, educators, and administrators when the MAPS test became standard across Alaska public schools.

[9:16:27 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DIBERT commented her appreciation for using students' growth as an achievement metric.

[9:17:18 AM](#)

DR. GETCHELL resumed the presentation on slide 8, which displayed a graph that compared how growth and achievement could be used as a metric for the success of a school district.

[9:19:46 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT excitedly shared her appreciation for the graph displayed on slide 8.

[9:20:55 AM](#)

DR. GETCHELL resumed the presentation on slide 8 and elaborated on achievement-growth standards. He continued to slide 9, which displayed an image of a "Sample Student Report" that a teacher would receive to visualize a student's growth over time.

[9:22:53 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT enthusiastically shared her appreciation for the Sample Student Report and its effectiveness in assessing a student's overall wellbeing and achievement.

[9:24:26 AM](#)

DR. GALLANOS picked up the presentation on slide 10, which further elaborated on the positive aspects of the Sample Student Report. She moved to slide 11, which displayed a map of Juneau that she used as an analogy for a student's direction and needs. She continued to slide 12, which highlighted the AK READS Act Assessment and the positive impacts of both the legislation and its associated assessment. She moved to slide 13, which further detailed the assessment tools currently being used by school districts in Alaska. She continued through slides 14 and 15, both of which summarized the results of the Dynamic Indicators of Basic early Literacy Skills (DIBELS 8) test and explained how the data determined by the test could be an effective tool for school districts and teachers to understand and make sense of students and their progress throughout their school career.

[9:32:50 AM](#)

DR. GETCHELL thanked the committee for the opportunity to hear the presentation.

[9:33:35 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY asked Dr. Getchell how teachers might use the data presented by a DIBELS 8 test result.

DR. GETCHELL answered that professional development days are aligned with DIBELS 8 and MAPS assessment days to evaluate instructional and developmental decisions among teachers. He emphasized that there is "a lot of work that happens to put this [testing] information into action".

[9:36:26 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE asked Dr. Getchell to try and understand "the importance of how influential an educator could be on a single day".

DR. GETCHELL replied that test scores highlight a "moment in time" and said that he appreciated Representative Schwanke's perspective.

[9:42:51 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DIBERT commented that MAPS scores are extremely effective in being able to "meet a student where they're at" when they've recently transferred to a new school.

DR. GETCHELL thanked Representative Dibert for sharing her perspective and emphasized the consistency of MAPS tools across all states in the country.

[9:46:23 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ELAM asked if there is a "collective report card" that the Alaska State Legislature could use as a reference when it is creating education policy.

DR. GETCHELL explained that there is "so much misunderstanding" with regard to standardized assessments in Alaska and said that there were many ways to view the efficacy of a test administered.

[9:49:45 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT commented that prior to 2001, there were no assessment standards in the state of Alaska and after 2001, there was a period of "over testing" that created a problematic relationship with education assessments, whereas now there are very minimal tests, and the public has still maintained a

pessimistic attitude towards education assessments. She asked if the school district or the state would pay for each education assessment that is administered.

[9:53:42 AM](#)

KELLY MANNING, Deputy Director, Division of Innovation & Education Excellence, Department of Education & Early Development, answered questions on the presentation titled "Statewide and Standardized Assessment Tools". She answered that the DEED covers the cost of full-year MAPS testing for grades 3-9 as apart of a contract created by Alaska System of Academic Readiness (AKSTAR).

[9:55:17 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY thanked the invited testifiers and delivered committee announcements.

[9:56:27 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

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