

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 19, 2025  
8:04 a.m.

**DRAFT**

**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**

PRESENTATION(S): SCHOOL MAINTENANCE AND CONSTRUCTION

- HEARD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

LORI WEED, School Finance Manager  
Division of School Finance & Facilities  
Department of Education & Early Development  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave a presentation titled "Capitol Needs for School Facilities".

MICHAEL BUTIKOFER

Technical Engineer 1, Division of School Finance & Facilities,  
Department of Education & Early Development  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered committee questions on the presentation titled "Capitol Needs for School Facilities".

DR. LISA PARADY, Executive Director  
Alaska Council of School Administrators & Superintendents  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave a presentation titled "School District Major Maintenance"

AUDRA FINKENBINDER, Superintendent  
Southwest School District  
Dillingham, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave a presentation titled "School District Major Maintenance"

MADELINE AGUILLARD,  
Superintendent, Kuspuk School District  
Aniak, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Gave a presentation titled "School District Major Maintenance"

#### **ACTION NARRATIVE**

[8:04:35 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:04 a.m. Representatives Himschoot, Schwanke, Dibert, Elam, Underwood, Eischeid and Story were present at the call to order.

#### **PRESENTATION(S): School Maintenance and Construction**

[8:05:34 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT announced that the only order of business would be a presentation titled "School Maintenance and Construction".

[8:06:39 AM](#)

LORI WEED, School Finance Manager, Division of School Finance & Facilities, Department of Education & Early Development, gave a presentation titled "Capitol Needs for School Facilities". She began on slide 3, which highlighted the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)'s strategic priorities as an executive agency. She moved to slide 4, which outlined the current funding mechanisms being utilized by the DEED for school maintenance.

[8:10:04 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT asked how the Regional Education Attendance Area (REAA) fund is indexed and asked if there are "funds in the funds".

MS. WEED answered that the REAA fund would be diminished by a governor's veto of education funding and explained that there are small allocations within the REAA to direct funds in specific directions.

[8:11:45 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ELAM asked Ms. Weed to further detail the Municipal School District School Fund.

MS. WEED answered that both the REAA funds and the Municipal School District School Funds are put together in a fund to be implemented in school maintenance.

[8:14:33 AM](#)

MS. WEED resumed the presentation on slide 5, which described the different types of school maintenance "project categories" as they are classified within the DEED. She moved to slide 6, which detailed how a school construction/maintenance project could become eligible for the Capital Improvement Project (CIP) program.

[8:16:17 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE asked how often school districts in Alaska are participating in the CIP program.

MS. WEED explained that certain school districts are more involved in the CIP program than others and said that there is roughly a 60 percent participation rate within the CIP.

[8:20:01 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY asked how expensive it might be for a school district to put forward a 6-year CIP and asked how long a CIP project cost estimate is valid for.

MS. WEED answered that the DEED provides a "range of tools" to school districts so that they may successfully obtain funding from the CIP program. She explained that there are many

different projects at many different stages of development with differing ages of cost estimates.

[8:23:40 AM](#)

MS. WEED resumed the presentation on slide 7, which further detailed how a school district might become eligible to participate in the CIP program. She moved to slide 8, which emphasized the four qualities that a project must meet in order to be eligible for the CIP program and continued to slide 9, which displayed a graph that highlighted the overall CIP program participation and eligibility statistics since Fiscal Year 2016 (FY16). She moved to slide 10, which outlined the total number of CIP-eligible projects and the actual amount of dollars associated with each project. She continued to slide 11, which detailed the total amount of CIP dollars requested for FY26. She moved to slide 12, which displayed a table that outlined the total amount of dollars requested within school districts' six-year plans.

[8:29:41 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE UNDERWOOD asked Ms. Weed to for the names of the school districts that received CIP funding.

MS. WEED answered that she could follow-up with the requested information later.

[8:30:02 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE asked if a school district's likelihood of receiving CIP funding is based off of how well their application is completed.

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT asked about the current state of staffing within the DEED.

MS. WEED answered that the success of a school districts CIP application is based off of a number of differing factors and said that there are about five staff members working in the facilities section of DEED.

[8:33:00 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY asked how the CIP applications are evaluated and awarded and asked if DEED ever makes visits to project sites.

[8:33:14 AM](#)

MICHAEL BUTIKOFER, Technical Engineer 1, Division of School Finance & Facilities, Department of Education & Early Development, answered committee questions on the presentation titled "Capitol Needs for School Facilities". He answered that DEED made 5 site visits in fiscal year (FY) 2024 and said that 2 more are planned. He explained that the DEED does not make district visits based on outstanding CIP applications, rather they visit school districts every 5 years to ensure that they meet the criteria of the DEED's preventative maintenance programs. He said that the DEED takes effort in informing and training school districts on how to qualify for CIP projects.

MS. WEED added that there are approximately 436 main school facilities under the DEED's facility database.

[8:40:35 AM](#)

MS. WEED resumed the presentation on slide 10, which outlined the total number of CIP-eligible projects and the actual amount of dollars associated with each project. She continued to slide 11, which detailed the total amount of CIP dollars requested for FY26.

[8:43:32 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE asked how the DEED makes its determinations regarding the necessity of a CIP grant and asked what the minimum value for a CIP grant.

MS. WEED explained a series of different qualifications that a successful CIP application might have and confirmed that \$50,000 was the minimum value for a CIP grant. She said that the threshold was set in consideration of what might be considered "routine" in a school district's maintenance plan.

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT emphasized that schools often budget their maintenance funding directly from the Base Student Allocation (BSA) and must make do with only that.

[8:48:04 AM](#)

MS. WEED resumed the presentation on slide 12, which displayed a table that outlined the total amount of dollars requested within school districts' six-year plans and continued to slide 13, which detailed three key points of an annual report mandated sb

the 26th Alaska Legislature's Senate Bill 237. She moved to slide 14, which displayed a table that highlighted the different types of CIP funding that the DEED awarded by specific Fiscal Year.

8:50:45 AM

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE asked Ms. Weed to further detail the recommended 3 percent renewal rate.

MS. WEED explained that the 3 percent amount was recommended by the National Council of School Facilities.

REPRESENTATIVE EISCHEID added that the National Council of School facilities has recommended a rate of 4 percent.

8:52:53 AM

MR. BUTIKOFER added his understanding that school maintenance funding is an "issue nationwide" based off of his interactions with the National Council of School Facilities.

REPRESENTATIVE ELAM commented that Boroughs in Alaska fund schools within themselves similarly to counties in the Lower 48.

8:54:14 AM

MS. WEED resumed the presentation on slide 15, which focused on the deferred maintenance funds that Mt. Edgecumbe High School requested from DEED. She concluded the presentation on slides 16-18.

8:55:33 AM

REPRESENTATIVE DIBERT asked if school districts are able to compile project needs for different buildings under one structure.

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE asked if a project would be awarded to a district how needs it vs one that is being more proactive in its maintenance process. She asked how a maintenance project that was completed using local funds would be categorized by the DEED.

MS. WEED in response to committee member's questions, answered that the projects that Representative Dibert was asking about were called "district wide projects" and are addressed

holistically. She explained that the response to a disaster is dependent on the nuance of the emergency and said that a school district would have to cover the immediate cost of any emergency maintenance, not a CIP grant. She elaborated that certain maintenance projects would be able to be reimbursed after the immediate repair and said that the DEED does not distinguish between completed or ongoing projects when it is determining who shall receive a CIP grant.

[9:04:15 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT thanked the invited testifiers and invited Dr. Lisa Parody to begin the next presentation.

[9:04:54 AM](#)

DR. LISA PARADY, Executive Director, Alaska Council of School Administrators & Superintendents, gave a presentation titled "School District Major Maintenance" She began on slide 2, which detailed the Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA) and moved to slide 3, which highlighted the ACSA's "joint position statement" regarding major school maintenance in Alaska. She continued to slide 4, which displayed three statistics related to Alaska schools and moved to slide 5, which emphasized the "ongoing challenge" of deferred maintenance in Alaska's schools. She moved to slide 6, which highlighted the major maintenance issues that Alaska's schools are facing and continued to slide 7, which displayed a table that detailed the recommended and funded capitol renewal since FY11. She moved to slide 8, which listed specific projects that are on the DEED major maintenance list since FY18 and continued to slide 9, which emphasized the poor physical condition of Alaska's schools. She moved through slides 10-11, which displayed a series of photos that emphasized the poor condition of Alaska's schools. She continued to slide 12, which detailed a series of proposed solutions to combat Alaska's deteriorating schools and concluded the presentation on slide 13.

[9:19:51 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE asked about the separation between rural and urban school districts in Alaska.

DR. PARODY emphasized that rural school districts often have less resources to put towards preventative or routine maintenance, which leads dollars away from the classroom.

[9:23:11 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ELAM commented his understanding that there might be a large tax burden placed on municipalities if they were to be made responsible for REAA maintenance projects.

DR. PARODY highlighted the importance of municipalities in handling local school maintenance issues in lieu of the state "not handling" school maintenance issues.

[9:26:32 AM](#)

AUDRA FINKENBINDER, Superintendent, Southwest School District, gave a presentation titled "School District Major Maintenance". She began on slide 2, which highlighted the top priorities of the Southwest Region School District (SRSD)'s six year CIP plan. She moved to slide 3, which detailed the Twin Hills School renovation/replacement project and continued to slide 4, which detailed the Ekwok School renovation project. She moved to slide 5, which detailed the Aleknagik School renovation project and continued to slide 6, which described 4 main concerns regarding the previously mentioned improvement projects. She moved to slide 7, which emphasized the importance of schools in the role they sometimes serve as emergency shelters and concluded the presentation on slide 8.

[9:33:45 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT asked if the Southwest School District has a maintenance employee at each school site, given the extreme remote nature of the district.

MS. FINKENBINDER answered that the Southwest School District does have limited maintenance personnel out at certain school sites, but has more at its central office in Dillingham, Alaska.

[9:36:45 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY asked how much time and resources are spent on preparing the annual six-year CIP grant plan.

MS. FINKENBINDER replied that the Southwest School District has had to begin doing its CIP grant plans "in house" due to budget constraints and explained that its lead administrators have been spending significant time on preparing the annual six-year plan before it is due.

[9:39:10 AM](#)

MADELINE AGUILLARD, Superintendent, Kuspuk School District, gave a presentation titled "School District Major Maintenance". She began on slides 2-3, which detailed the history and current status of the Sleetmute school improvement project. She moved through slides 4-5, which emphasized the positive impact of good school facility conditions on student achievement and teacher retention. She continued through slides 6-10, all of which compared the current derelict condition of schools in the Kuspuk School District to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. She concluded the presentation on slide 11, which highlighted the needs of school districts in Alaska and some solutions for those needs.

[9:58:24 AM](#)

DR. AGUILLARD commented "the kids aren't going to let us down"

[9:58:51 AM](#)

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

[9:59:54 AM](#)

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 10:00 a.m.