

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 24, 2025

8:02 a.m.

DRAFT

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Maxine Dibert

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION(S) :ALASKA STATEWIDE ASSESSMENTS

- HEARD

PRESENTATION(S) : SCHOOL FACILITIES AND MAJOR MAINTENANCE

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

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

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave a presentation titled "Alaska Statewide Assessments".

KAREN MELIN, Administrator
Division of Standards & Assessments
Department of Education & Early Development
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered committee questions on the presentation titled "Alaska Statewide Assessments".

FRANK HAUSER, Superintendent
Juneau School District
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave a presentation titled "School Facilities and Major Maintenance".

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

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered committee questions on the presentation titled "School Facilities and Major Maintenance".

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:02:23 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:02 a.m. Representatives Eischeid, Elam, Story, Himschoot, Underwood, and Schwanke were present at the call to order.

PRESENTATION(S):Alaska Statewide Assessments

[8:03:20 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY announced that the first order of business would be a presentation titled "Alaska Statewide Assessments".

[8:04:24 AM](#)

KELLY MANNING, Deputy Director, Division of Innovation & Education Excellence, Department of Education & Early Development, gave a presentation titled "Alaska Statewide Assessments". She began on slide 2, which described the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)'s Mission, Vision, and purpose with regard to education assessment in Alaska. She skipped to slide 4, which outlined the agenda of the DEED's education assessments and continued through slides 5-8, which detailed each major education assessment in Alaska that is administered throughout a student's career.

[8:08:03 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT asked why Alaska has so many English Language Learner (ELL) Students comparatively to other states.

MS. MANNING answered that she would follow up with more information later.

[8:12:14 AM](#)

MS. MANNING resumed the presentation on slide 9, which displayed a table that detailed the cost of each previously mentioned assessment.

[8:13:26 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT asked what entity administers the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test.

MS. MANNING answered that the federal government is responsible for the administration of the NAEP test.

[8:14:54 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ELAM asked how the United States Department of Education being cut would affect the DEED's ability to administer any of its tests.

MS. MANNING said that the DEED is closely monitoring education politics in the United States Federal Government.

[8:16:27 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY asked which school districts in Alaska are chosen to receive the NAEP test.

MS. MANNING answered that the selection process for the NAEP test often depends on the size and scope of a school district and explained how the geographic size of Alaska leads to the same school districts being chosen to take the NAEP test year after year.

[8:17:21 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE asked if the United States Department of Education (ED) generally follows up with any information after the NAEP test is administered.

MS. MANNING explained that the ED delivers the testing information to the school district that the NAEP test was administered in and said that the science portion of the NAEP test does not overlap with the Alaska Science Assessment.

[8:19:22 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT asked why Alaska does not participate in the science portion of the NAEP test given the state's historic excellence in the category.

[8:20:46 AM](#)

KAREN MELIN, Administrator, Division of Standards & Assessments, Department of Education & Early Development, answered committee questions on the presentation titled "Alaska Statewide Assessments". She said that the primary reason Alaska does not participate in the science portion of the NAEP test is that it is not a required assessment, and the DEED does not want to increase any assessment burden on students in Alaska.

[8:22:22 AM](#)

MS. MANNING resumed the presentation on slide 10, which outlined a "balanced assessment system" is and moved to slide 11, which described the goals of the previously mentioned "balanced assessment system".

[8:28:05 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE asked how the DEED determines where to correct when an assessment is showing an area to be failing.

MS. MANNING explained that school testing and curriculum is often up to the local school district, not the DEED.

CO-CHAIR STORY added that she would like DEED to consider that teachers need time for the professional development that it demands.

MS. MANNING said that the DEED does not currently monitor any use of funds for professional development and explained how the DEED is making efforts to create better opportunities for assessment-related professional development. She detailed the Northwest Education Association (NWEA) training that DEED has made available to school district staff and highlighted how this training reduces the training burden on teachers.

[8:38:47 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE UNDERWOOD commented that the Matanuska-Susitna School District makes certain to have "early-start Mondays" to allow time for professional development.

[8:40:03 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT shared her memory of the Sitka School District receiving a title II grant that allowed recently retired teachers to teach a class while another teacher observed the instruction.

CO-CHAIR STORY added her curiosity as to how many school districts in Alaska have implemented an early-release Friday policy to allow for professional development.

[8:42:18 AM](#)

MS. MANNING resumed the presentation on slide 12, which compared the AK STAR test and the MAP growth assessment and moved to slide 13, which outlined a school district's "roadmap" of testing throughout a school year. She continued to slide 14, which detailed the Alaska Science Standards between practices, core ideas, and crosscutting. She moved through slides 15-7, which detailed the specifics of Standards Aligned Assessments, testing screener exemptions, as well as the difference between the Screener, Interim, and Summative test types. She continued to slide 18, which displayed a graphic that visualized the cohesion of the MAPs, Amplify, and AK star test and moved through slides 19-20, which detailed how the DEED might provider support for both the administration of tests and the interpretation of the results of those tests.

[8:54:19 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EISCHEID asked how vacancies within school districts and the DEED are currently affecting the DEED's standards and assessment team.

MS. MANNING answered that there are no current vacancies within the DEED's standards and assessment team and acknowledged that district vacancies can have a serious impact on a districts ability to properly administer and interpret education assessments.

[8:58:23 AM](#)

MS. MANNING resumed the presentation on slides 21-29, which detailed the specific participation rates by grade level and year administered for each assessment that is delivered in Alaska.

[8:59:30 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY asked if correspondence and homeschool students also receive detailed reports on their assessment performance.

MS. MANNING replied that the DEED has a multitude of resources regarding correspondence and homeschool performance.

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT asked if the DEED is required to provide information to parents and asked if there is a federal test participation rate requirement. She asked why there is a historically lower participation in the AK STAR science assessment.

MS. MANNING clarified that participation rates for students were reflective of an entire age group in Alaska, not a specific school district's student body. She continued to detail assessment participation rates on slides 21-29 and concluded the presentation on slide 30.

[9:08:50 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY asked why the participation rate for the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) test is higher among certain types of schools.

MS. MANNING spoke to the Alaska developmental profile's report that found the delivery of a student's assessment to be the most effective tool in establishing a consistent testing schedule and standard for students in Alaska.

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT added that the WIDA is comprised of four separate tests that are major drivers in a student's potential to remain in a school's ELL program.

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE asked if there is anything that the Alaska State Legislature can do to incentivize school districts to deliver assessments.

MS. MANNING said that it is important that everyone understand the purpose and intent of education assessments in Alaska.

PRESENTATION(S): School Facilities and Major Maintenance

[9:15:49 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY announced that the final order of business would be a presentation titled "School Facilities and Major Maintenance".

[9:16:40 AM](#)

FRANK HAUSER, Superintendent, Juneau School District, gave a presentation titled "School Facilities and Major Maintenance". He began on slides 2-3, which compared the learning environments of Massachusetts schools and Alaska schools. He moved to slide 4, which emphasized the old age of Alaska's schools and continued to slide 5, which highlighted the fiscal year 2025 (FY25) school closures that occurred within the Juneau School District (JSD). He continued through slides 6-7, which highlighted the major maintenance projects and priority categories in the JSD. He moved through slides 8-10, which displayed images of deteriorating school buildings within the JSD. He continued through slides 11-12, which emphasized the positive impact on test scores that a quality learning environment has as well as the pressure on the City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) from other projects that demand funding. He moved to slide 13, which displayed the JSD deferred maintenance backlog and continued through slides 14-15, which displayed further images of dilapidated school structures within the JSD. He moved to slide 16, which displayed a series of images from the Sleetmut Public School's poorly maintained building and continued to slide 17, which emphasized the "Mississippi" model of school maintenance. He moved through slides 18-19, which described the positives impacts of a safe and structurally sound school facility on its students and staff. He continued to slide 20, which highlighted the California Policy Lab's finding that new school construction had a positive impact on student test scores and concluded the presentation on slides 21-22, which highlighted the positive impact of capital spending on school facilities and maintenance.

[9:28:22 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE UNDERWOOD commented that the Alaska State Legislature simply needs to "figure out" new revenue streams to fund the maintenance needs of Alaska's public schools.

[9:29:34 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE asked Mr. Hauser if he had any suggestions as to how to improve the process surrounding the Capitol Improvement Project (CIP) grant.

MR. HAUSER explained that a major challenge with the CIP grant is getting engineers out to the sites that are in need of the CIP grant. He emphasized that only 60 percent of school districts in Alaska are able to submit a CIP grant application due to the lack of access to engineers and said that the JSD is "lucky" to be able to carry out its maintenance needs. He pointed to revenue streams like bond debt reimbursement as important sources of funding that organized boroughs have access to that unorganized boroughs cannot utilize. He opined that Alaska is driving families away from the state because of its "lack of commitment" to public education and used an example of military leaders not wanting to station soldiers in Alaska because of its failing education system.

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE thanked Mr. Hauser for cutting schools in the JSD and asked how the JSD goes about submitting CIP grant applications.

MR. HAUSER replied that the JSD utilizes the CBJ engineering department when it is creating a CIP grant application.

[9:40:43 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ELAM asked, "which revenue from the state would be the least impactful on your community".

MR. HAUSER said that he was unsure if it would be appropriate to answer Representative Elam's question.

[9:43:26 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT shared her concern that a failing fire panel in a school actually would lead to a net higher cost due to the need for a staff member to be constantly monitoring the panel and asked if the DEED has any plan to solve deferred maintenance issues in Alaska's schools.

[9:47:05 AM](#)

LORI WEED, School Finance Manager, Division of School Finance & Facilities, Department of Education & Early Development, answered committee questions on the presentation titled "School Facilities and Major Maintenance". She said that the DEED does not currently have any proposed solutions to the deferred maintenance crises that Alaska's schools face.

[9:48:30 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT asked if the DEED has any role in the caretaking of Mt. Edgecumbe high schools' facilities maintenance. She asked which entity is primarily responsible for the advocacy of school facilities maintenance.

MS. WEED explained that the Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF) is responsible for the maintenance of Mt. Edgecumbe high school. She said that Alaska is a "local control state", so the DEED is tasked with partnering with local school districts to solve school facilities maintenance problems.

[9:51:01 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY asked Ms. Weed what she thought of the idea to separate deferred maintenance lists for Rural Education Area districts and asked how DEED could obtain the funds that need engineering and architectural support.

MS. WEED said that she wouldn't advocate for separate maintenance lists in the name of equality and said that the DEED would afford school district major maintenance through legislative appropriations.

[9:56:00 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT asked if the DEED has a "good sense" of public school maintenance needs across Alaska.

MS. WEED answered that the DEED has the data that Co-Chair Himschoot requested and would follow-up later.

[9:57:59 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EISCHEID commented that he would like to see the DEED give more comparative analysis of the condition of Alaska's schools to other states' public schools.

[9:58:48 AM](#)

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

[9:59:51 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:59 a.m.