

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

April 2, 2025

9:02 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Jubilee Underwood

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION(S) : TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO ALASKANS

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

OLIVIA YANCEY, Executive Director
Special Education Service Agency
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave a presentation titled "Technical Assistance to Alaskans".

JOHN BARROWMAN, Lead Autism Specialist
Special Education Service Agency
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave a presentation titled "Technical Assistance to Alaskans".

LYON JOHNSON, Emotional Disabilities Education Specialist
Special Education Service Agency
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave a presentation titled "Technical Assistance to Alaskans".

MERIAH CORY, Multiple Disabilities Education Specialist
Special Education Service Agency
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave a presentation titled "Technical Assistance to Alaskans".

ACTION NARRATIVE

[9:02:51 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. Representatives Eischeid, Story, Dibert, Elam, Schwanke, and Himschoot. were present at the call to order.

PRESENTATION(S): Technical Assistance to Alaskans

[9:04:10 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT announced that the only order of business would be a presentation titled "Technical Assistance to Alaskans" by the Special Education Service Agency.

[9:05:28 AM](#)

OLIVIA YANCEY, Executive Director, Special Education Service Agency, gave a presentation titled "Technical Assistance to Alaskans". She began the presentation on slide 2, which displayed a photo of the Special Education Service Agency (SESA)'s staff and moved through slides 3-4, which highlighted the SESA's primary mission as an agency. She continued through slides 5-6, which outlined the SESA board and funding structure and moved to slide 7, which highlighted a series of statistics related to SESA's work in Alaska.

[9:10:47 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DIBERT asked what the term "multi-disabilities" refers to and asked if there is a waitlist for care services to people with multi-disabilities.

MS. YANCY answered that "multiple disabilities" is apart of the special education eligibility category and said that there is currently no waitlist for students with multiple disabilities.

[9:11:48 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT asked if SESA serves both urban and rural children with disabilities and asked how SESA is funded.

MS. YANCY answered that SESA has a cap of about 10-20 students per school district and explained that the federal pass-through funding comes directly from the Department of Education alongside funding from the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (AMHA).

[9:14:04 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY shared her understanding that SESA is currently subject to an audit-sunset cycle.

MS. YANCY confirmed Co-Chair Story's understanding and said that there will be a dip in average daily membership, which will lead to a decrease in funding of \$35,700.

[9:16:00 AM](#)

MS. YANCY resumed the presentation on slide 7 and moved to slide 8, which displayed a map of Alaska that highlighted the number of children receiving care in specific communities in Alaska.

[9:17:42 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY asked why everything in SESA is named after Ann Freitag.

MS. YANCY answered that Ann Freitag was a librarian who was with SESA for 30 years.

[9:18:06 AM](#)

MS. YANCY continued the presentation on slide 8, which displayed a map of Alaska that highlighted the number of children receiving care in specific communities in Alaska.

[9:19:12 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT asked for clarification on the numbers displayed on slide 8.

MS. YANCY clarified that the numbers displayed on slide 8 referred to the number of participants involved in SESA studies.

[9:20:23 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ELAM asked if SESA works with correspondence schools in Alaska.

MS. YANCY answered that SESA does work with correspondence schools.

[9:20:52 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DIBERT asked how often SESA is able to provide care to rural communities in the face of logistics.

MS. YANCY replied that SESA does both distance delivery services and does not perform onsite services consistently for a "variety of reasons".

[9:23:12 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 9:23 a.m. to 9:26 a.m.

[9:26:29 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSHOOT invited John Barrowman to provide further testimony on the presentation before the committee.

[9:27:00 AM](#)

JOHN BARROWMAN, Lead Autism Specialist, Special Education Service Agency, gave a presentation titled "Technical Assistance to Alaskans". He picked up the presentation on slide 9, which highlighted the members of the SESA Low Incidence Disability (LID) autism program team members and moved to slide 10, which listed three main points of feedback from the SESA LID autism program.

[9:30:51 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY asked if the SESA LID autism program team could make para-educator training videos and asked Mr. Barrowman if he has any specific mentors in his own professional development. She asked if the SESA parent library had books by Michelle Garcia Winters or Superflex books on autism.

MR. BARROWMAN agreed that paraeducators are the "keystone" of Alaskan's public schools and explained that there are currently free training videos available to paraeducators that directly

concern their line of work. He said that his team of paraeducators often "divide and conquer" between different aspects of professional development as a paraprofessional or paraeducator. He confirmed that the SESA library does have books by Michelle Garcia Winters and Superflex books about autism.

[9:35:54 AM](#)

LYON JOHNSON, Emotional Disabilities Education Specialist, Special Education Service Agency, gave a presentation titled "Technical Assistance to Alaskans". He picked up the presentation on slide 11, which highlighted the SESA LID emotional disabilities program and moved to slide 12, which highlighted three main points of feedback from the SESA LID emotional disabilities program.

[9:47:57 AM](#)

MERIAH CORY, Multiple Disabilities Education Specialist, Special Education Service Agency, gave a presentation titled "Technical Assistance to Alaskans". She picked up the presentation on slide 16, which highlighted the SESA LID multiple disabilities program and moved to slide 17, which highlighted three main points of feedback from the SESA LID multiple disabilities program.

[9:53:34 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE encouraged Ms. Yancy to create a sort of local advocacy program to help hire and retain special education teachers.

[9:54:56 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY thanked the invited testifiers for their work and impact on children around Alaska.

[9:55:49 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT delivered committee announcements.

[9:56:51 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

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