

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

April 4, 2025

8:06 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Bill Elam

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 90

"An Act establishing a financial literacy education program for public schools; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

PRESENTATION(S): SERRC ALASKA'S EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER HISTORY AND SUPPORT TO SCHOOL DISTRICTS

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 90

SHORT TITLE: FINANCIAL LITERACY PROGRAM IN SCHOOLS

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) EISCHEID

02/10/25	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/10/25	(H)	EDC, FIN
04/04/25	(H)	EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE TED EISCHEID
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As prime sponsor, gave a PowerPoint presentation on HB 90.

MEREDITH TRAINOR, Staff
Representative Ted Eischeid
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: On behalf of Representative Ted Eischeid, prime sponsor, presented HB 90 to the committee.

CHRIS REITAN, Executive Director
Southeast Alaska Regional Resource Center
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave a presentation titled "SERRC Alaska's Educational Resource Center History and Support to School Districts".

CHRIS GIRON, Facilities Program Manager
Southeast Alaska Regional Resource Center
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave a presentation titled "SERRC Alaska's Educational Resource Center History and Support to School Districts".

DAVID LANDIS, Facilities Specialist
Southeast Alaska Regional Resource Center
Ketchikan, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered committee questions on the presentation.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:06:21 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:06 a.m. Representatives Underwood, Eischeid, Story, Schwanke, and Himschoot were present at the call to order. Representative Dibert arrived as the meeting was in progress.

HB 90-FINANCIAL LITERACY PROGRAM IN SCHOOLS

[8:07:29 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 90, "An Act establishing a financial

literacy education program for public schools; and providing for an effective date."

8:09:25 AM

REPRESENTATIVE TED EISCHEID, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, gave a PowerPoint presentation on HB 90. He began on slide 2, which outlined the varying definitions of financial literacy and moved to slide 3, which emphasized the need for financial literacy curriculum in Alaska's school districts by pointing out statistics related to the average American's lack of financial knowledge. He continued to slide 4, which explained how HB 90 would implement its proposed policies throughout schools in Alaska and moved through slides 5-8, which listed the included topics that would be covered by HB 90 and concluded the presentation on slide 9.

8:19:46 AM

MEREDITH TRAINOR, Staff, Representative Ted Eischeid, Alaska State Legislature, on behalf of Representative Ted Eischeid, prime sponsor, presented HB 90 to the committee. She read the sectional analysis for HB 90 [included in the committee packet], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Section 1. AS 14.30 relating to public schools, adds a new section

a. Directing school districts to establish and provide a financial literacy education program, equivalent to a half credit, for students in grades nine through 12 that will be approved by the Department of Education & Early Development. And topics covered therein.

b. Creates an exemption to this graduation requirement for transfer students who cannot reasonably complete the course work.

c. Provides definitions.

Section 2. Provides an applicability date of January 1, 2027, for the first graduating class that will need to meet this requirement.

Section 3. Provides an effective date for the bill of July 1, 2026.

[8:20:55 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE asked if there is other language in Alaska Statute that mandates the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) to approve a proposed curriculum.

REPRESENTATIVE EISCHEID answered that the intent of the proposed legislation was to allow for a school district to adopt a program with a variety of curated financial literacy programs. He said that HB 90 would direct the DEED to review the proposed financial literacy curriculum every five years.

[8:24:25 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY shared her concern that HB 90 would place an undue budget burden on school districts by creating a new graduation requirement and asked the bill sponsor if his office had consulted school districts around Alaska for input on the proposed legislation.

REPRESENTATIVE EISCHEID explained that it was his intention for the proposed legislation to create a graduation requirement to the "extent practicable" for school districts to implement. He said that he spoke to the superintendent of the Juneau School District (JSD) and shared his belief that financial literacy is paramount in Alaskan's education careers.

[8:31:59 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE UNDERWOOD commented that financial literacy should be implemented for both legislators and students alike.

REPRESENTATIVE EISCHEID said that he often heard "why are we learning this" during his time as a teacher and emphasized that his role as a science teacher was to encourage his students to think scientifically and shared his admiration for the independence of Alaskans. He emphasized his belief that financial literacy might allow for people to realize the "American dream."

[8:36:23 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE shared a joke and asked if there are any current financial literacy requirements within the Anchorage School District (ASD).

REPRESENTATIVE EISCHEID answered that he would follow-up with more information regarding the ASD's financial literacy requirements. He shared a story about an 18 year-old and a 60-year old taking the same financial literacy class at a university as a means to emphasize the importance of the equity that financial literacy might provide someone.

[8:39:56 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DIBERT commented that she has a 20 year-old son whose only financial understanding is to save parts of his paycheck.

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT added that HB 90 might add to a burden of budgeting and staffing that school districts in Alaska are currently facing.

[8:43:16 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:43 a.m. to 8:45 a.m.

**PRESENTATION(S): SERRC Alaska's Educational Resource Center
History and Support to School Districts**

[8:45:46 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT announced that the first order of business would be a presentation titled "SERRC Alaska's Educational Resource Center History and Support to School Districts".

[8:46:40 AM](#)

CHRIS REITAN, Executive Director, Southeast Alaska Regional Resource Center, gave a presentation titled "SERRC Alaska's Educational Resource Center History and Support to School Districts". He began on slide 2, which highlighted the Southeast Alaska Regional Resource Center (SERRC)'s mission and vision as an education resource center and moved to slide 3, which described the history of SERRC's work in Alaska. He continued through slides 4-5, which outlined the SERRC's management and fiscal control structure as an entity and moved to slide 6, which highlighted the SERRC's primary function as an education resource center. He continued to slide 7, which detailed the SERRC's operations and office location in Alaska and moved to slide 8, which highlighted the SERRC's work in adult education and vocational training.

[8:51:00 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY asked how well the General Education Development (GED) is utilized in Alaska.

MR. REITAN shared an anecdote that the number of students who are utilizing the GED is growing.

[8:52:28 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE asked if SERRC delivers its services to adults across Alaska virtually.

MR. REITAN answered that SERRC serves some of its students virtually.

[8:53:28 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DIBERT asked the presenters to elaborate on the term "massed in Fairbanks".

[8:53:41 AM](#)

CHRIS GIRON, Facilities Program Manager, Southeast Alaska Regional Resource Center, gave a presentation titled "SERRC Alaska's Educational Resource Center History and Support to School Districts". He clarified that he was referring to SERRC's "massed" program being expanded outside of the Juneau area to other places in Alaska, like Fairbanks.

[8:54:35 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT asked how each different program that is administered by SERRC is funded.

MR. REITAN answered that all SERRC programs are funded by federal grants passed through the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DLWD) to SERRC.

[8:55:19 AM](#)

MR. REITAN resumed the presentation on slides 9-10, which detailed SERRC's district contracts and grant indirect costs. He continued to slide 11, which listed the various services that SERRC provides to school districts around Alaska.

[8:58:25 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE EISCHEID asked what SERRC defines as a "health career education" and asked what role the organization plays in such an education.

MR. REITAN explained that SERRC delivers a program through the Area Health Education Consortium (AHEC) that allows students to commence various health career education programs.

[8:59:48 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT asked about the scope of SERRC's contracted business services.

MR. REITAN replied that SERRC's business services are dependent on the needs of the school district they are contracted to and pointed to various school districts with varying needs that SERRC provides its services to.

[9:01:58 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DIBERT asked how many employees in SERRC are working in special education and asked if SERRC has any staff members working in speech language services in Fairbanks.

MR. REITAN answered that he would follow up with regard to the number of staff members working in special education services and said that the number of employees working in speech language service often varies by semester or calendar year.

[9:04:06 AM](#)

MR. REITAN resumed the presentation on slide 12, which gave a series of examples of school district contracts that the SERRC might engage in.

[9:05:36 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY asked if SERRC contracts out school counselors.

MR. REITAN answered that SERRC does contract school counselors once it determines a need for them in a school.

[9:06:38 AM](#)

MR. REITAN resumed the presentation on slide 13, which highlighted the local, state, and federal grant-funded services that the SERRC provides.

[9:07:48 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT asked how many school districts participate in academic decathlon.

MR. REITAN said that there were 13 school districts that participated in the statewide academic decathlon competition.

[9:09:10 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY asked Mr. Reitan to detail the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) trades training.

MR. REITAN answered that SERRC would pay for any of a prospective student's needs in their participation in a UAS trades program.

[9:10:34 AM](#)

MR. REITAN resumed the presentation on slide 14, which detailed four key school facilities programs that the SERRC provides to school districts in Alaska.

[9:13:03 AM](#)

MR. GIRON picked up the presentation on slides 15-17, which further detailed the school facilities programs that the SERRC provides to schools in Alaska.

[9:23:35 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE asked Mr. Giron to further elaborate on the Capitol Improvement Grant (CIP) process and application cost.

MR. GIRON replied that SERRC "prides itself" in maintain affordable services to schools and said that the cost of a CIP grant application is generally about \$3,000.

[9:32:30 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY asked Mr. Giron for his thoughts and suggestions on how SERRC could help to improve the CIP grant application process.

MR. GIRON shared his belief that both school districts and business contractors could benefit from some sort of standardization in the CIP grant process.

[9:36:46 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT asked if emergency maintenance events are generally covered by a school building's insurances.

MR. GIRON answered that the DEED does have a series of standards that qualify a maintenance event for emergency funding.

[9:40:03 AM](#)

DAVID LANDIS, Facilities Specialist, Southeast Alaska Regional Resource Center, answered committee questions on the presentation. He added that emergency projects are simply put on a normal CIP list and emphasized that there is no real emergency maintenance fund for school buildings in Alaska. He said that schools often have to direct funds to emergency maintenance through other avenues, like insurance, crowdfunding, or general funds.

[9:43:24 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SCHWANKE shared her understanding that catastrophic failures and emergency maintenance end up lower on a CIP list because they are not eligible to be reimbursed like a normal maintenance request.

MR. GIRON confirmed Representative Schwanke's understanding of how the CIP grant interacts with emergency maintenance.

[9:45:23 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY asked if SERRC is concerned that only 60% of school districts in Alaska complete an annual CIP application and asked Mr. Giron if he felt that school districts in Alaska were adequately informed of the services that entities like SERRC provide to school districts.

MR. GIRON said that about 30% of the school districts that SERRC works with are utilizing the organization's help in completing CIP applications.

MR. LANDIS added that there is an inequity across the state with regards to payment and construction of school facilities maintenance.

[9:48:41 AM](#)

MR. GIRON resumed the presentation on slide 18, which detailed the SERRC's facilities maintenance program project administration.

[9:51:40 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY asked if the employment of architects and engineers at SERRC would be beneficial.

MR. LANDIS answered that the Bond Reimbursement & Grant Review (BRGR) Committee within SERRC is membered by a variety of architects, engineers, and industry specialists to assist school districts in completing CIP applications.

[9:56:38 AM](#)

MR. GIRON resumed the presentation on slide 19, which outlined the SERRC facilities maintenance program Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA) re-inspections and concluded the presentation on slide 20, which detailed the facilities maintenance contracts that SERRC is serving in fiscal year (FY) 2025.

[9:58:53 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR HIMSCHOOT asked Mr. Reitan if SERRC has any grant writers on its staff.

MR. REITAN replied that SERRC has "in some regards, a lot of grant writers on staff" because of the nature of the work that SERRC does in constantly writing various grants applications.

[10:00:46 AM](#)

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

10:01:24 AM

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 10:01 a.m.