

**SB**

**17**

<TARGET><BILL>SB 17</BILL><SUBJECT>SB  
17</SUBJECT><COMM>SFIN28</COMM></TARGET>

# SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

DATE: 2/4/13

FURTHER: Rules

DATE TURNED  
IN TO OFFICE: 3/27/13

Finance Committee considered SENATE BILL NO. 17

SB 17 EXTEND SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICE AGENCY

"An Act extending the special education service agency; and providing for an effective date."

and recommends:

be replaced with CS SB 17 (FIN) [ ] Same Title  New Title

[ ] adopt previous CS \_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_\_) [ ] Same Title [ ] New Title

[ ] attached amendment(s)

SCS/CS- Forthcoming

[ ] adopt \_\_\_\_\_ Letter of Intent

[ ] further referral to \_\_\_\_\_ Committee

Dept Abbr.	
ADM	LWF
CED	LAW
COR	LEG
CRT	MVA
EED	DNR
DEC	DPS
DFG	REV
GOV	DOT
DHS	UA

NEW FISCAL NOTE(S)				
Dept.	Fiscal	Indet.	Zero	FN #
Fiscal Info Forthcoming				

PREVIOUS FISCAL NOTE(S)				
Dept.	Fiscal	Indet.	Zero	FN #

[ ] APPROPRIATION - no fiscal note

SIGNATURES AND RECOMMENDATIONS:	PRINTED LAST NAME	DO PASS	DO NOT PASS	NO REC	AMEND
<i>Anna I. Fairclough</i>	FAIRCLOUGH	✓			
<i>Cliff Bishop</i>	BISHOP	✓			
<i>[Signature]</i>	Duplissy	✓			
<i>[Signature]</i>	Hoffman	✓			
<i>[Signature]</i>	Orfanos				✓
CS CHAIR: <i>K. M. [Signature]</i>	Mayer	✓			
CO-CHAIR:					

# Fiscal Note

State of Alaska  
2013 Legislative Session

Bill Version: SB 17  
Fiscal Note Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
( ) Publish Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Identifier: CSSB017-EED-K12-3-27-13  
Title: EXTEND SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICE  
AGENCY  
Sponsor: STEVENS  
Requester: Senate Rules Committee

Department: Department of Education and Early Development  
Appropriation: K-12 Support  
Allocation: Special Schools  
OMB Component Number: 2735

**Expenditures/Revenues**

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below. (Thousands of Dollars)

	FY2014	Included in	Out-Year Cost Estimates				
	Appropriation Requested	Governor's FY2014 Request	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019
<b>OPERATING EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>FY 2014</b>	<b>FY 2014</b>					
Personal Services							
Travel							
Services							
Commodities							
Capital Outlay							
Grants & Benefits	374.8	2,035.5	2,410.3	2,410.3	2,410.3	2,410.3	2,410.3
Miscellaneous							
<b>Total Operating</b>	<b>374.8</b>	<b>2,035.5</b>	<b>2,410.3</b>	<b>2,410.3</b>	<b>2,410.3</b>	<b>2,410.3</b>	<b>2,410.3</b>

**Fund Source (Operating Only)**

1004 Gen Fund	374.8	2,035.5	2,410.3	2,410.3	2,410.3	2,410.3	2,410.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>374.8</b>	<b>2,035.5</b>	<b>2,410.3</b>	<b>2,410.3</b>	<b>2,410.3</b>	<b>2,410.3</b>	<b>2,410.3</b>

**Positions**

Full-time							
Part-time							
Temporary							

<b>Change in Revenues</b>							
---------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Estimated SUPPLEMENTAL (FY2013) cost: 373.8

Estimated CAPITAL (FY2014) cost: 0.0

**ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS**

Does the bill direct, or will the bill result in, regulation changes adopted by your agency? No  
If yes, by what date are the regulations to be adopted, amended or repealed?

**Why this fiscal note differs from previous version:**

The CS increases the funding for SESA from \$15.75 to \$18.65 multiplied by ADM; removes language from AS 14.30.650 regarding reducing SESA's allocation to account for PERS/TRS payments made by the department; amends the sunset date for SESA to June 30, 2017; and would take effect immediately.

Prepared By: Elizabeth Nudelman, Director  
Division: School Finance and Facilities  
Approved By: Mike Hanley  
Commissioner

Phone: (907)465-8679  
Date: 03/27/2013 04:30 PM  
Date: 03/27/13

FISCAL NOTE ANALYSIS

STATE OF ALASKA  
2013 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. CSSB17

**Analysis**

This legislation amends AS 14.30.650, the funding for the Special Education Service Agency (SESA), by increasing the funding from \$15.75 times the average daily membership (ADM) to \$18.65 times the ADM.

In addition, this legislation is removing language in AS 14.30.650 which addresses the department to reduce payments to SESA by the amount the department contributes to the Alaska public employee and teacher retirement (PERS/TRS) system on-behalf of SESA.

This legislation extends the sunset date for the Special Education Service Agency (SESA) from June 30, 2013 to June 30, 2017. Additionally, the uncodified law is amended stating this Act is retroactive to June 30, 2013.

Since the legislation would take effect immediately under AS 01.10.070(c), the formula for SESA would increase for FY2013 and a supplemental would be required. The current FY2013 SESA Entitlement is \$2,029,952 (FY2012 actual ADM of 128,885.84 x \$15.75). Under the CSSB17, the total entitlement would be \$2,403,721 (FY2012 actual ADM of 128,885.84 x \$18.65); an increase of \$373,769.

SESA is governed by the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education. It provides outreach services to school districts that serve low incidence severely disabled students. [AS 14.30.600 - 660]

FY2014 Calculation:

FY2013 Preliminary ADM:	129,240.60
FY2014 Projected SESA Entitlement (appropriation in budget at \$15.75)	\$2,035,539
FY2014 Projected SESA Entitlement (CSSB17 at \$18.65)	<u>\$2,410,337</u>
Additional funding necessary for FY2014 based on CSSB17	\$ 374,798

**CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 17(FIN)**

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Offered:

Referred:

Sponsor(s): SENATORS STEVENS, Ellis, Gardner

**A BILL****FOR AN ACT ENTITLED**

1 "An Act relating to allocations to the special education service agency and extending the  
2 special education service agency; and providing for an effective date."

3 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

4 \* **Section 1.** AS 14.30.650 is amended to read:

5       **Sec. 14.30.650. Funding.** Each fiscal year the department shall allocate to the  
6 agency not less than \$18.65 [\$15.75] times the number of students in the state in  
7 average daily membership in the preceding fiscal year as determined under  
8 AS 14.17.600. Money to carry out the provisions of this section may be appropriated  
9 annually by the legislature. If amounts are insufficient to meet the allocation  
10 authorized under this section for a fiscal year, the allocation shall be reduced pro rata.  
11 [THE AMOUNT ALLOCATED TO THE AGENCY SHALL BE REDUCED EACH  
12 FISCAL YEAR BY THE AMOUNT CONTRIBUTED BY THE DEPARTMENT TO  
13 THE TEACHERS' RETIREMENT SYSTEM (AS 14.25) OR THE PUBLIC  
14 EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM (AS 39.35) ON BEHALF OF

1 EMPLOYEES OF THE AGENCY.]

2 \* **Sec. 2.** AS 44.66.010(6) is amended to read:

3 (6) special education service agency (AS 14.30.600) - **June 30, 2017**

4 [JUNE 30, 2013];

5 \* **Sec. 3.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to  
6 read:

7 RETROACTIVITY. Section 2 of this Act is retroactive to June 30, 2013.

8 \* **Sec. 4.** This Act takes effect immediately under AS 01.10.070(c).

ADOPTED  
3/27/13

28-LS0289\P  
Mischel  
3/20/13

**CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 17(FIN)**

**IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA**

**TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION**

**BY THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**Offered:  
Referred:**

**Sponsor(s): SENATORS STEVENS, Ellis, Gardner**

**A BILL**

**FOR AN ACT ENTITLED**

1 **"An Act relating to allocations to the special education service agency and extending the**  
2 **special education service agency; and providing for an effective date."**

3 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

4 **\* Section 1. AS 14.30.650 is amended to read:**

5 **Sec. 14.30.650. Funding.** Each fiscal year the department shall allocate to the  
6 **agency not less than \$18.65 [\$15.75] times the number of students in the state in**  
7 **average daily membership in the preceding fiscal year as determined under**  
8 **AS 14.17.600. Money to carry out the provisions of this section may be appropriated**  
9 **annually by the legislature. If amounts are insufficient to meet the allocation**  
10 **authorized under this section for a fiscal year, the allocation shall be reduced pro rata.**  
11 **[THE AMOUNT ALLOCATED TO THE AGENCY SHALL BE REDUCED EACH**  
12 **FISCAL YEAR BY THE AMOUNT CONTRIBUTED BY THE DEPARTMENT TO**  
13 **THE TEACHERS' RETIREMENT SYSTEM (AS 14.25) OR THE PUBLIC**  
14 **EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM (AS 39.35) ON BEHALF OF**

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8

EMPLOYEES OF THE AGENCY.]

\* **Sec. 2.** AS 44.66.010(6) is amended to read:

(6) special education service agency (AS 14.30.600) - June 30, 2017

[JUNE 30, 2013];

\* **Sec. 3.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to read:

**RETROACTIVITY.** Section 2 of this Act is retroactive to June 30, 2013.

\* **Sec. 4.** This Act takes effect immediately under AS 01.10.070(c).

# TESTIFY ON SB17

---

**From:** Patrick Pillai <ppillai@sesa.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 19, 2013 6:31 PM  
**To:** Tim Lamkin  
**Cc:** Patrick Pillai  
**Subject:** Finalized list for testimony

New names added in green. All of those listed below will be calling in. I asked teachers and parents to keep it to two minutes or less.

1. PJ Ford Slack (SESA Board President and Principal in Sitka) will testify.
2. Margaret Kavenaugh, parent of a child with a disability and retired school teacher will testify.
3. Genevieve Hollins (SESA Business Manager) will be available online to assist with questions.
4. Eric Gephart (representing governor's council will testify)
5. Christine Cook who is a parent/teacher in Whale Pass on POW Island will testify
6. Jennifer Eubanks (special education teacher) will testify.

Thanks Tim!  
Patrick

--  
*Patrick Pillai, Executive Director*  
*Special Education Service Agency (SESA)*  
*3501 Denali Street, Anchorage AK 99503*  
*Ph: 907 334 1300 Fax: 907 562 0545*  
*TTY: 907 563 8284*  
[www.sesa.org](http://www.sesa.org)

-----  
The information contained in this email (including any attachments) is confidential and may be privileged. If you are not the intended recipient, do not read, print, copy, retain, distribute, or disclose its content. If you have received this email in error, please advise us by return email.  
-----

SESSION ADDRESS:  
Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182  
(907) 465-4925  
Fax: (907) 465-3517  
Toll Free: 1-800-821-4925

**Senator Gary Stevens**  
**Alaska State Legislature**

INTERIM ADDRESS:  
112 Mill Bay Road  
Kodiak, Alaska 99615  
(907) 486-4925  
Fax: (907) 486-5264



***SPONSOR STATEMENT***

***CS for SENATE BILL 17 (EDU)***

**"An Act relating to allocations to the special education service agency and extending the special education service agency; and providing for an effective date."**

SB 17 would extend the sunset date for the Special Education Service Agency (SESA) to June 30, 2021. In its current version it also repeals some extraneous language that has never been a necessary tool for the manner in which the Department of Education & Early Development (DEED) and SESA do business.

Currently on the books is a provision for DEED to reimburse itself with SESA funds when DEED contributes to the Alaska public employee and teachers retirement (PERS/TRS) system on behalf of SESA. However, DEED allocates annually to SESA the full amount appropriated to it by the Legislature. SESA contributes to PERS/TRS directly from those funds. There has never been a need for, nor the practice of, DEED contributing to the PERS/TRS system on behalf of SESA. Thus, all the agencies involved agree that that statutory language should be repealed.

SESA is a public agency, created in 1986 under Alaska statute AS 14.30.600. It is governed by the Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special Education. SESA was created to assist Alaska school districts to serve children with low incidence disabilities. Technical assistance, provided by specialists with advanced training and specialized disability experience, is provided at no cost to school districts. Specifically, SESA is tasked to provide:

- (A) itinerant outreach services to students who are deaf, deaf-blind, mentally retarded, hearing impaired, blind and visually impaired, orthopedically disabled, health-impaired in other ways, and severely emotionally disturbed, and to students with multiple disabilities;
- (B) special education instructional support and training of local school district special education personnel; and
- (C) other services appropriate to special education needs.

SESA must be reauthorized this session to avoid discontinuation of these services beginning July 1, 2013.

SESA performs an effective and efficient service to school districts educating students with low incidence disabilities. SESA employs 11 education specialists who provided services to 45 school districts and more than 200 students during the last school year. During this time, SESA also provided 320 onsite consultations with school districts.

*The August 2012 Alaska Legislative Budget and Audit Committee Report concluded:* "SESA meets a valid public need by:

- (1) assisting school districts in providing students affected by low incidence disabilities (LID) an education that meets their unique needs;
- (2) affording opportunities to enhance the capabilities of school district teachers and paraprofessionals; and
- (3) providing LID and special education resources.

We recommend the legislature extend SESA's termination date until June 30, 2021." SESA offers services not provided by any other government or private sector agency in the State of Alaska. Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

Senate District R  
Senator\_Gary\_Stevens@legis.state.ak.us

SESSION ADDRESS:  
Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182  
(907) 465-4925  
Fax: (907) 465-3517  
Toll Free: 1-800-821-4925

**Senator Gary Stevens**  
**Alaska State Legislature**

INTERIM ADDRESS:  
112 Mill Bay Road  
Kodiak, Alaska 99615  
(907) 486-4925  
Fax: (907) 486-5264



***SECTIONAL ANALYSIS***  
***CS for SENATE BILL 17 (EDU)***

**"An Act relating to allocations to the special education service agency and extending the special education service agency; and providing for an effective date."**

- Section 1: Repeals language requiring the Dept. of Education & Early Development (DEED) to reimburse itself with SESA funds for monies contributed to the state retirement system on behalf of SESA employees. However, in practice SESA manages and contributes its own funds directly to the PERS/TRS system and therefore this language is extraneous.
- Section 2: Extends the sunset date for SESA to June 30, 2021.
- Section 3: Provides for a retroactive effective date in the event the bill doesn't pass before June 30, 2013.
- Section 4: Provides for an immediate effective date.

## Tim Lamkin

---

**From:** Slotnick, Stephen C (LAW) <neil.slotnick@alaska.gov>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 28, 2013 10:38 AM  
**To:** Tim Lamkin (tim\_lamkin@legis.state.ak.us)  
**Cc:** Badgley, Cori M (LAW)  
**Subject:** AS 14.30.650

Tim:

Thank you for bringing AS 14.30.650 to our attention. As you noted, the last sentence of this statute reads as follows:

“The amount allocated to the agency shall be reduced each fiscal year by the amount contributed by the department to the Teachers' Retirement System (AS 14.25) or the Public Employees' Retirement System (AS 39.35) on behalf of employees of the agency.”

I checked with the Division of School Finance at EED, and the Division of Retirement and Benefits at DOA. They agree with you that this sentence serves no purpose because SESA pays its own retirement contributions. EED does not make the contributions on behalf of SESA. Therefore, this sentence is extraneous and it would be appropriate to repeal it.

Please let us know if you need further assistance.

Neil Slotnick  
Assistant Attorney General

**Tim Lamkin**

---

---

**From:** Nudelman, Elizabeth M (EED) [<mailto:elizabeth.nudelman@alaska.gov>]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 29, 2013 12:25 PM  
**To:** Tim Lamkin  
**Subject:** RE: AS 14.30.650

Tim-

Thank you for your follow up email. The division of school finance concurs that the final sentence at 14.30.650-

“The amount allocated to the agency shall be reduced each fiscal year by the amount contributed by the department to the Teachers' Retirement System (AS 14.25) or the Public Employees' Retirement System (AS 39.35) on behalf of employees of the agency.”

is not necessary because the department does not make the PERS/TRS payment for SESA.

SESA, as a participant in the PERS and TRS plans makes payment to the department of administration and reports these financial transactions in the budget and audit documents in the same manner as other employers.

Thank you,

Elizabeth Nudelman  
Director of School Finance  
State of Alaska Department of Education &  
Early Development

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

## LEGISLATIVE BUDGET AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

Division of Legislative Audit



P.O. Box 113300  
Juneau, AK 99811-3300  
(907) 465-3830  
FAX (907) 465-2347  
legaudit@legis.state.ak.us

August 29, 2012

Members of the Legislative Budget  
and Audit Committee:

In accordance with the provisions of Title 24 and Title 44 of the Alaska Statutes (sunset legislation), we have reviewed the activities of the Special Education Service Agency, and the attached report is submitted for your review.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT  
AND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES  
SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICE AGENCY  
SUNSET REVIEW

June 22, 2012

Audit Control Number  
05-20073-12

This audit was conducted as required by AS 44.66.050 and under the authority of AS 24.20.271(1). Currently, under AS 44.66.010(a)(6), the Special Education Service Agency is scheduled to terminate June 30, 2013. In our opinion, the termination date for this agency should be extended. We recommend the legislature extend the termination date to June 30, 2021.

The audit was conducted in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. Fieldwork procedures utilized in the course of developing the conclusions, findings and recommendations presented in this report are discussed in the Objectives, Scope, and Methodology.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kris Curtis".

Kris Curtis, CPA, CISA  
Legislative Auditor

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Objectives, Scope, and Methodology .....	1
Organization and Function .....	5
Background Information.....	9
Report Conclusions.....	13
Findings and Recommendations.....	15
Auditor’s Comments .....	21
Analysis of Public Need .....	23
Appendix A – SESA Revenues and Expenditures Schedule FY 08 through FY 12.....	31
Appendix B – SESA Student Count by School District for Low Incidence Disability and Dual Sensory Impairment Programs .....	33
Agency Responses	
Department of Education and Early Development .....	35
Department of Health and Social Services .....	37
Special Education Service Agency .....	39
Governor’s Council on Disabilities and Special Education .....	43

## OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

In accordance with Title 24 and 44 of the Alaska Statutes, we have reviewed the activities of the Special Education Service Agency (SESA) to determine if there is a demonstrated public need for its continued existence and if it has been operating in an efficient and effective manner.

As required by AS 44.66.050(a), this report shall be considered by the committee of reference during the legislative oversight process in determining whether SESA should be reestablished. Currently, under AS 44.66.010(a)(1), SESA will terminate on June 30, 2013, and will have one year from that date to conclude its administrative operations.

### Objectives

The three central interrelated objectives of our audit were to:

1. Determine if the termination date of the agency should be extended.
2. Determine if the agency is operating in the public's interest.
3. Provide a current status of the recommendations made in the prior sunset audit report.

Our assessment of SESA's operations and performance is based on criteria set out in AS 44.66.050(c). These criteria relate to the determination of a demonstrated public need for the continued existence of the agency.

### Scope and Methodology

The audit evaluated SESA operations from July 1, 2008, through June 22, 2012. The audit reviewed information from SESA's database that tracks student information, specialist contacts and travel information, and SESA trainings and conferences that occurred from July 1, 2011, through March 22, 2012.

During the course of the audit, we examined:

- Applicable statutes to identify SESA's functions and responsibilities. We also reviewed proposed legislation and related testimony for statutory changes.
- A random sample of SESA students affected by low incidence disabilities (LID). SESA students were selected from the database, as of March 22, 2012, to verify evidence that SESA services were provided as documented in the database.

- SESA board minutes to gain an understanding of agency proceedings and activities as well as the nature and extent of public input.
- Public notice documentation to ascertain whether notice of board meetings was published as required by statute.
- SESA and board policies and procedures related to agency operations.
- SESA audited financial statements and grant agreements to prepare a schedule of revenues and expenditures for FY 08 through FY 11. We prepared the FY 12 financial schedule based on estimates provided by SESA management. The unaudited FY 12 financial estimates are included for comparison purposes.
- SESA's two-year operations plans submitted to the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) for statutory compliance.
- DEED's monitoring report of SESA's LID and dual sensory disability programs to determine if DEED identified areas for improvement.
- SESA personnel files for qualifications and related experience.

We also assessed the control procedures related to various objectives of the audit, including controls over SESA database, student records, and board proceedings.

We inquired if any complaints regarding SESA were filed with the:

- DEED commissioner's office;
- Alaska State Commission for Human Rights;
- Office of the Ombudsman;
- Office of Victim's Rights;
- Department of Administration, Division of Personnel and Labor Relations;
- American Federation of Teachers;
- Alaska Disability Law Center; and
- United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

To identify and evaluate the various issues relating to SESA activities, we conducted interviews with state agency staff, SESA staff and board members, and the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education executive director. Topics of inquiry included SESA operations, statutes, funding, and duplication of efforts.

We interviewed a sample of school district special education directors and teachers to obtain their perspective on the qualifications of SESA education specialists, sufficiency of SESA on-site visits and interim contacts, duplication of efforts, and SESA's operations. We also

examined SESA's surveys from school district personnel and attendees of SESA conferences and trainings for their perspective of SESA operations and services.

(Intentionally left blank)

## ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTION

The Special Education Service Agency (SESA or agency) was established in 1986 by the legislature to provide the following special education services:

- (A) *Itinerant outreach services to students who are deaf, deaf-blind, [mental disabilities], hearing impaired, blind and visually impaired, orthopedically disabled, health- impaired in other ways, and severely emotionally disturbed, and to students with multiple disabilities;*
- (B) *Special education instructional support and training of local school district special education personnel; and*
- (C) *Other services appropriate to special education needs.*

SESA is governed by the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (council). However, SESA is a nonprofit organization that has its own independent board of directors consisting of no fewer than eight and no more than ten members. SESA's corporate bylaws require that not less than five and no more than seven council members be on SESA's board.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the council has the voting majority. Representation on SESA's board of directors also includes: the Department of Education's Office of Special Education administrator or his/her designee; one member appointed by the Alaska Association of School Administrators; one member appointed by the Alaska Confederation of Administrators of Special Education; and one teacher appointed by the National Education Association/Alaska, with a rural teacher preference.

In FY 12, SESA had 30 employees, including: an executive director, a program director, ten education specialists for the low incidence disability (LID) program, three specialists for the positive behavior program, one specialist for the education transition support project, a librarian, three autism resource center staff, and ten support staff. Although SESA employees are not under the executive branch's classified personnel system, they are statutorily under the Public Employees' Retirement System or the Teachers' Retirement System.

During August 2009, SESA opened a Fairbanks office to provide autism outreach services to interior Alaska. Various stakeholders visited the office to access services, books, trainings, and video teleconferencing. During SESA's June 2012 board meeting, due to a decline in autism resource funding, a motion was passed to close the Fairbanks office when the office lease expires August 2012.

---

<sup>1</sup>Required under SESA's Bylaw 9110. Additionally, the bylaw provides that the council's executive director may serve as a non-voting ex-officio member of the SESA board.

The FY 12 budget for SESA was \$4.7 million. Approximately \$2 million of SESA's funding is derived from a statutory appropriation<sup>2</sup> through the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED). These funds are spent on operations and support for the agency and for services provided to various school districts for students affected by LID.

The remaining \$2.7 million of SESA's funding is from federal and state grants. The funds are used by SESA to provide services for the following programs:

- Alaska Autism Resource Center – Funding for the center is provided by a DEED grant funded by federal, Mental Health Trust Authority, and state general fund monies. This program provides information, referrals, training, and consultation to families, caregivers, and providers who have individuals affected by autism spectrum disorders.
- Alaska Dual Sensory Impairment Services – This program is funded by a five-year grant from the United States Department of Education. Parents and professionals receive consultation and training for children and youth up to 21 years old who are affected by both vision and hearing impairments.
- Educational Transition Support Project – The project was funded and developed by DHSS to establish a non-direct services program to support youth returning to Alaska schools from residential psychiatric treatment centers. SESA establishes communications with residential psychiatric treatment centers and assists with advance notice of student returns, transition of necessary paperwork, and follow up of recommended services.
- Guiding and Investing in New Special Educators (GAINS) – GAINS is a five-year initiative funded by DEED to address the key problems of an inadequate supply of qualified, trained educational personnel to meet the needs of Alaska's special education population. SESA staff work with a component of the GAINS initiative that provides services to preschool and early childhood educators in rural, remote Alaskan school districts through mentoring and training staff in best practices for early childhood education.
- Library – SESA maintains an extensive library to support its staff and school districts. The library is also available to educators, families, university students, and other service providers throughout Alaska. Assistive technology devices may be borrowed to try or use while a student's own device is being repaired.

---

<sup>2</sup>Under AS 14.30.650, DEED is required to allocate to SESA an amount not less than \$15.75 for each student in the State's average daily membership (ADM) from the preceding fiscal year. ADM is determined by the student counting procedures used for the public school foundation formula.

- National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard – Funded by DEED, this federal program was established through the American Printing House for the Blind to help users affected by a wide range of disabilities access printed materials on a variety of hardware and software reading devices. The federal program files are used to create accessible specialized formats (such as Braille, audio, digital talking books, and large print).
- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports Center – The center is a state resource funded by DEED to provide information, training, and technical assistance in the area of positive behavioral interventions and supports to Alaskan educators and communities throughout the State.

(Intentionally left blank)

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

According to the 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the State is required to provide “a free appropriate public education” to each child affected by a disability who needs special education.

Special education refers to instruction specially designed to meet the unique needs of a child affected by a disability at no cost to the parents. Specially designed instruction means adapting the content, methodology, and/or delivery of instruction to address the unique needs of each child affected by a disability and ensuring the child has access to the general education curriculum.

As a component of public school funding, school districts are eligible for special education funding based on a formula established in AS 14.17. The State also provides intensive funding for students affected by disabilities whose special education needs are significantly more complex and require frequent individualized services and attention. These individualized services require more resources than the services received by other special education students. If a student meets the eligibility requirements set out in regulations, a district may claim student services for reimbursement at the intensive funding rate as opposed to the regular special education allocation.

Some disabilities occur at such a low incidence rate that school district special education teachers do not have the necessary expertise to effectively teach children affected by such disabilities. The Special Education Service Agency (SESA) assists districts in serving children affected by low incidence disabilities (LID).

According to the Session Laws of Alaska, the legislature created SESA intending that SESA:

- (1) *Assist districts and rural educational attendance areas to make more special education and related services available to exceptional children, as that term is defined in Alaska Statute 14.30.350;*
- (2) *Encourage cooperation between districts and education agencies in making special educational programs and services available to these children; [and]*
- (3) *Ensure that qualified specialists are available to assist districts in the provision of free appropriate public education services for those exceptional children that are difficult to serve, without regard to their location in the state.*

SESA was established as a nonprofit corporation whose governing authority is the Governor’s Council on Disabilities and Special Education within the Department of Health

and Social Services. However, SESA's primary service, the LID Outreach Program, is budgeted and funded by the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED). This funding is independent of the intensive funding school districts may otherwise receive. SESA's funding provides additional financial support to help ensure that students affected by LID are receiving the free and appropriate public education required by state and federal laws.

SESA employs education specialists with advanced special education training and specialized disability experience. SESA specialists provide technical assistance to help school district personnel and parents develop and implement an effective education program based on each student's needs.

To be eligible for SESA services through the LID program, students' special education needs must be considered low incidence (occurring infrequently in the special education population). Additionally, school district enrollment of children with similar needs must be too low to warrant a district-employed specialist.

In order for SESA to provide services for the LID program, a written referral from a school district's special education director is required. School districts determine student eligibility for special education services prior to referral and provide supporting documentation of the eligibility determination to SESA.<sup>3</sup>

Any of the following five LID qualify for SESA's LID program:

- Autism Impairments – Students must have a diagnosis of autism or Asperger's syndrome to be eligible for services.
- Hearing Impairments – Students must be affected by a hearing impairment that adversely affects his or her educational performance in order to receive services.
- Emotional Disturbances – Services are provided to students diagnosed as emotionally disturbed and having associated characteristics that adversely affect educational performance.
- Multiple Disabilities – Students must be affected by:
  - Two or more severe disabilities;
  - Moderate or severe mental disabilities;
  - Orthopedic impairments;
  - Other health impairments;
  - Traumatic brain injuries; or
  - Preschool developmental delays.

---

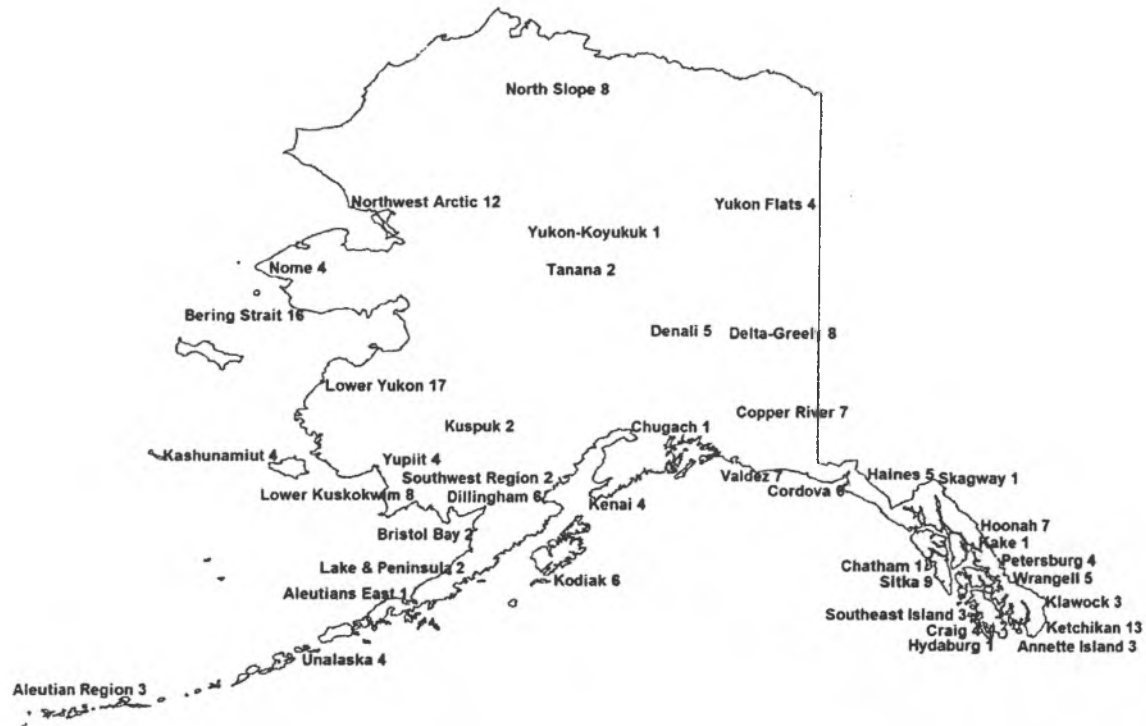
<sup>3</sup>Supporting documentation includes medical, psychological, and other diagnostic reports.

- Vision Impairments – Students must be visually impaired to the extent defined by regulatory criteria to receive services under this program.

As of March 2012, SESA assisted in delivering specialized education to over 200 children affected by LID within 45 school districts throughout Alaska. Exhibit 1 and Appendix B of this report show, by school district, the number of students that SESA serves.

**Exhibit 1**

**Number of SESA LID Students  
in School Districts**



SESA assists school districts in providing special education services to students including, but not limited to:

- Specially designed instruction including the context, methodology, and delivery methods to meet each student’s unique educational needs;
- Assistive technology services;<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Assistive technology services include: evaluating students in their natural environment as required by the 2004 IDEA; providing for the acquisition of assistive technology devices and their application, maintenance, and repair; and training or technical assistance for the child, the child’s family, and educational staff.

- Assessments of the child's environment to identify educational resources and needed skills;
- Behavioral intervention techniques;
- Instruction strategies;
- Functional assessments;
- Orientation and mobility training for visually impaired students;
- Assistance in classroom adaptations;
- Assistance in developing students' individual educational plan goals, objectives, and activities; and
- Assistance in coordinating appropriate specialized services.

In addition to student consultation services, SESA provides LID training to school district teachers and paraprofessionals. Training is available through classes, web-based courses, and seminars.

## REPORT CONCLUSIONS

In concluding whether the Special Education Service Agency's (SESA) termination date should be extended, we evaluated SESA operations using the 11 factors set out in the State's "sunset" law, AS 44.66.050(c). These factors are used to assess whether an agency has demonstrated a public need for continuing operation.

With the exceptions noted in the Findings and Recommendations section of this report, SESA is operating in the public's interest. In our opinion, SESA meets a valid public need by: (1) assisting school districts in providing students affected by low incidence disabilities (LID) an education that meets their unique needs; (2) affording opportunities to enhance school district teachers and paraprofessionals' capabilities; and (3) providing LID and special education resources. The Analysis of Public Need section of this report further evaluates SESA activities.

Under AS 44.66.010(a)(6), SESA is scheduled to terminate June 30, 2013. We recommend SESA's termination date be extended until June 30, 2021.

(Intentionally left blank)

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There were no recommendations from the prior audit. However, the prior audit suggested that the legislature consider reviewing the Special Education Service Agency's (SESA or agency) funding formula concurrent with the revision of the State's public school funding formula. To date, SESA's statutory funding formula has not changed, and we reiterate this prior issue in Recommendation No. 1.

### Recommendation No. 1

The Department of Education and Early Development's (DEED or department) special education director and SESA management should collaborate to ensure SESA is operating and funded as intended by the legislature.

DEED management has not actively assessed SESA activities and funding to ensure that the department and the agency are fulfilling legislative intent by providing appropriate services to children affected by low incidence disabilities (LID).

The State is required to meet the 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act to:

*Ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designated to meet their unique needs.*

The State carries out this mandate through DEED. The legislature intended for SESA to help DEED fulfill this requirement by assisting school districts with providing special education for children affected by LID.

There is confusion regarding DEED's oversight authority over SESA because SESA is governed by the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (council). Additionally, SESA is a nonprofit corporation with a board of directors that helps guide its activities. Regardless of the council and SESA's own board's oversight, Alaska Statutes relating to SESA specify that DEED is responsible for providing funding and ensuring that children affected by LID are being appropriately served in their school districts. SESA's organizational structure is further discussed in the Auditor's Comment section of this report.

DEED's responsibilities in overseeing SESA activities are outlined as follows.

- Alaska Statute 14.30.650 requires DEED to allocate funding to SESA to serve children affected by LID.
- Alaska Statute 14.30.630(b)(3)-(4) requires SESA to submit an operation plan and an annual budget to DEED.

- SESA bylaws designate the Department of Education's Office of Special Education administrator or designee as a SESA board member.

Although not a SESA-related statutory requirement, DEED has historically monitored the LID and dual sensory impairment programs based on federal guidance used to monitor school districts. During FY 12, SESA assisted DEED in meeting its federal requirement by providing necessary services to over 200 children affected by LID within 45 Alaskan school districts. Exhibit 1 (page 11) and Appendix B of this report show the number of students affected by LID and receiving SESA services in each school district.

DEED did not fulfill their oversight responsibility and effectively collaborate with SESA in the following operational areas.

1. SESA funding is not actively evaluated by DEED for operational needs.

In 1998, legislation was enacted that revised public school funding statutes and the statutory funding formula for SESA. Alaska Statute 14.30.650 states:

*Each fiscal year the department shall allocate to the agency **not less than \$15.75 times** [emphasis added] the number of students in the state in average daily membership in the preceding fiscal year as determined under AS 14.17.600.*

Over the past 14 years, school districts have received increases in their funding formula, yet SESA's funding formula has not increased. DEED can allocate an amount greater than the statutory amount of \$15.75 but has not done so. According to DEED management, the historical process for evaluating and increasing SESA funding has been a legislative process, and DEED does not consider recommending budgetary increases to be a departmental responsibility.

Due to inflation, the real value of SESA's LID budget, as established 14 years ago, has decreased by approximately 36 percent. Accounting for inflation since 1998, SESA's funding formula in today's dollars would be approximately \$21.50<sup>5</sup> per student rather than the current funding formula amount of \$15.75. As a result, SESA is experiencing challenges with recruiting and retaining education specialists with specialized disability endorsements and meeting school districts' need for itinerant outreach services. As illustrated in Appendix A, SESA's general funds received for the LID program are approximately \$2 million per year.

In March 2011, the council supported House Bill 198 to change SESA funding related statutes to allocate an amount equal to four-tenths of one percent of the base student allocation in AS 14.17.470 (equal to approximately \$22.72 times the number of

---

<sup>5</sup>The basis for this calculation is the consumer price index inflation calculator formula for Municipality of Anchorage found on the Alaska State Department of Labor's website.

students in the daily average membership). House Bill 198 was not passed by the 27<sup>th</sup> Legislature.

We recommend that DEED's special education director collaborate with SESA management to assess the adequacy of SESA funding levels on an annual basis and incorporate assessments into DEED's budgetary process.

2. SESA operating plans do not comply with Alaska Statutes.

Since FY 08, the two-year operation plans that SESA submitted to DEED did not include adequate details as required by statute. Particularly, the plans did not include information concerning the description of SESA services offered, the number of students and school district personnel receiving services, and all funding sources.

Alaska Statute 14.30.630(b)(3), mandates SESA must:

*Provide the department with a two-year plan of operation including a description of the services to be offered by the agency, the method by which the services will be evaluated, information on the number of students and school district personnel to be served, a schedule of funding available to the agency from all sources, and other information that maybe required by the department by regulation.*

According to SESA's executive director, most statutorily required information is communicated to SESA's board when the two-year operation plan is presented. Although DEED's special education director is a board member, the director's attendance at the board meetings has not been consistent. This is further discussed below.

We recommend that DEED's special education director collaborate with SESA management to ensure the biennial operation plan is adequate and in compliance with statute.

3. DEED staff have not consistently attended SESA board meetings.

DEED's special education director or designee did not attend nine of 21 SESA board meetings from FY 08 through FY 12. Per SESA bylaws, the Department of Education's Office of Special Education administrator or a designee shall be a member of SESA's board of directors.

During March 2011, a new special education director was appointed. Since the appointment, the director attended four of seven board meetings.

Without regular attendance at SESA board meetings, DEED's special education director is not fully informed of SESA activities; able to participate in discussions involving SESA operations; and able to provide input through the voting process.

We recommend that DEED's special education director or designee attend SESA board meetings on a regular basis to oversee SESA activities and confirm that SESA is operating as the legislature intended.

## Recommendation No. 2

### SESA's board president should revise board policies and procedures to improve SESA oversight and accountability.

SESA's board did not provide adequate oversight of certain SESA activities. Specific areas the board should address include:

1. Lack of oversight of employee-related contracts.

During FY 10, the prior SESA executive director initiated a contract with her spouse for services with board approval. However, the letter requesting approval did not specify scope of duties, deliverables, timeframe, or a contract amount. Furthermore, the board did not approve a contract renewal. Board bylaws delegate managing and controlling SESA affairs to the board of directors. Therefore, board policies should be revised to ensure the board provides ongoing appropriate contract oversight.

2. Lack of administrative ethics policies.

Since SESA is not a state entity, it does not have to comply with the State's Ethics Act. Although, SESA has procedures for potential ethics violations of teachers, it does not have procedures for addressing potential ethics violations involving administrative and management staff who are not teachers. SESA's board should develop written procedures to address potential ethics violations for staff who are not teachers.

3. Inadequate public notice of board meetings.

In accordance with SESA bylaws, SESA board meetings are to comply with the AS 44.62, Open Meetings Act which requires reasonable public notice. SESA's current executive director considers three days reasonable notice, yet SESA's board president considers seven days reasonable. Of the 21 times SESA's board met from July 2007 to June 2012, over 50 percent of the meetings did not have a seven-day public notice. Without adequate public notice, SESA stakeholders may not be aware of a meeting or have adequate time to plan for attendance. The board policy should specifically define the reasonable number of days for a public notice.

4. Board work meetings are not publicly noticed or documented.

SESA board meetings are divided into two sections: (1) a work meeting to inform and allow for board member discussion of issues to be voted on and (2) the voting business meeting. Eighty-six percent of work meetings were not publically noticed. Additionally, work meeting minutes were not recorded. The Open Meetings Act requires that board meetings to be publicly noticed. SESA bylaws require board meeting minutes to be recorded. Board policies should address public notice and recording of the minutes for work meetings.

SESA's current board president reported initiating changes to board procedures over contracts and hiring a consultant to assist reviewing board policies and procedures to identify areas for improvement. Additionally, a new executive director was appointed in June 2011.

We recommend SESA's board president continue efforts to revise board policies and procedures to improve oversight and accountability over SESA activities.

(Intentionally left blank)

## AUDITOR'S COMMENTS

The Special Education Service Agency's (SESA) organizational structure creates confusion regarding the oversight responsibility for funding and monitoring SESA's Low Incidence Disabilities (LID) Outreach Program. The confusion is rooted in SESA's status as a nonprofit corporation with several oversight entities. Statutes designate the Department of Health and Social Services' Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (council) as SESA's governing entity. However, the council does not have budgetary authority over SESA. As a component of special education, SESA's LID program is funded through the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) as required by statute.

Additionally, SESA's corporate bylaws designate a separate governing board that is made up of no less than five and no more than seven council members. Bylaws also designate DEED's special education director as a SESA board member.

The organizational structure has led to confusion and conflicting opinions regarding which entity is responsible for SESA's budget and operational oversight. The council does not pursue increasing SESA's LID program funding through the budgetary process because SESA is statutorily funded by DEED. DEED management does not consider itself authorized to monitor or increase funding for SESA's LID program because SESA reports to the council. According to staff within DEED's commissioner's office, the historic process for evaluating and increasing SESA funding has been a legislative process independent of the department. DEED's current management also maintains that school districts are responsible for monitoring SESA services even though DEED has historically monitored SESA's LID program using federal guidance.

Alaska Statute 14.07 authorizes DEED to supervise Alaska public school districts. DEED's supervisory responsibilities include regulating, monitoring, and modifying school district operation plans, budgets, and instruction to ensure that school districts comply with federal and state education requirements. Alaska Statute 14.30.186 delegates to school districts the responsibility for providing special education and related services to children affected by disabilities but makes DEED responsible for overseeing special education and related services funding and coordination.

Therefore, while school districts are responsible for providing special education and related services, DEED is responsible for enabling school districts to fulfill federal education laws, including the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and monitoring districts for federal and state compliance.

Alaska Statutes relating to SESA do not specifically identify DEED as being responsible for assessing and monitoring the LID program's funding and operational needs. However, DEED is responsible for ensuring the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is met. Consequently, through federal mandate, DEED is ultimately responsible for oversight.

Given the confusion among SESA oversight agencies, the legislature should consider evaluating statutes relating to SESA to clarify oversight responsibilities.

# ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC NEED

The following analyses of the Special Education Service Agency (SESA) activities relate to the public need factors defined in AS 44.66.050(c). These analyses are not intended to be comprehensive, but address those areas we were able to cover within the scope of our review.

*Determine the extent to which the board, commission, or program has operated in the public interest.*

We conclude that SESA is serving the public's interest.

As of March 2012, SESA's low incidence disabilities (LID) and dual sensory impairment (DSI) programs served 223 individual students<sup>6</sup> throughout 45 school districts located in various regions of Alaska. A detailed, by school district, listing of the number of students affected by LID receiving SESA services is illustrated in Exhibit 1 (page 11) and in Appendix B of this report.

SESA's LID and DSI program services are provided by education specialists. As of March 2012, SESA had 11 education specialists for the LID program and one education specialist for the DSI program, who also assists with the LID program. The majority of SESA education specialists have degrees in special

**Exhibit 2**

<b>SESA LID Education Specialists Teaching Degrees and Endorsements</b>			
<b>Endorsements:</b>	<b><u>Bachelor's</u></b>	<b><u>Master's</u></b>	<b><u>Doctorate</u></b>
Special Education	1	2	
Cognitively Impaired	1		1
Hearing Impairment		2	
Vision Impairment	1	2	
School Psychologist		1	
Elementary Education - Emphasis in Autism Spectrum Disorders		1	

Source: SESA personnel files and Department of Education and Early Development Teacher Certification website

education with endorsements in specific disability categories. See Exhibit 2 for a breakdown of the degrees by the various endorsements.

According to SESA's executive director, SESA strives to employ the highest level of specialists to provide necessary services to students in the LID program; however, due to limited funding, SESA is unable to pay the equivalent of an Anchorage school district teacher's entry level salary. As a result, it has been difficult for SESA to hire and retain education specialists. Telephone interviews were conducted with nine special education

---

<sup>6</sup>There were 206 LID students and 17 DSI students served.

directors and 12 special education teachers from different Alaska school districts. Interviewees discussed the need for additional funding for SESA to address its high turnover in specialists and the need for additional specialized employees in LID education who can provide new information on an ongoing basis to school district staff.

Interviews were also conducted with SESA education specialists who stated that additional funding is necessary to hire more specialized employees and to provide more onsite visits.

**Exhibit 3**

<b>FY 12 LID and DSI Contacts by SESA Education Specialists</b>	
Email	1,113
Onsite Consultations	320
Telephone	206
Video Teleconferencing	21

Source: SESA Contact Log Database as of March 2012

As of March 2012, SESA education specialists provided approximately 320 onsite consultations for the LID and DSI programs. Specialists also keep in contact with school district staff using emails, video teleconferencing, and telephone. See Exhibit 3 for the number of FY 12 contacts by method.

SESA education specialists also provide other outreach activities to various stakeholder groups throughout the State. During FY 12, specialists conducted 126 training sessions<sup>7</sup> with teachers and paraprofessionals. See Exhibit 4 for examples of outreach activities provided by SESA during FY 12.

**Exhibit 4**

<b>SESA Outreach Activities for FY 12</b>	
<b>Outreach Activity</b>	<b>Number of Occurrences</b>
Community Relations <i>(SESA interacts with the public to present or provide assistance)</i>	73
Interagency Collaboration <i>(SESA interacts with other entities like DEED and Department of Health and Social Services)</i>	40
School District Training <i>(SESA specialists conduct training for teachers and paraprofessionals)</i>	126

Source: SESA Activities Database as of March 2012

During FY 12, SESA provided services to school districts through the Positive Behavior Intervention Program. SESA employs four additional education specialists who coach and mentor school district staff at five schools that were referred by the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED). Additionally, through a grant with the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), SESA provides assistance to children returning home after placement in a residential psychiatric treatment facility.

<sup>7</sup>Training sessions include specialized trainings requested by school district staff, iPad and assistive technology trainings, and functional behavioral assessment trainings.

***Determine the extent to which the operation of the board, commission, or agency program has been impeded or enhanced by existing statutes, procedures, and practices that it has adopted, and any other matter, including budgetary, resource, and personnel matters.***

As previously discussed, SESA operations have been impeded by its flat funding. SESA's statutory funding allocation has not changed since 1998.

In accordance with AS 14.30.630(b)(3)-(4), SESA submits a two-year operation plan and an annual budget to DEED. However, DEED does not use SESA's information in its annual budgetary process because, according to DEED management, the process for evaluating and increasing SESA funding has historically been legislative and independent of the department. See Recommendation No. 1 for further discussion regarding the need for improved collaboration between DEED and SESA. The Auditor's Comment section of this report further discusses how SESA's organizational structure has contributed to SESA's funding and operational challenges.

***Determine the extent to which the board, commission, or agency has recommended statutory changes that are generally of benefit to the public interest.***

There were no statutory changes during FY 08 through FY 12.

During March 2011, House Bill (HB) 198 was introduced which would have increased SESA funding and exempted SESA from sunset legislation. According to SESA's executive director, the increase in SESA funding and exemption from sunset legislation would allow SESA to hire additional education specialists and provide more onsite services to school districts through the LID program. House Bill 198 was not passed by the 27<sup>th</sup> Legislature.

The Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education testified in support of HB 198, and SESA's board, executive director, and DEED were present to respond to questions during testimony.

***Determine the extent to which the board, commission, or agency has encouraged interested persons to report to it concerning the effect of its regulations and decisions on the effectiveness of service, economy of service, and availability of service that it has provided.***

SESA's board of directors scheduled 23 board meetings from October 2007 through June 2012, but lack of board member attendance resulted in two cancelled meetings. DEED did not have representation for nine of the 21 board meetings. See Recommendation No. 1 for further discussion regarding collaboration between DEED and SESA.

Board meetings were advertised in newspapers of general circulation, on the State's Online Public Notice website, and SESA's website. SESA also uses its website to communicate with the general public, school district staff, and parents or other caregivers of children.

Although SESA board meetings are open to the public and agendas provide time for public comment, areas for improvement were identified specific to public notice timeframes and inclusion of work meetings.<sup>8</sup> Eighty-six percent of the work meetings were not publicly noticed, and over 50 percent of the board meetings were not noticed seven days before the meeting. Additionally, board meeting minutes were not recorded for the work meetings that discussed issues for board action. See Recommendation No. 2 for discussion on recommended changes to board policies regarding public notices and meeting minutes.

***Determine the extent to which the board, commission, or agency has encouraged public participation in the making of its regulations and decisions.***

Alaska Statutes do not give SESA authority to promulgate regulations. However, SESA has encouraged public participation in its decisions at board meetings and through feedback from school district staff during onsite consultations and trainings.

During the first nine months of FY 12, SESA conducted approximately 320 onsite consultations for the LID and DSI programs. As illustrated in Exhibit 4 (page 24), an additional 126 trainings were provided to teachers and paraprofessionals<sup>9</sup> at various school districts throughout Alaska. After trainings, SESA solicits feedback from attendees.

***Determine the efficiency with which public inquiries or complaints regarding the activities of the board, commission, or agency filed with it, with the department to which a board or commission is administratively assigned, or with the office of victims' rights or the office of the ombudsman have been processed and resolved.***

SESA's board, DEED, the Office of Victims' Rights, and the State's Office of the Ombudsman reported receiving no formal complaints about SESA from July 2008 to February 2012.

During FY 11, SESA's board was informed of a potential administrative issue regarding SESA's prior executive director contracting with her spouse to provide services. Although SESA's board approved the initial contract, the contract lacked ongoing oversight by the board. The board initiated an internal review; however, SESA does not have procedures in place to address potential administrative ethics issues. Before the board made a formal decision, the contract was ended, and the prior executive director submitted a resignation. See Recommendation No. 2 for further discussion regarding the need for SESA's board to establish procedures for contract oversight and administrative ethics issues.

---

<sup>8</sup>Some SESA board meetings consist of two sections: (1) work meetings where discussions are held to inform the board members of actions to be voted on and (2) the voting business meetings.

<sup>9</sup>Paraprofessionals include teachers' assistants, teacher's aides, and interpreters.

***Determine the extent to which a board or commission that regulates entry into an occupation or profession has presented qualified applicants to serve the public.***

SESA has no licensing, regulatory, or enforcement responsibilities.

***Determine the extent to which state personnel practices, including affirmative action requirements, have been complied with by the board, commission, or agency to its own activities and the area of activity or interest.***

From July 2008 through February 2012, no formal SESA related complaints were filed with any of the following agencies: the Alaska State Commission for Human Rights; the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission; and the Department of Administration's Division of Personnel and Labor Relations.

SESA teachers are represented by the United Special Education Service Employees Local No. 4688, an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers. This union reported that no formal complaints were received concerning SESA.

***Determine the extent to which statutory, regulatory, budgeting, or other changes are necessary to enable the agency, board, or commission to better serve the interests of the public and to comply with the factors enumerated in this subsection.***

As discussed above, SESA's statutory funding allocation of \$15.75 has not changed since 1998. See Recommendation No. 1 for further discussion regarding the need for improved collaboration between DEED and SESA.

Another area that should be addressed to better enable SESA to serve the public's interest is guidance for LID enrollment thresholds. SESA provides LID services to assist school districts when school districts do not have specialists to serve children affected by LID. The only written guidance for LID enrollment is from DEED's Special Education Handbook, which states:

*The Alaska Legislature and EED expect districts to employ their own disability specialist when enrollments exceed the intent of the Legislature in creating SESA and the Low Incidence Disability Outreach Program.*

DEED has delegated the determination of LID enrollment levels to SESA. SESA's executive director stated that once enrollment exceeds seven students in a LID category, the school district will be informed that they must hire a disability specialist to provide the necessary services for students affected by that LID category. SESA has no written basis for the threshold of seven students. As outlined in the DEED's handbook, it is unclear if the enrollment levels should be based on the LID count for each disability category or the overall LID program count for each school district. Furthermore, the handbook is unclear whether a

district must hire an individual specializing in the specific LID that has reached SESA's threshold. As illustrated in Appendix B, there are eight school districts where enrollment levels for the overall LID program have exceeded seven students. Without clear written guidance, school districts may not be aware that they will be required nor are they prepared to employ a disability specialist when their LID enrollment levels exceed SESA expectations. There is also a risk that SESA will continue to serve LID students when it is more appropriate for the school districts to serve the students. Additionally, students affected by disabilities, parents, and classroom teachers may be significantly impacted when services transition. Thus, the expectation of transitioning services should be clearly explained and timelines established to minimize the impact on transitioned individuals.

One final area for improvement is SESA's board oversight. SESA's board should continue to review its policies and procedures in conjunction with its operation to identify areas for improvement. This review should include examining the following protocols:

- Approving and monitoring employee-related contracts.
- Guiding administrative ethics violation evaluations.
- Clarifying public notice timeframes for public meetings.
- Including public notices of and recording meeting minutes for work meetings.

See Recommendation No. 2 for discussion on improving board oversight.

***Determine the extent to which the board, commission, or agency has effectively attained its objectives and purposes and the efficiency with which the board, commission, or agency has operated.***

Although areas for improvement were identified, we conclude that SESA has carried out the statutory purpose of AS 14.30.630(b)(1) related to providing special education services.

Telephone interviews were conducted with nine special education directors and 12 special education teachers from different school districts regarding SESA activities. Overall, the interviewees were satisfied with the services provided by SESA and stated that SESA is an invaluable resource – especially to the rural school districts. Positive comments about SESA education specialists included that specialists are:

- Very knowledgeable, personable, and flexible;
- Assisting by demonstrating and implementing the activities they teach; and
- Dedicated and passionate about what they do.

School district interviewees also noted areas for improvement included needing more:

- In-person contact;
- Consistency with specialists as SESA has experienced high turnover; and
- Video conferencing between visits.

During FY 12, SESA conducted surveys of approximately 100 school district staff during onsite visits. The majority of the survey responses were from teachers and were positive regarding SESA staff and activities.

Every five years, DEED conducts an oversight review of SESA's LID and DSI programs. The latest review, issued in November 2007, identified no significant departures from program practices.

***Determine the extent to which the board, commission, or agency duplicates the activities of another governmental agency or the private sector.***

No other government agency or private sector entity in the State provides specialized assistance to school districts for educating students affected by LID. However, there are two agencies that provide services to school district students affected by disabilities: Southeast Regional Resource Center; and the Student, Educators, and Parents Center.

There is no duplication of services between SESA; the Southeast Regional Resource Center; and the Student, Educators, and Parents Center. These organizations are providing different services to assist Alaskan school districts in providing appropriate public education for students affected by disabilities.

(Intentionally left blank)

**Appendix A**  
**SESA**  
**Revenues and Expenditures Schedule**  
**FY 08 through FY 12**

	<u>FY 08</u>	<u>FY 09</u>	<u>FY 10</u>	<u>FY 11</u>	<u>FY 12 Estimated</u>
<b>Revenues:</b>					
<b>State Revenues</b>					
<i>Department of Education and Early Development</i>					
Low Incidence Disability	\$ 2,050,100	\$ 2,035,900	\$ 1,956,700	\$ 2,029,400	\$ 2,032,500
Alaska Autism Resource Center*	261,500	305,000	500,000	512,000	431,000
Positive Behavior Interventions and Support		50,000	162,200	369,600	275,200
Census Survey*	47,500	162,700	149,800	136,900	146,700
National Instructional Materials*		24,800	149,700	128,800	146,300
Guiding and Investing in New Special Educators*				31,400	192,200
E-Learning Module	2,000		5,000		
Subtotal	<u>2,361,100</u>	<u>2,578,400</u>	<u>2,923,400</u>	<u>3,208,100</u>	<u>3,223,900</u>
<i>Department of Health and Social Services</i>					
Educational Transition Support Project	23,300	120,600	150,000	125,300	128,800
Infant Learning Programs*	393,400	407,300	541,400	75,200	
Alaska Circle Project*			50,000	35,600	51,400
Subtotal	<u>416,700</u>	<u>527,900</u>	<u>741,400</u>	<u>236,100</u>	<u>180,200</u>
<i>Department of Revenue</i>					
Equalizing Access	9,800	19,600			
<i>Department of Administration</i>					
Retirement System Relief – LID		374,300	341,400	373,100	418,700
<b>Total State Revenues</b>	<u><b>2,787,600</b></u>	<u><b>3,500,200</b></u>	<u><b>4,006,200</b></u>	<u><b>3,817,300</b></u>	<u><b>3,822,800</b></u>
<b>Federal Revenues – Direct Grants</b>					
Merging and Enhancing System for Health Alaskan Kids		7,000	114,400	255,700	
Creating Innovative, Responsive, and Consistent Learning Environments Projects (CIRCLE)		134,200	188,200	200,600	34,600
Dual Sensory Impairment	126,800	74,400	107,100	118,100	100,200
<b>Total Direct Federal Revenues</b>	<u><b>126,800</b></u>	<u><b>215,600</b></u>	<u><b>409,700</b></u>	<u><b>574,400</b></u>	<u><b>134,800</b></u>
<b>Other Revenues</b>	<u><b>25,200</b></u>	<u><b>63,300</b></u>	<u><b>94,400</b></u>	<u><b>103,600</b></u>	<u><b>129,600</b></u>
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<u><b>\$ 2,939,600</b></u>	<u><b>\$ 3,779,100</b></u>	<u><b>\$ 4,510,300</b></u>	<u><b>\$ 4,495,300</b></u>	<u><b>\$ 4,087,200</b></u>

\*Programs are funded through state and federal grant funds.

**Appendix A (Continued)**

**SESA  
Revenues and Expenditures Schedule  
FY 08 through FY 12**

	<u>FY 08</u>	<u>FY 09</u>	<u>FY 10</u>	<u>FY 11</u>	<u>FY 12 Estimated</u>
<b>Expenditures</b>					
State Expenditures					
<i>Department of Education and Early Development</i>					
Low Incidence Disability	\$ 2,185,700	\$ 1,720,300	\$ 1,891,700	\$ 1,955,000	\$ 2,255,500
Alaska Autism Resource Center*	261,500	305,000	506,100	545,500	457,300
Positive Behavior Interventions and Support		46,000	162,200	369,600	275,200
Census Survey*	47,500	162,700	149,800	136,900	146,700
National Instructional Materials*		24,800	149,700	128,800	146,300
Guiding and Investing in New Special Educators*				31,400	192,600
E-Learning Module	2,000		3,200		
Subtotal	<u>2,496,700</u>	<u>2,258,800</u>	<u>2,862,700</u>	<u>3,167,200</u>	<u>3,473,600</u>
<i>Department of Health and Social Services</i>					
Educational Transition Support Program	23,300	120,600	200,300	167,000	128,800
Infant Learning Programs*	393,500	407,300	546,700	75,200	
Alaska Circle Project*			53,500	35,600	51,400
Subtotal	<u>416,800</u>	<u>527,900</u>	<u>800,500</u>	<u>277,800</u>	<u>180,200</u>
<i>Department of Revenue</i>					
Equalizing Access	9,800	19,600			
<i>Department of Administration</i>					
Retirement System Relief – LID		374,300	341,400	373,100	418,700
<b>Total State Expenditures</b>	<u><b>2,923,300</b></u>	<u><b>3,180,600</b></u>	<u><b>4,004,600</b></u>	<u><b>3,818,100</b></u>	<u><b>4,072,500</b></u>
Federal Expenditures – Direct Grants					
Merging and Enhancing System for Health Alaskan Kids		7,000	114,400	255,700	
Creating Innovative, Responsive, and Consistent					
Learning Environments Projects (CIRCLE)		134,300	188,200	200,600	34,600
Dual Sensory Impairment Program	126,800	74,400	107,100	118,100	100,200
<b>Total Direct Federal Expenditures</b>	<u><b>126,800</b></u>	<u><b>215,700</b></u>	<u><b>409,700</b></u>	<u><b>574,400</b></u>	<u><b>134,800</b></u>
<b>Other Expenditures</b>			<b>29,900</b>		<b>7,600</b>
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<u><b>\$ 3,050,100</b></u>	<u><b>\$ 3,396,300</b></u>	<u><b>\$ 4,444,200</b></u>	<u><b>\$ 4,392,500</b></u>	<u><b>\$ 4,214,900</b></u>
Excess Revenue over Expenditures	\$ (110,500)	\$ 382,800	\$ 66,100	\$ 102,800	\$ (127,700)

Source: FY 08 to FY 11 SESA Audited Financial Statements and grant agreements. The unaudited FY 12 financial information are estimates provided by SESA management.

\*Programs are funded through state and federal grant funds

**Appendix B**

**SESA Student Count by School District  
for Low Incidence Disability and  
Dual Sensory Impairment Programs**

	Low Incidence Disability Program					Low Incidence Disability Totals	Dual Sensory Impairment
	Autism Impairment	Emotional Disturbance	Hearing Impairment	Multiple Disabilities	Visual Impairment		
Aleutian Region	2	1				3	
Aleutians East	1					1	
Anchorage							4
Annette Island		1	2			3	
Bristol Bay				2		2	
Bering Strait	4	5	1	6		16	1
Chatham	1					1	
Chugach		1				1	
Copper River	4	2		1		7	
Cordova	2			3	1	6	
Craig	3			1		4	
Delta-Greely	6		1	1		8	
Denali	1	4				5	
Dillingham		2		3	1	6	
Fairbanks							4
Haines	2			2	1	5	
Hoonah	3	2		2		7	
Hydaburg					1	1	
Juneau							3
Take				1		1	
Kashunamiut		1		3		4	
Kenai	2			2		4	1
Ketchikan	4		4	4	1	13	
Klawock	1			2		3	
Kodiak			2	2	2	6	
Kuspuk			1	1		2	
Lake & Peninsula	2					2	
Lower Kuskokwim	1		3		4	8	
Lower Yukon	1	5	1	8	2	17	
Mat-Su							3
Nome	2			2		4	1
North Slope	2		1	4	1	8	
Northwest Arctic	3	1	3	4	1	12	
Petersburg	3	1				4	
Sitka		7	2			9	

**Appendix B  
(Continued)**

**SESA Student Count by School District  
for Low Incidence Disability and  
Dual Sensory Impairment Programs**

	Low Incidence Disability Program					Low Incidence Disability Totals	Dual Sensory Impairment
	Autism Impairment	Emotional Disturbance	Hearing Impairment	Multiple Disabilities	Visual Impairment		
Skagway		1				1	
Southeast Island	2			1		3	
Southwest Region				1	1	2	
Tanana		2				2	
Unalaska	3			1		4	
Valdez	5			2		7	
Wrangell	3	2				5	
Yukon Flats	2			2		4	
Yukon-Koyukuk					1	1	
Yupiit		1		2	1	4	
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>17</b>

Source: SESA Student Database



THE STATE  
of **ALASKA**  
GOVERNOR SEAN PARNELL

Department of Education  
and Early Development

Office of the Commissioner

801 W 10th Street, Suite 200  
P.O. Box 110500  
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0500  
Main: 907.465.2800  
TTY/TTD: 907.465.2815  
Fax: 907.465.4156

September 25, 2012

Kris Curtis, Legislative Auditor  
Division of Legislative Audit  
P.O. Box 113300  
Juneau, AK 99811-3300

RECEIVED

SEP 26 2012

LEGISLATIVE AUDIT

Dear Ms. Curtis:

The Department of Education & Early Development (DEED) appreciates the opportunity to respond to the audit recommendations in the preliminary audit report on the Department of Education and Early Development and Department of Health and Social Services, Special Education Service Agency, June 22, 2012.

Recommendation No. 1

The Department of Education and Early Development's (DEED or department) special education director and SESA management should collaborate to ensure SESA is operating and funded as intended by the legislature.

The department does not concur entirely with Recommendation No. 1.

*(1) SESA funding is not actively evaluated for operational needs.*

DEED does not concur with this part of Recommendation No. 1. SESA's funding has been actively evaluated by its governing body, which in turn advocated for increases at the legislative level (House Bill 198). DEED has been actively engaged in the SESA board activities during FY2012, and for several years in the GCDSE, and at no time has the department received an indication SESA is unable to comply with its operational requirements due to funding. Further, the recommendation suggests that because the language in AS 14.30.650 states that "*the department shall allocate to the agency not less than,*" that in fact the department could request additional funding in the budget. DEED believes that the budget should be determined through the legislative process either by changing the statute or through the budget process where the legislature could increase the agency budget using this statutory language.

*(2) SESA operating plans do not comply with Alaska Statutes.*

DEED has already taken steps to ensure that the biannual operation plan is adequate and in compliance with statute. Components of SESA's biannual operation plan not specifically addressed in the plan were reported to the department. DEED's Deputy Commissioner met with SESA's Executive Director on November 14, 2011 to discuss the biannual operation plan and DEED specifically asked that in the future the plan contain all the required elements as outlined in statute.

*(3) DEED staff have not consistently attended SESA board meetings.*

DEED has resolved all issues concerning our attendance at SESA board meetings at the beginning FY2012. DEED's special education director or designee has attended SESA board meetings on a regular basis through FY2012 and will continue to do so in FY2013 and future years.

Recommendation No. 2

SESA's board president should revise board policies and procedures to improve SESA oversight and accountability.

DEED does not believe this recommendation is warranted. While the recommendation specifically relates to the SESA board and its president and the observations appear to be reasonable and prudent, the SESA board president has already initiated the corrective actions noted in the recommendation.

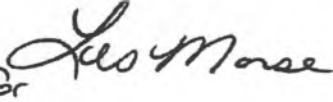
Response to Auditor's Comments

The department does not concur that the legislature should consider evaluating statutes relating to SESA to clarify oversight responsibilities. AS 14.30.610 clearly states that SESA shall be governed by GCDSE and therefore DEED does not see a reason for this comment.

Response to Analysis of Public Need

The department concurs that SESA meets a valid public need through the services they offer and that there is no duplication of services.

Sincerely,

*for* 

Mike Hanley  
Commissioner



THE STATE  
of **ALASKA**  
GOVERNOR SEAN PARNELL

Department of  
Health and Social Services

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER  
Anchorage

3601 C Street, Suite 902  
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-5924  
Main: 907.269.7800  
Fax: 907.269.0060

September 24, 2012

Kris Curtis, CPA, CISA  
Legislative Auditor  
Division of Legislative Audit  
P.O. Box 113300  
Juneau, AK 99811-3300

RECEIVED

SEP 26 2012

LEGISLATIVE AUDIT

Dear Ms. Curtis,

I appreciate the time that the Division of Legislative Audit put into the audit of the Special Education Service Agency (SESA). The recommendations made are reasonable and activities are currently underway to address these recommendations. The Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) will support the Governor's Council on Disabilities, the governing entity, in addressing the areas identified for improvement.

In response to the Report Conclusion:

We appreciate the recommendation that SESA be extended to June 30, 2021. SESA provides a valuable service to students with low incidence disabilities, which in turn assists local school districts to provide them a free appropriate public education as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Extending SESA to 2021 allows for continuous quality improvement in the delivery of these necessary services.

In response to Recommendation No. 1:

The recommendation that DEED and SESA collaborate to ensure SESA is operating and funded as intended by the legislature is reasonable. SESA need an adequate infrastructure to support its operations. It is our understanding that SESA management has scheduled an October 4 meeting with Commissioner Hanley of the Department of Education and Early Development to discuss SESA's operations and funding.

In response to Recommendation No. 2:

We concur that board policies and procedures be revised to improve SESA oversight and accountability. However, this cannot be completed by the board president alone; the board president can ensure the revision of policy and procedures is addressed during board meetings but the entire board is responsible for making any needed changes. In addition, it is our understanding that the SESA board of directors conducted a comprehensive review and revision


of its policies and procedures, including employee-related contracts and administrative ethics policies; and completed a first reading of its *Board Policy Reference Manual* during its September 24, 2012 board meeting. In addition, it is our understanding that the board passed a motion to notice SESA work sessions and business meetings seven days in advance of the actual date of meeting during its September 24 meeting.

In response to Auditor's Comments:

We agree that it makes sense to look at the pros and cons of current oversight responsibility for funding and monitoring SESA's Low Incidence Disabilities Outcome Program. It is our understanding that this has not occurred since SESA was first established by the legislature.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

  
William J. Streur  
Commissioner

cc: Millie Ryan, Executive Director, Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education



September 25, 2012

Kris Curtis  
Legislative Auditor  
Legislative Budget Audit Committee  
Division of Legislative Audit  
P.O. Box 113300  
Juneau, AK 99811-3300

RECEIVED

SEP 26 2012

LEGISLATIVE AUDIT

**RE: Response to Preliminary Audit Report, Special Education Service Agency (SESA)**

Dear Ms. Curtis:

The Board of Directors of the Special Education Service Agency is in receipt of the preliminary audit report dated September 5, 2012. We are sincerely appreciative of the hard work vested by staff of the Division of Legislative Audit in its comprehensive evaluation of the Special Education Service Agency. We are excited that the audit found SESA to be an efficient organization meeting a public need and recommends reauthorization of SESA until June 30, 2021. This letter serves as SESA's written response to the September 5, 2012, Preliminary Audit Report.

**RECOMMENDATION NO. 1**

**DEED's special education director and SESA management should collaborate to ensure SESA is operating and funded as intended by the legislature.**

The SESA Board concurs with this recommendation with expansion. Under the direction of the Board, SESA executive management should be collaborating with the Commissioner of Education, or his/her designee, towards assessment of adequacy of SESA's annual funding level and possible incorporation of assessments into DEED's budgetary process. Steps have already been taken to promote this collaboration and SESA's executive director and finance manager have a confirmed meeting with the Commissioner of Education and Early Development on October 4, 2012. SESA's executive director has also communicated with the state special education administrator on SESA funding.

**RECOMMENDATION NO. 2**

**SESA's board president should revise board policies and procedures to improve SESA oversight and accountability.**

➤ Lack of oversight of employee-related contracts

The SESA Board concurs with this recommendation with expansion. SESA staff, SESA administration, and the full Board reviewed all Board policies, including Board bylaws, on May 30, 2012, under the direction of Joseph Reeves of the Alaska Association of School Boards. Revisions, consistent with the Board's FY12 practice, was read and discussed (first reading) at SESA's September 24, 2012, board meeting. Once finalized and Board approved after the second reading, SESA Board policies will be posted in an online format on the SESA website. Board practice was revised in FY12 to ensure ongoing and appropriate Board contract oversight. For FY12 all personnel contracts, including Memorandums of Agreement (MOAs) of \$5000 or higher, were presented to the Board. The Board, at the September 24, 2012, meeting also read proposed Board policy to require Board approval of purchases of supplies, materials and equipment over \$5000. (Current Board policy allows expenditure up to \$50,000.)

➤ Lack of administrative ethics policies

All members of the teaching profession (as defined in AS 14.20.370) are obligated to abide by the code of ethics and the professional teaching standards adopted by the Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC). SESA's program specialists and program administrators each hold a valid teaching certificate and are therefore, governed by the PTPC Code of Ethics. SESA board policy addressing ethics is BP 4119.21. Relevant board policy and Code of Ethics was reviewed on May 30, 2012, and presented to the SESA Board (first reading) on September 24, 2012 to include AASB Board exhibit E 4119.21 (a) Code of Ethics and Teaching Standards (20 AAC 10.020). In addition, the Collective Bargaining Agreement covering SESA's certificated specialists provides for disciplinary action against any specialist for professional misconduct that would include violations of the Code of Ethics. Code violations by certificated administrators subject them to PTPC disciplinary measures as well.

➤ Inadequate public notice of Board meetings

SESA Board policy was updated, at the September 24 Board meeting, to reflect a minimum of 7 (seven) days as Board definition of the reasonable number of days for public notice of SESA Board regular meetings and work sessions.

SESA's legal counsel has advised us that work sessions do constitute Board meetings and do need to be noticed and described on an agenda the same as other Board meetings. In addition, even though no official Board action is taken at work sessions, minutes reflecting the call to order, the roll call, the subject of the work session, and the adjournment, along with any other necessary matters, will be recorded and maintained the same as other Board meetings.

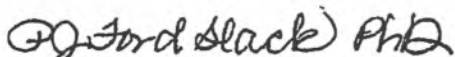
**Response to Auditor's Comments**

The SESA board concurs that the legislature should consider evaluating statutes relating to SESA to clarify oversight responsibilities. As the report points out, SESA's organizational structure has created confusion regarding oversight responsibility for funding and monitoring SESA's LID program. This confusion has manifested in flat funding to the agency for fourteen (14) years and resulted in a budget decrease in real value of 36%.

\*\*\*\*\*

Thank you for the opportunity to reply to the preliminary audit report. If you desire further response I can be contacted at: 907 966-1906 (Work), 907 250-3355 (Cell), or ford pj@mail.ssd.k12.ak.us (E-Mail).

Sincerely,



PJ Ford Slack, Ph.D.  
President, SESA Board of Directors

(Intentionally left blank)



THE STATE  
of **ALASKA**  
GOVERNOR SEAN PARNELL

Department of Health & Social Services

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITIES  
& SPECIAL EDUCATION  
Millie Ryan, Executive Director

3601 C Street, Suite 740  
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-5924  
Main: 907.269.8990  
Toll Free: 1.888.269.8990  
Fax: 907.269.8995

RECEIVED

SEP 27 2012

LEGISLATIVE AUDIT

September 26, 2012

Kris Curtis, CPA, CISA  
Legislative Auditor  
Division of Legislative Audit  
P.O. Box 113300  
Juneau, AK 99811-3300

Dear Ms. Curtis,

On behalf of the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (Council), I would like to thank you for the time and careful consideration the Division of Legislative Audit put into the audit of the Special Education Service Agency (SESA). The recommendations the division made are reasonable and activities are currently underway to address them. As the governing entity for SESA, the Council will work closely with the SESA board and management to address areas identified for improvement.

Please accept the following as the Council's response to the Preliminary Audit Report issued September 5, 2012.

In response to the Report Conclusion:

We appreciate the recommendation that SESA be extended to June 30, 2021. Not only does SESA provides a valuable service to students with low incidence disabilities, SESA also helps local school districts to provide them a Free Appropriate Public Education as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. In addition, as noted in the report, SESA does not duplicate services provided by any other entity. Extending SESA to 2021 ensures Alaska has an infrastructure in place to meet the needs of students with low incidence disabilities and allows the SESA board and management to continuously improve the quality of services provided.

In response to Recommendation No. 1:

We concur with the recommendation in general. Collaboration between DEED and SESA to ensure SESA is operating and funded as intended by the legislature

is essential. However, it is our understanding that this collaboration needs to occur at the Commissioner's level since the special education director's title and associated responsibilities were changed. As such, the special education administrator does not have the authority to collaborate with SESA management as recommended in the report. Therefore, SESA management is meeting with Commissioner Hanley October 4, 2012 to discuss SESA's operations and funding.

In response to Recommendation No. 2:

We concur that board policies and procedures be revised to improve SESA oversight and accountability and work is underway to make necessary changes. Since the board president cannot revise board policies and procedures by herself, the full board of directors conducted a comprehensive review and revision of its policies and procedures, including employee-related contracts and administrative ethics policies; and completed a first reading of its *Board Policy Reference Manual* during its September 24, 2012 board meeting. During that same meeting, the board passed a motion to notice SESA work sessions and business meetings seven days in advance of the actual date of meeting.

In response to Auditor's Comments:

We agree there is confusion regarding the oversight responsibility for funding and monitoring SESA's Low Incidence Outreach Program. That confusion became very apparent during the 2012 legislative session. Since it is our understanding that an evaluation of the current oversight responsibility has not occurred since SESA was first established by the legislature, we believe it makes sense for the legislature to look at the pros and cons of the current oversight responsibility.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Millie Ryan  
Executive Director

cc: Commissioner William Streur, Department of Health and Social Services



## Special Education Service Agency

**ASK:**

Support the passage of SB 17 to reauthorize the Special Education Service Agency (SESA) and support an amendment to increase SESA funding to \$21.50 per student as recommended by the legislative audit report.

**WHAT:**

The Special Education Service Agency (SESA) is a non-profit organization established in 1986 under Alaska State statute (AS 14. 30.600). SESA's role is to provide school districts with training specific to a student's disability. The availability of SESA's services allows students to receive special education services in their home community and keeps students with their families.

**WHY:**

SESA must be reauthorized this session to avoid discontinuation of services beginning June 30, 2013.

SESA is unable to meet its statutorily mandated duties due to increased operating expenses including wages, benefits and travel costs.

## GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

The Legislative Budget and Audit Committee 2012 Report recommends increasing funding for SESA. The report concluded:

- SESA performs an effective and efficient service to school districts educating students with low incidence disabilities. SESA employs 10 education specialists who provided services to 45 school districts and 223 students during the last school year. During this time, SESA also provided 320 onsite consultations with school districts.
- SESA meets a valid public need by:
  1. offering school districts the specialized training necessary to provide an education that meets the unique needs of students with low incidence disabilities
  2. elevating the specific skill level of local school district teachers and paraprofessionals in educating students with disabilities
  3. providing resources to local school staff on low incidence disabilities and special education
- SESA offers services not provided by any other government or private sector agency in the State of Alaska.

### CALL TO ACTION:

1. Support passage of SB 17 to reauthorize SESA until June 30, 2021
2. Support an amendment to increase SESA's funding to \$21.50 per student for FY14 and to include a ½ of a percentage point annual funding increase for each year thereafter



*The Key to Success*

for Alaskan Educators Serving Students  
with Low-Incidence Disabilities



# Special Education Service Agency (SESA)

SESA provides consultation and training to support the unique educational needs of individuals and the Alaskan communities that serve them.



*The Key to Success*

for Alaskan Educators Serving Students  
with Low-Incidence Disabilities



## **Background**

- Created in 1986; formed as a not-for-profit Corporation;
- Governed by the Alaska Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education;
- Receive Low Incidence Disabilities funding through DOEED based on prior years statewide total enrollment;
- Receives grant funding from State & Federal sources, (DHHS and DOEED);





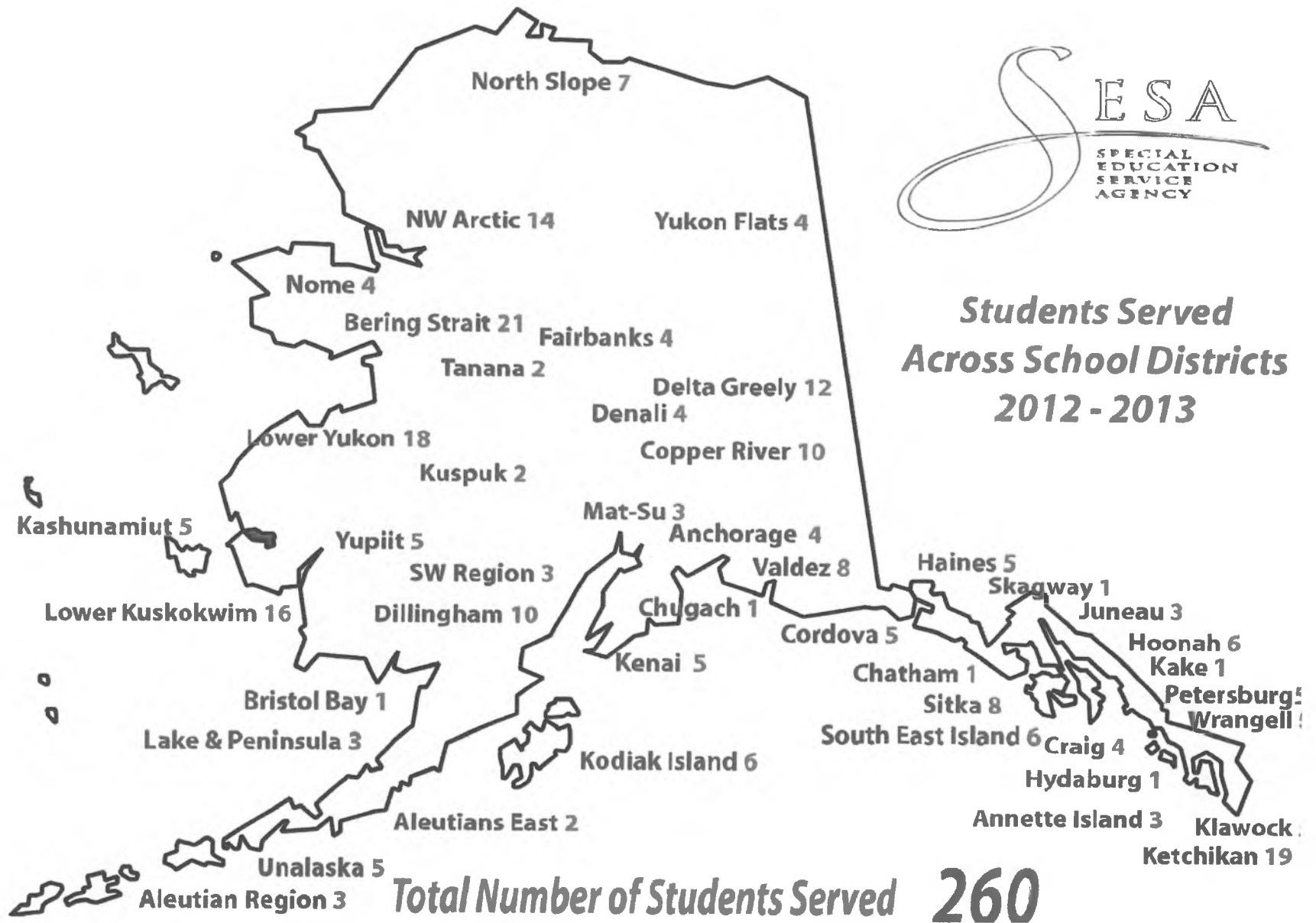
*The Key to Success*

for Alaskan Educators Serving Students  
with Low-Incidence Disabilities



**A.S. 14.30.630(b) (1) requires SESEA to provide the following special education services:**

- (A) Itinerant outreach services to students who are deaf, deaf-blind, mentally retarded, hearing impaired, blind and visually impaired, orthopedically disabled, health-impaired in other ways, and severely emotionally disturbed, and to students with multiple disabilities;
- (B) Special education instructional support and training of local school district special education personnel; and
- (C) Other services appropriate to special education needs.





# SESA Services

**On-site consultation – Observation/Modeling/Evidence Based Strategies**

**In-service training (professional development)**

**Alaska State Special Education Conference (ASSEC)**

**Specific courses designed and offered for university credit**

**Alaska Deaf Education Advisory Board**

**Governor's Council/Education/ Rural Education**

**DEED – Specific Grants – AARC/BTKH/DSI**

**Other Non-profits – Stone Soup/Center for Human Development/ILP**

**Distance Education**



# Special Education Service Agency

- HOME
- AUTISM
- EMOTIONAL
- VISION
- HEARING
- MULTIPLE DISABILITIES
- DEAFBLIND
- LIBRARY
- AARC
- ETSP
- GAINS
- ABOUT SESA



## What is the Special Education Service Agency (SESA)?

SESA is an educational service agency comprised of a core low incidence disability service inclusive of a statewide lending library. Low incidence disabilities include autism, learning disabilities, visual impairment, orthopedic disabilities, and multiple disabilities. In addition, SESA operates four grants:

1. Alaska Autism Resource Center (AARC)
2. Educational Transition Support Project (ETSP)
3. Alaska Deaf/Blind Project (DS)
4. Guiding and Investing in New Special Educators (GINSE)

SESA was created in 1986 by the Alaska State Legislature to provide the following special education services to Alaska's school districts:

- A. Itinerant outreach services to students who are autistic, deaf, deafblind, cognitively impaired, learning impaired, blind and visually impaired, orthopedically disabled, health impaired in other ways, severely emotionally disturbed, and to students with multiple disabilities.
- B. Special education instructional support and training of local school, district special education personnel, and
- C. Other services appropriate to special education needs.

## How to access SESA services

In order for SESA to consult with teams about specific students, a referral must be completed. The Referral Packet contains all the necessary forms to be filled out for SESA services to begin. [Access a referral packet now!](#)

## Our Mission

SESA provides consultation and training to support the unique educational needs of individuals and the Alaskan communities that serve them.

## Board of Directors Meeting

**Board of Directors Meeting: March 25, June 3 and June 4, 2013**  
Monday, March 25: Work Session 8:00 AM, Business Meeting 1:00 PM  
Monday, June 3: Work Session 8:00 AM  
Tuesday, June 4: Business Meeting 8:00 AM

Posted By webadmin

## Contact us

3501 Denali St., Suite 101 Anchorage, AK 99503 (MAA)  
Phone: 907-334-1300  
Toll Free: 877-880-9269  
Fax: 907-562-0545  
TTY: 907-563-8284  
[se@alaska.gov](mailto:se@alaska.gov)

[SESA Administration](#)

[Contact Us](#)

## Referrals

Use the SESA Referral Packet to request SESA services. [Access a referral packet now!](#)

## Resources

[SESA Newsletter Archives](#)

## Useful Links

[Alaska Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education](#)

[Alaska State Special Education Webpage](#)

[Alaska Office of Children Services](#)

[South East Regional Resource Center \(SERRC\)](#)

[Accredited Online Colleges and Disability Education](#)

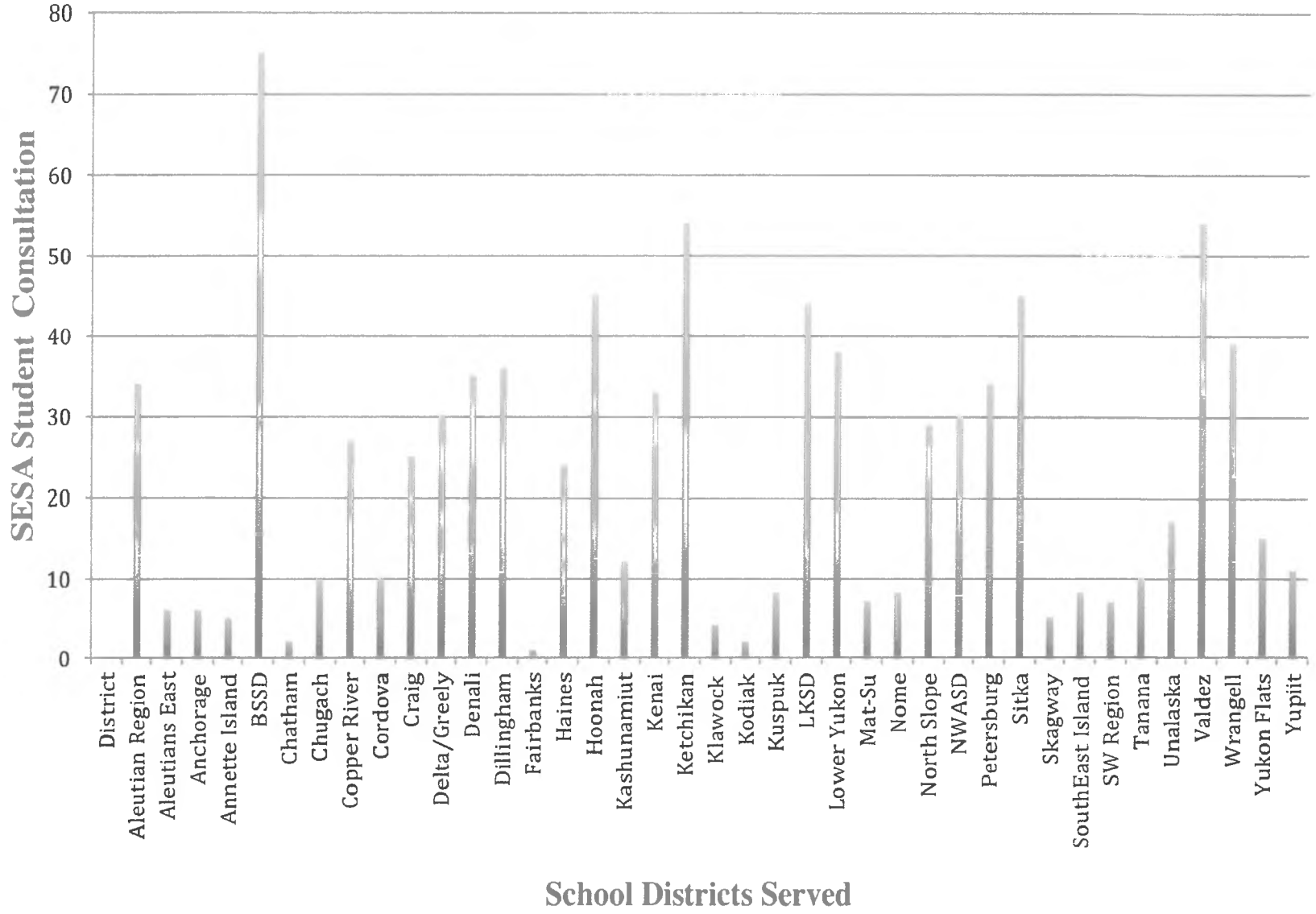
Search



[Read more](#)



## *SESA FY12 Student Consultation by District*







*The Key to Success*

for Alaskan Educators Serving Students  
with Low-Incidence Disabilities



## **Impact on Students & Teachers**

1. Reduced ability to promote evidenced based practices.
2. Fewer on-site visits to provide targeted interventions.
3. Shorter visits to maximize travel dollars to include more sites.
4. Less time for classroom observation and program enhancement.
5. Loss of guidance to new special education teachers and to classroom teachers encountering unique disabilities.
6. Loss of child specific educational intervention strategies modeled on-site to teachers.
7. Reduced ability to recruit quality specialists to Alaska.



*The Key to Success*

for Alaskan Educators Serving Students  
with Low-Incidence Disabilities



## 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

The State is required to meet the 2004 IDEA to “ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designated to meet their unique needs.”

The Legislature intended for SESA to help DEED fulfill this requirement by assisting schools with providing special education children affected by LID.



*The Key to Success*

for Alaskan Educators Serving Students  
with Low-Incidence Disabilities



# Legislative Audit Report

June 22, 2012

Recommendation #1: Reiterating from the prior report that the Legislature should review SESA funding; and

“Over the past 14 years, school districts have received increases in their funding formula, yet SESA’s funding formula has not increased. ...the historical process for evaluating and increasing SESA funding has been a legislative process...”



*The Key to Success*  
for Alaskan Educators Serving Students  
with Low-Incidence Disabilities



# Legislative Audit Report

June 22, 2012

“Due to inflation, the real value of SESA’S LID budget, as established 14 years ago, has decreased 36 per cent. Accounting for inflation since 1998, SESA’s funding formula in today’s dollars would be approximately \$21.50 per student rather than the current funding formula amount of \$15.75. As a result, SESA is experiencing challenges with recruiting and retaining education specialists with specialized disability endorsements and meeting schools’ need for itinerant outreach services.”



*The Key to Success*

for Alaskan Educators Serving Students  
with Low-Incidence Disabilities

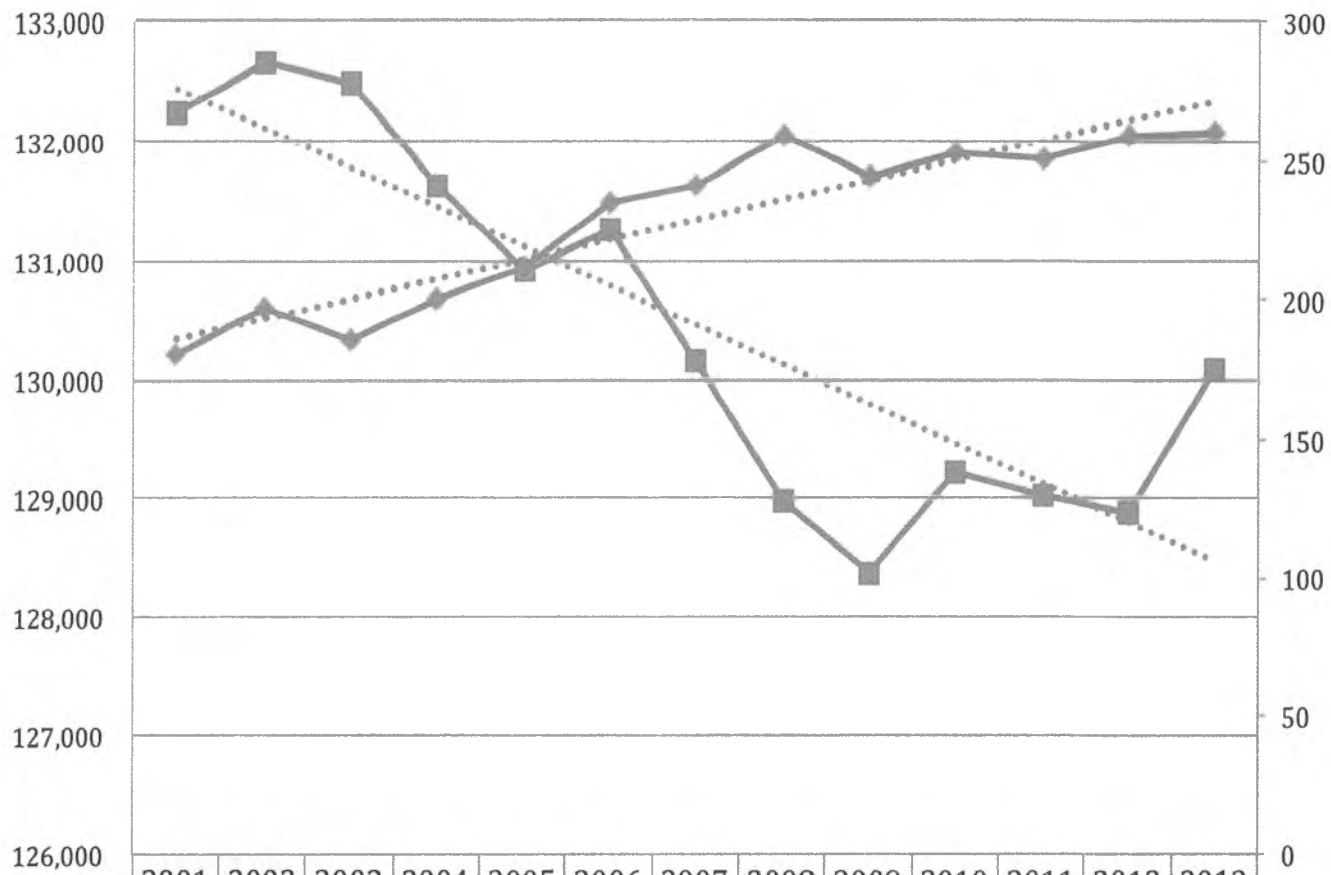


## Senate Bill 17 Conclusion

1. Alaska Statute Funding Calculation for SESA should be changed to **\$21.50**
2. SESA needs these funds to:
  - (a) fulfill the intent of the Legislature, and the mandate of the 2004 IDEA;
  - (b) provide competitive salaries to attract and retain qualified specialists;
  - (c) continue providing quality services for LID children;
  - (d) maintain consistent infrastructure despite short term or discontinued grant funding cycles.

## ADM (i.e. SESA's Funding) vs SESA LID Student Count FY 2001-FY2013

Average Daily Membership (ADM) State of Alaska



■ Average Daily Membership	132,251	132,661	132,481	131,621	130,921	131,261	130,161	128,971	128,381	129,221	129,041	128,881	130,099
◆ Student Count - LID	180	197	186	200	212	235	241	259	245	253	251	259	260

Average Daily Membership
  Student Count - LID
  Linear (Average Daily Membership)
  Linear (Student Count - LID)



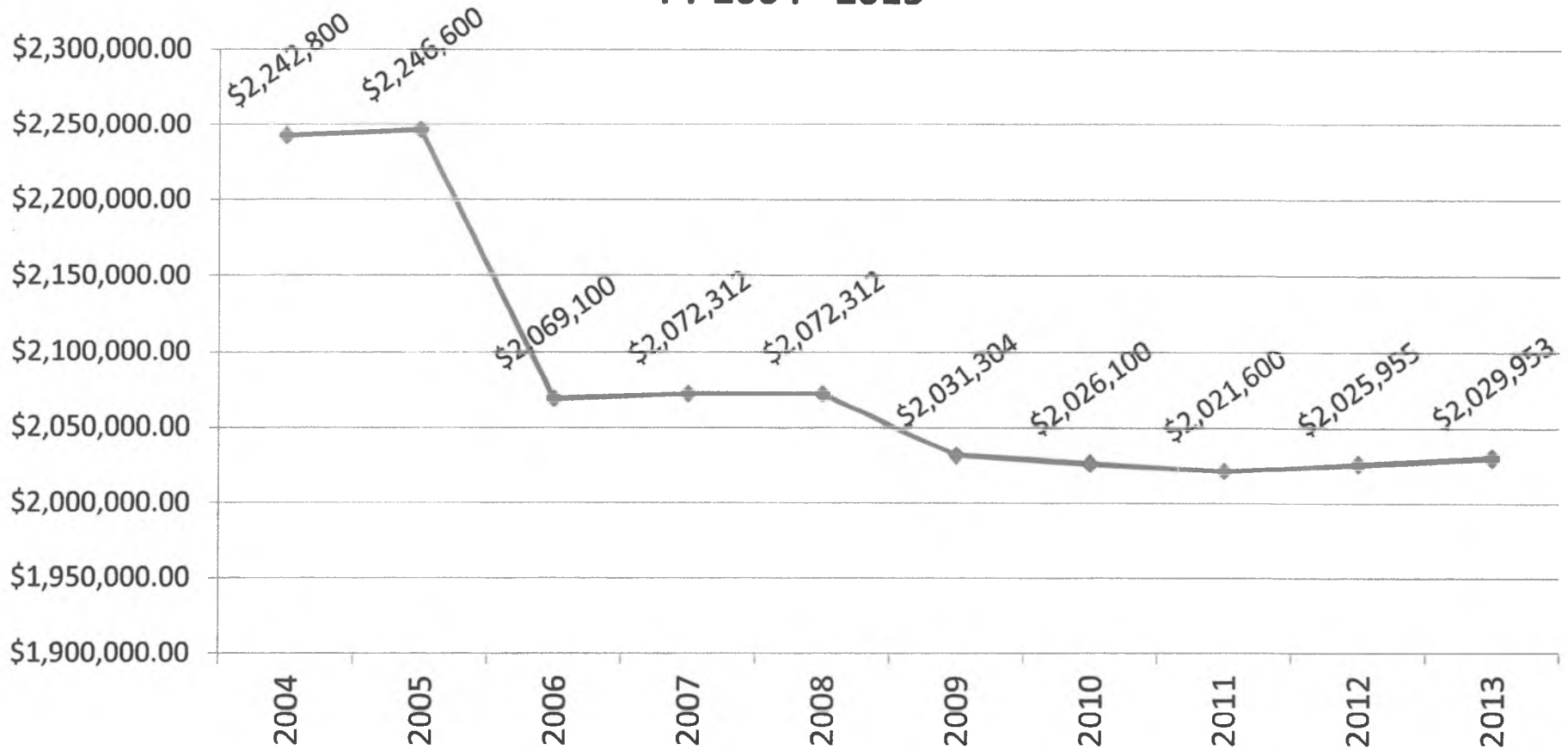
*The Key to Success*

for Alaskan Educators Serving Students  
with Low-Incidence Disabilities



## A Review of SESA's Low Incidence Disabilities Funding Over the Past 10 Years.

### SESA's Funding FY 2004 - 2013



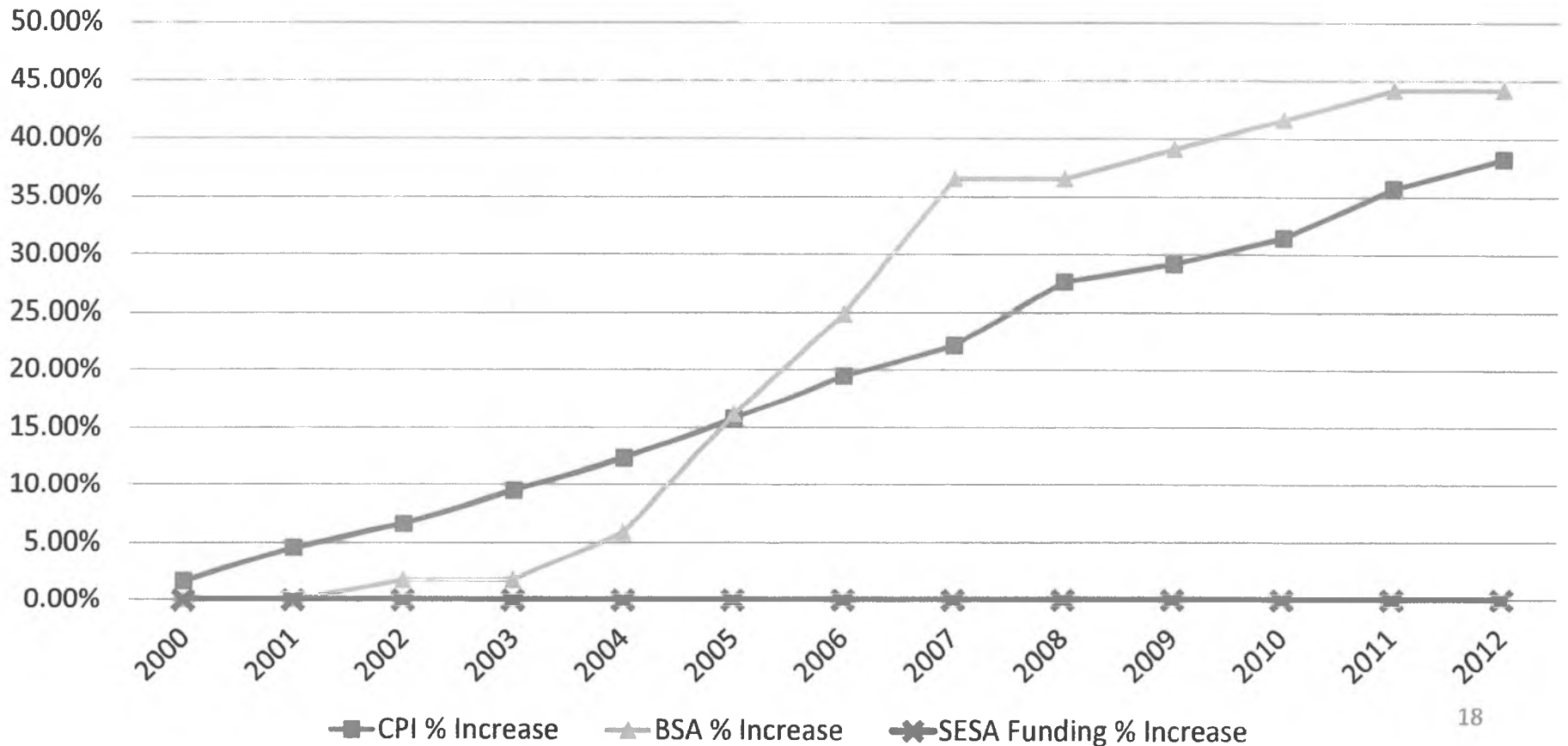


*The Key to Success*  
for Alaskan Educators Serving Students  
with Low-Incidence Disabilities



**This chart shows the increase in the Consumer Price Index and Base Student Allocation, with SESA's funding remaining flat.**

**CPI and BSA Increase vs. SESA Funding**



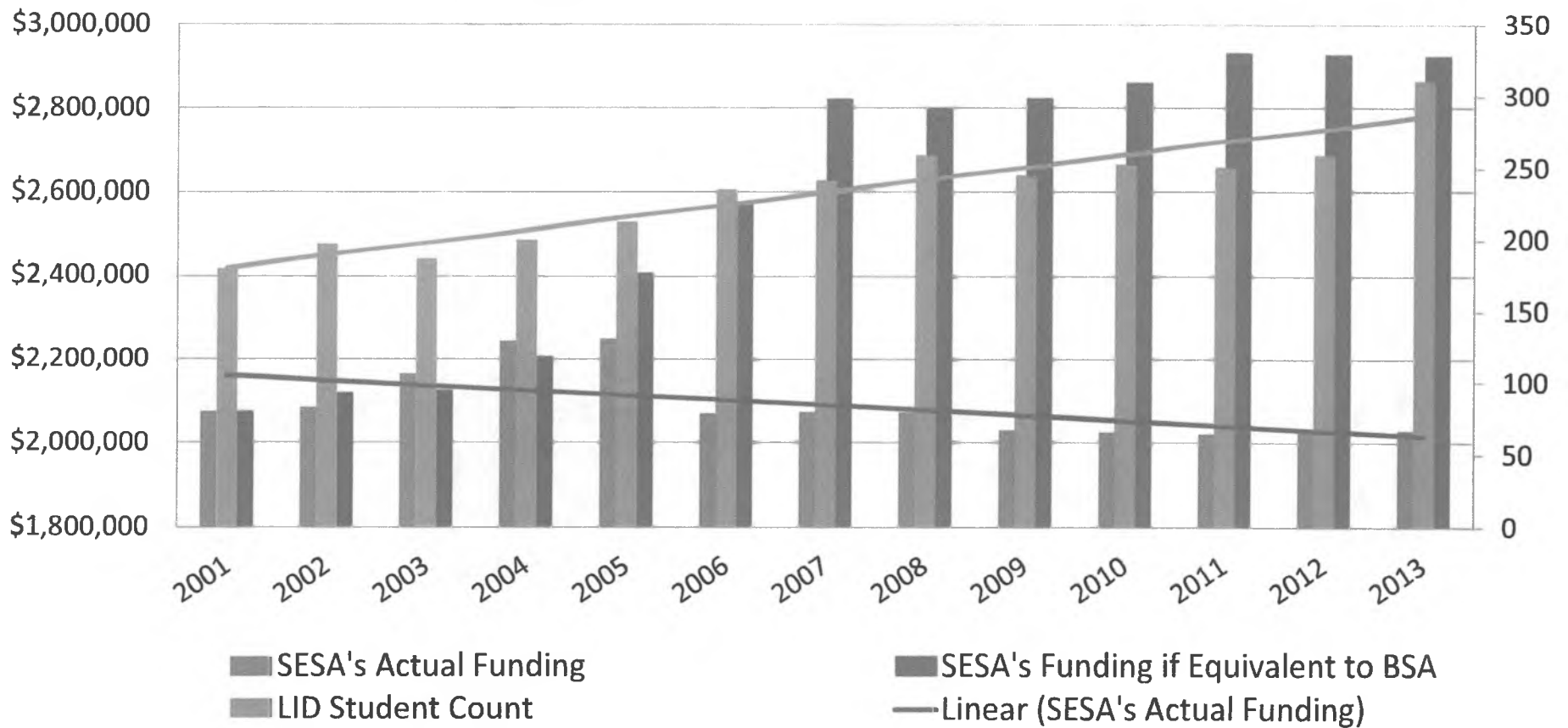


*The Key to Success*  
 for Alaskan Educators Serving Students  
 with Low-Incidence Disabilities



This graph shows how LID student count has increased while SESA's overall funding has decreased due to decreased ADM.

**SESA's Actual Funding vs Funding if Equivalent to BSA vs Student Count**

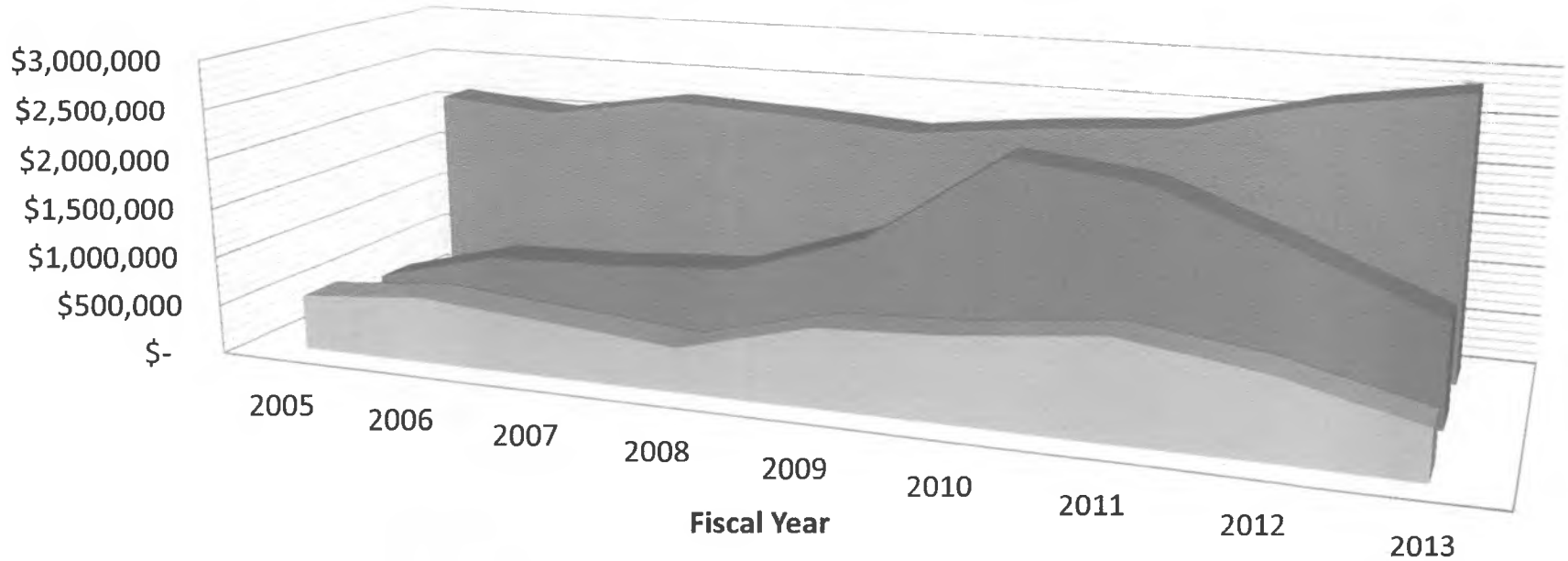




*The Key to Success*  
 for Alaskan Educators Serving Students  
 with Low-Incidence Disabilities



### LID Cost of Operations, Fund Balances AND Grant Expenditures FY2005 - FY2013 (9 Years)



	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
■ Fund Balance	\$552,789	\$661,919	\$552,553	\$441,479	\$780,263	\$847,623	\$993,746	\$810,268	\$494,156
■ Total Grant Expenditures	\$400,708	\$734,390	\$775,280	\$864,373	\$1,301,67	\$2,211,11	\$2,064,41	\$1,563,96	\$1,038,10
■ LID Cost of Operations	\$2,140,88	\$2,025,56	\$2,254,82	\$2,185,70	\$2,094,59	\$2,233,09	\$2,328,11	\$2,670,56	\$2,860,88



*The Key to Success*

for Alaskan Educators Serving Students  
with Low-Incidence Disabilities



## **How SESA's Funding Should be Structured VERSUS How it is Currently Structured**



With this structure, SESA is built upon providing LID services, and its funding reflects same.



With the current funding structure, LID payments are insufficient to provide the LID services requested by districts.



## *The Key to Success*

for Alaskan Educators Serving Students  
with Low-Incidence Disabilities



# **Impact of Continued Under-Funding:**

1. Reduced ability to promote evidenced based practices.
2. Fewer on-site visits to provide targeted interventions.
3. Shorter visits to maximize travel dollars to include more sites.
4. Less time for classroom observation and program enhancement.
5. Loss of guidance to new special education teachers and to classroom teachers encountering unique disabilities.
6. Loss of child specific educational intervention strategies modeled on-site to teachers.
7. Reduced ability to recruit & retain quality specialists.



*The Key to Success*

for Alaskan Educators Serving Students  
with Low-Incidence Disabilities



# Special Education Service Agency (SESA)

Please support SB 17,  
extending the sunset for and fully funding SESA.

---

**From:** Maria Sackrison <maria\_sackrison@lksd.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 11, 2013 7:46 AM  
**To:** Riley Leonard; Tim Lamkin  
**Subject:** Fwd: Letter in support of SESA

**From:** Maria Sackrison <[Maria\\_Sackrison@lksd.org](mailto:Maria_Sackrison@lksd.org)>  
**Date:** February 11, 2013 7:40:36 AM AKST  
**To:** [riley.leonard@akleg.org](mailto:riley.leonard@akleg.org), [tim.lamkin@akleg.org](mailto:tim.lamkin@akleg.org)  
**Subject:** Letter in support of SESA

We receive tremendous services from SESA. Their help has made all the difference in the lives of the children, parents and school staff. We are in tremendous support of this phenomenal agency and could not do as well out here in these remote areas without them. They have figured out some "puzzles" that had not been figured out by other specialists from other places. Please make sure that any support you can provide them is available.

Thanks,

Maria Sackrison-Special Education Teacher Napaskiak School, Napaskiak, AK (LKSD)

1. The importance of funding a service that was created by the legislature to guarantee students with low incidence disabilities a free and appropriate public education under IDEA 2004.
2. The importance of funding the agency based on services provided and your continuing need for those services.
3. The need for training staff, including special education teachers, who need training in disability areas they do not have adequate experience in.
4. The importance of having a free service from SESA in the context of tight budgets.



# KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

**Pupil Services**  
**Clayton Holland, Director**

148 North Binkley Street, Soldotna, Alaska 99669-7553 Phone (907) 714-8881

Fax (907) 262-1374

To: Senator Stevens

From: Mr. Clayton Holland, Director of Pupil Services, KPBSD

Re: SESA

Date: 2/8/13

Dear Senator Stevens:

I am the Director of Pupil Services for the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District. I am writing you in support of the reauthorization of the Special Education Service Agency. SESA has been a valuable resource to our district when working with students with low incidence disabilities. On several occasions we have asked for their assistance with students that we have struggled to serve effectively. SESA has always been able to help our students and work productively as a team with both our staff and parents. The positive impact that SESA has on students, families, and schools in the more remote locations of the state must be even more substantial than here, where we do have access to more resources.

Respectfully,

Clayton Holland

Clayton Holland  
Director of Pupil Services  
KPBSD  
907-714-8899  
cholland@kpbsd.k12.ak.us

Superintendent's Office  
(907) 886-6332  
FAX: (907) 886-5130

Business Office  
(907) 886-6009  
FAX: (907) 886-5130

Special Education  
(907) 886-6020  
FAX: (907) 886-4122



**ANNETTE ISLANDS SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
P.O. Box 7 • Metlakatla, AK 99926  
Accredited by Northwest Accreditation Association

Metlakatla High School  
(907) 886-6000  
FAX: (907) 886-5120

C.R. Leask Sr. Middle  
School  
(907) 886-6003  
FAX: (907) 886-6019

R.J. Elementary School  
(907) 886-4121  
FAX: (907) 886-4120

Representative Ms. Lynn Gattis  
Chair House Education Committee  
Attention: Mr. Jim Ellis, Legislative Aide  
Alaska State Capitol  
Room 420  
Juneau, Alaska 99801  
February 7, 2013  
Regarding: HB85

Dear Honorable Gattis,

This letter is written in support of funding for the Special Education Service Agency, Anchorage, Alaska. The Special Education Service Agency (SESA) has provided quality services to our district since 1986. Throughout those years, SESA has been a consistent force in helping our district meet the needs of our special education students.

The Special Education Service Agency has sent highly qualified specialists that are trained in designing effective programs for students diagnosed as vision or hearing impaired, autistic, emotionally disturbed, and multiply disabled. These specialized programs have allowed our students to access their educational opportunities to the fullest extent possible.

Small school districts that serve low-incidence disabled students would find it challenging to meet the special needs of individual students without the expertise of the Special Education Service Agency, who are specifically trained and qualified to provide assistance to rural districts, such as ours.

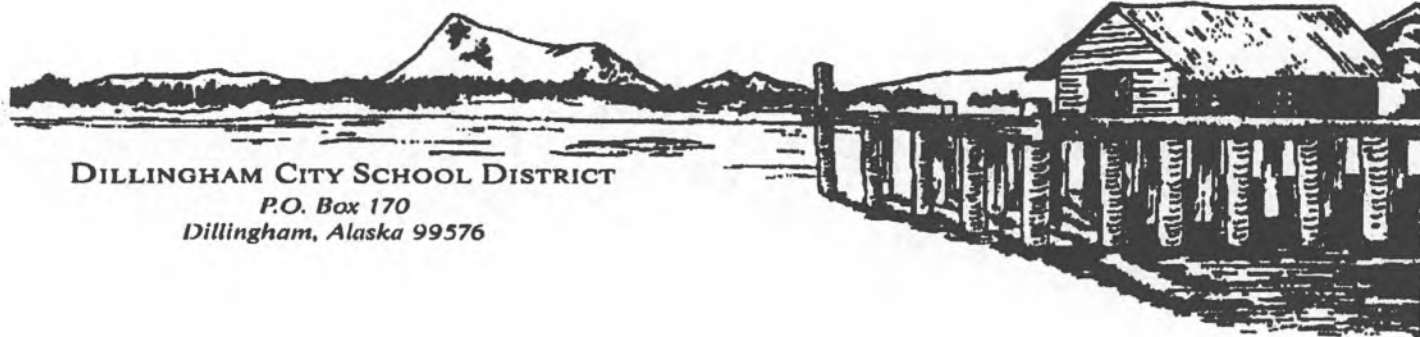
As the Special Education Director of the Annette Islands School District, I can attest to the loss we would incur if the Special Education Service Agency would not be granted funding to ensure their existence.

In closing, the Annette Islands School District and our community can only offer our utmost respect and gratitude to Mr. Patrick Pillai, as well as his highly trained staff.

Professionally,

Susan Beardsworth  
Director of Special Education

Cc: Mr. Eugene Avey, Superintendent of Schools



DILLINGHAM CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
P.O. Box 170  
Dillingham, Alaska 99576

January 31, 2013

Dear Senator Gary Stevens,

It is indeed a genuine pleasure to submit this letter of support to increase per student funding for the Special Education Services Agency (SESA). As you no doubt know, SESA was established by the Alaska Legislature to help Alaska School Districts meet the unique and diverse needs of students with low-incident disabilities as defined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

I have been fortunate to be able to request and receive SESA services for over the past 20 years. There have been times as both a classroom practitioner and a school district administrator that I have sought advice and services from SESA, and in all cases found their professional wisdom and responses to my queries to be invaluable.

The need for a special services organization, such as SESA, can best be explained by providing a typical example of what school districts encounter in rural and isolated Alaska villages. Example, Dillingham has five children with autism and four children with Down Syndrome. To locate and retain the services of a qualified professional in autism is quite expensive, and in many cases impossible. We also have a student that is blind and one that is hard of hearing. Dillingham Schools need centralized expertise in a variety of special service fields in order to provide adequate services for special needs children in their school district. SESA provides that expertise. SESA also provides staff training.

In conclusion, Dillingham City School District fully supports the increase in funding. The increase will assure that SESA is able to continue to seek and retain the services of highly qualified professional experts to address the growing demand we have for their.

Thank you for your interest, time and support of SESA. If I can be of any further assistance, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Danny Frazier, Assistant Superintendent

Superintendent  
Ph: 842-5223  
Fax: 842-5634

Central Office  
Ph: 842-1046  
Fax: 842-3756

Business Office  
Ph: 842-3318  
Fax: 842-4145

Elementary  
Ph: 842-5642  
Fax: 842-4313

Middle/High  
Ph: 842-5221  
Fax: 842-4395

Alternative School  
Ph: 842-5023  
Fax: 842-5024

**Tim Lamkin**

---

**From:** Tim Stathis <tstathis@aebbsd.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 21, 2013 4:16 PM  
**To:** Ryan Wilson  
**Cc:** Tim Lamkin  
**Subject:** AEBSD Supporting SB17

**Honored Senator Stevens and Members of the Senate and House Education Committees:**

I am writing to earnestly convey to you the dire need for SB17 to successfully pass, for SESA funding to continue. SESA's service for our youth in the extremity of remoteness of our region is essential to the fulfilling of my promise to the parents of our Special Needs students, that ALL our students shall be provided an equal opportunity for excellence of education. We have an autistic child in the remote community/island of Akutan. SESA's intervention for this child has been a vital part of the child's development, positive self-esteem, and building identity. SESA support to our Teachers who work with our special needs students has, as well, been vital to our efforts. The costs of travel to Akutan are enormous (r/t ANC-Akutan is approximately \$1800), and these costs have been rising over the years; rising costs has a proportional negative impact on offered services. I therefore encourage increasing SESA's State funding to meet such rising demands (as I understand SESA has been flat funded for 15 years!). We cannot deny our pledge to provide for Alaska's youth no matter how remote the destiny of their upbringing. Please support everything SESA needs to continue with its mission.

Thank you.

Tim

--

**T. Stathis, Superintendent**  
**Aleutians East Borough School District**  
**Sand Point, Alaska 99661**

[tstathis@aebbsd.org](mailto:tstathis@aebbsd.org)

wk. 907-383-5222

c. 907-538-4962

SKYPE username: timstathis

REC'D 08 JAN 13

Margaret Kavanaugh

3260 Peninsula Rd

Kodiak, AK 99615

Senator Gary Stevens

305 Center Ave, Suite 1

Kodiak, AK 99615

Re: Re-Authorization of the Special Education Service Agency (SESA)

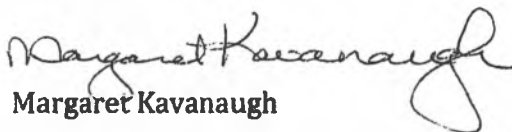
Dear Senator Stevens,

I am writing as a resident of Kodiak, a retired Kodiak Island Borough School District (KIBSD) special education teacher, and as a parent of an adult son with a disability. Over the course of my 23-year career with KIBSD I have consistently worked with specialists from the Special Education Service Agency (SESA), and fully support the reauthorization of SESA. I urge you to sponsor a bill in this regard.

As a special education teacher it is impossible to be knowledgeable in all the content areas necessary to adequately program for a child with a disability. It is even more difficult in areas of low incidence disabilities since every child is unique in terms of their cognitive, sensory, and medical needs. SESA specialists provide a critical service to Alaska's school staff, parents, and communities in this regard. The SESA specialists support teachers and paraprofessionals and create a sense of community by networking staff with resources across the state. This is a critical service to teachers who feel overwhelmed with encountering specific disabilities for the first time. Of extreme value to me as a classroom teacher was the sharing of the specialist's unique skill set honed from working in special education classrooms across the state of Alaska.

I have worked with many SESA specialists over my twenty-three year career and understand the value of their expertise with low incidence disabilities. I fully support legislative reauthorization of the Special Education Agency and urge you to sponsor a bill to reauthorize SESA.

Sincerely,

  
Margaret Kavanaugh

E-mail: [kavanaugh@gci.net](mailto:kavanaugh@gci.net)

Phone: 907-539-2950

**CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 17(EDC)**

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Offered: 2/4/13

Referred: Finance

Sponsor(s): SENATORS STEVENS, Ellis, Gardner

**A BILL**

**FOR AN ACT ENTITLED**

1 "An Act relating to allocations to the special education service agency and extending the  
2 special education service agency; and providing for an effective date."

3 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

4 \* **Section 1.** AS 14.30.650 is amended to read:

5 **Sec. 14.30.650. Funding.** Each fiscal year the department shall allocate to the  
6 agency not less than \$15.75 times the number of students in the state in average daily  
7 membership in the preceding fiscal year as determined under AS 14.17.600. Money to  
8 carry out the provisions of this section may be appropriated annually by the  
9 legislature. If amounts are insufficient to meet the allocation authorized under this  
10 section for a fiscal year, the allocation shall be reduced pro rata. [THE AMOUNT  
11 ALLOCATED TO THE AGENCY SHALL BE REDUCED EACH FISCAL YEAR  
12 BY THE AMOUNT CONTRIBUTED BY THE DEPARTMENT TO THE  
13 TEACHERS' RETIREMENT SYSTEM (AS 14.25) OR THE PUBLIC EMPLOYEES'  
14 RETIREMENT SYSTEM (AS 39.35) ON BEHALF OF EMPLOYEES OF THE

1 AGENCY.]

2 \* **Sec. 2.** AS 44.66.010(6) is amended to read:

3 (6) special education service agency (AS 14.30.600) - **June 30, 2021**

4 [JUNE 30, 2013];

5 \* **Sec. 3.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to  
6 read:

7 **RETROACTIVITY.** Section 2 of this Act is retroactive to June 30, 2013.

8 \* **Sec. 4.** This Act takes effect immediately under AS 01.10.070(c).

---

**From:** Cathy Bolling <lalaska11@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 18, 2013 12:06 PM  
**To:** Tim Lamkin  
**Subject:** please support SB17

Senator Gary Stevens,

I am writing to urge your support of SB17, reauthorizing the Special Education Services Agency of Alaska as well as calling for increased funding.

14 years ago our daughter was diagnosed on the Autism Spectrum. We live in Craig and one of our first thoughts was HOW will we provide her the services she needs in this small area with so few resources. Fortunately, there were other local parents who had blazed a trail for us and it was not as difficult as we had first thought. We were able to remain in the town we love.

Thanks to SESA, our 16 year old daughter, now a sophomore, has been able to learn and function in the public education system as any other child.

SESA specialists visit her school to provide support to teachers who work with her, including training on her specific disorder. I greatly appreciate that, not only for my daughter's sake, but for those students in the system and yet to come, with similar disorders. Teachers need to have the benefit of this knowledge, rather than wallow in the frustration of not knowing how to get through to these students.

SESA specialists meet with our daughter and when possible, with us. As a team, they work with our family and the school so that there is continuity in our approach to helping our daughter learn and function alongside her peers.

SESA also has an incredible lending library that has saved me hundreds of dollars. Their excellent selection and wonderful service allows me to read (and view DVDs) on my child's disability. If I had had to purchase all of these in order to gain the valuable insight and information in them, it would not have happened. We used SESA materials when explaining our daughter's disability to her. Today, she reads and relates to books written by those her age with her disability, books loaned to us by SESA.

SESA's project, the Alaska Autism Resource Center, AARC, has also been an invaluable support to us. Its offerings include information on statewide training for family members and professionals, a monthly call-in help session for parents and a weekly email entitled "Tip of the Week," to which I subscribe. Topics can range from what to do when first receiving your child's diagnosis, to preparing teens on the spectrum for college.

There will come a time when I will no longer be my daughter's main advocate; she will be. And thanks to the services and materials provided by SESA to our family and to her school, she will be able to do that well. I urge you to support this legislation for this valuable agency and the services it provides to a growing population in need in Alaska.

Sincerely,  
Cathy Bolling  
P.O. Box 509  
Craig, AK 99921  
(907)826-3061

---

**From:** Patrick Pillai <ppillai@sesa.org>  
**Sent:** Sunday, February 17, 2013 10:24 AM  
**To:** Tim Lamkin; James Ellis  
**Subject:** Fwd: SESA: Letters of support

**From:** Ron Levy <rlphoto@gci.net>  
**Date:** February 15, 2013 12:49:02 PM AKST  
**To:** Anne Freitag <afreitag@sesa.org>  
**Subject:** Re: SESA: Letters of support

Hello,

I would like to put in a strong word of support for SB17 and HB87.  
SESA has been not just INVALUABLE but a SAVIOR for us and my special needs/IEP boy.

They have provided me with a true wealth of resources -- books, DVDs, training, one-on-one help -- under one roof on a moment's notice that have saved my marriage, saved my sanity, and helped my boy slowly climb out of what we once thought was an unimaginable black hole of troubles.

They have helped us avoid unnecessary medical treatments.  
They have helped us re-focus our priorities and use positive actions to motivate our boy  
They have helped us improve his school academics and social life.

I can go on and on and on. SESA is a service that saves lives, and saves tons of money on medical bills, and tons of time trying to track down and research clinical and subclinical problems that many doctors either aren't willing or able to treat.

The free, accessible information they provide to us as parents and teachers informs us enough to avoid using unnecessary government sponsored programs, once we learn the wealth of interactive techniques available through their kind people and immense library.

Please don't kill this program. Reauthorize these 2 bills.  
I am positive you will be saving marriages, relationships, families and, most likely, lives.

Best,  
Ron Levy

---

**From:** Ron Levy <rlphoto@gci.net>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 15, 2013 12:48 PM  
**To:** Tim Lamkin  
**Subject:** SESA SB17 and HB87

Hello,

I would like to put in a strong word of support for SB17 and HB87.  
SESA has been not just INVALUABLE but a SAVIOR for us and my special needs/IEP boy.

They have provided me with a true wealth of resources -- books, DVDs, training, one-on-one help -- under one roof on a moment's notice that have saved my marriage, saved my sanity, and helped my boy slowly climb out of what we once thought was an unimaginable black hole of troubles.

They have helped us avoid unnecessary medical treatments.  
They have helped us re-focus our priorities and use positive actions to motivate our boy They have helped us improve his school academics and social life.

I can go on and on and on. SESA is a service that saves lives, and saves tons of money on medical bills, and tons of time trying to track down and research clinical and subclinical problems that many doctors either aren't willing or able to treat.

The free, accessible information they provide to us as parents and teachers informs us enough to avoid using unnecessary government sponsored programs, once we learn the wealth of interactive techniques available through their kind people and immense library.

Please don't kill this program. Reauthorize these 2 bills.  
I am positive you will be saving marriages, relationships, families and, most likely, lives.

Best,  
Ron Levy

---

**From:** Cate Koskey <ckoskey@loweryukon.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 15, 2013 12:50 PM  
**To:** Tim Lamkin  
**Subject:** SESA SB17 and HB87 Please Renew Funding For SESA!

Dear Senator Gary Stevens:

Hello and Good Morning. My name is Cate Koskey, and I am a special education teacher in the rural village of Hooper Bay, on the coast of the Bering Sea, and have been for the past 13 years.

The Special Education Service Association has provided an invaluable resource for our students. In our district, since we are so rural, our specialists only see students once per quarter, and less if weather causes travel problems with planes. We have extremely high-need students, many with intense and challenging behaviors and academic struggles. Our school as a whole struggles with academic progress, as we are labeled by the state as an "In Crisis" School, and many of our school and district resources are used to help remedy this academic "crisis". This leaves few resources or methods to help our most struggling students: our students with low-incidence disabilities.

But SESA professionals step in to fill that gap and provide amazing, creative, inventive, and resourceful help. What would I have done the first days of my career as a special educator, when I was faced with two students with vision impairments and teaching students with vision impairment was not part of my previous education, except for the help and care of the SESA vision specialist who came to my village within days of the school year's beginning? I don't know how I would have continued to manage three students with emotional disturbances who were violent and aggressive and were constantly facing suspension, if it had not been for the SESA professional who came to the rescue, with resources and ideas and new ways of thinking about their behavior.

I cringe to think what will happen if SESA is forced to close its doors. The quality of education in rural Alaska for students with low-incidence disabilities will plummet, for sure. Please renew SESA's funding with bills SB17 and HB87!

Thank You –

Cate Koskey, Hooper Bay Elementary Special Education

w: 907-758-1200x2419

c: 907-758-2548

[ckoskey@loweryukon.org](mailto:ckoskey@loweryukon.org)

skype: catetundramomma

~ " Your self-sacrificing devotion to your purpose in life and your unwavering faith will carry you through times of difficulty." ~

– Martin Luther King Jr, from the Jefferson County Jail, Birmingham, Alabama 1963

---

The information contained in this email (including any attachments) is confidential and may be privileged. If you are not the intended recipient, do not read, print, copy, retain, distribute, or disclose its content. If you have received this email in error, please advise us by return email.

---

---

**From:** Debbie Collins <dcollins@cordovasd.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 15, 2013 1:00 PM  
**To:** Tim Lamkin  
**Subject:** SESA SB17 HB 87

I am an paraprofessional in the Cordova School District. It has been brought to my attention that SESA may not get funding to continue its services. Over the years I have worked with many students with special, unique needs. The SESA library and staff has provided me with support materials and much good advice to give my students the very best help. Our school district would never have been able to purchase all the materials I have borrowed from the library. When working with special needs students, it is often trial and error. When one thing does not work, we try something else. I could borrow something, then borrow more. I have kept materials over the summer to be ready for the upcoming year. The legislature originally funded this program and it needs to continue, not just for staff, but more importantly, for the parents of children with downs, autism, and other disabilities. Please take this into consideration, and look at how we can help parents who live with struggles everyday and how we can support them.

Thank you,  
Debbie Collins  
Cordova

# Stephen Bailey



1688 Skylight Ave • Fairbank, AK 99709 • Phone: 907-474-2886  
E-Mail: stephen.bailey@k12northstar.org

Date: February 14, 2013

Senator Gary Stevens  
Representative Lynn Gattis

Dear Senator Stevens and Representative Gattis:

I am a special education teacher with the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District and currently serve the district as an Assistive Technology Specialist. I am also a parent of a blind child who has received important services from SESA (Special Education Service Agency) for the last four years.

I am writing in support of the reauthorization of SESA, as Senate Bill 17 and IIB87 are now being heard in legislature. In both of the above capacities the ongoing needs for which SESA exists, and was created, compel me to write this letter requesting continued, or increased, funding. Students with low incidence disabilities in rural Alaska require very specialized services that would otherwise be unavailable without the help of SESA and its specialists. Special Education teachers in the bush also need the specific training and support that SESA provides to serve their students with special needs. Many of these teachers are new or have expertise in areas other than those required for a particular student's FAPE (free and appropriate public education) under IDEA 2004. SESA provides important in-service training across the state.

Personally - even as a member of the more sizable community of Fairbanks - I can testify to the very great importance of the early childhood ILP services we received from SESA for our blind son. Andrea Story, Teacher for the Visually Impaired and an Orientation & Mobility Specialist, was able to provide my wife and me with invaluable information and resources toward an effective early intervention and understanding of our son's disability.

Please consider the needs and purpose for which SESA was created, and continue to fund this important agency.

Sincerely,

Stephen Bailey  
Assistive Technology Specialist, FNSBSD  
And Parent

---

**From:** Monica Doss <mdoss@kuspuk.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 14, 2013 6:41 PM  
**To:** Tim Lamkin  
**Subject:** SESA SB17 and HB87

Please vote for increased funding for SESA with bills SB17 and HB87. SESA employees Belinda Lafleur and Michelle Radin were enormously helpful with my intensive needs elementary students. They both provided individual training for me and my student's aid. They have both been available via email for any consultations about my students. Our school has also borrowed needed audio enhancement equipment and communication devices from SESA--equipment that was needed but the district could not afford to buy. Again please vote for increased funding for SESA. Their help to our school and many other schools and special needs students is invaluable.

Sincerely,

Monica Doss

Special Education Teacher

Joseph and Olinga Gregory Elementary School Kalskag, Alaska

---

**From:** mandy evans <evansm@sitkaschools.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 14, 2013 11:49 AM  
**To:** Tim Lamkin; Rep. Lynn Gattis  
**Subject:** SESA SB17 and HB87

Dear Senator Gary Stevens and Representative Lynn Gattis,

I am writing in regards to Senate Bill17 and HB87, which are now being heard in the legislature. It is **critical** that funding for SESA is reauthorized. As a Special Education Director, I want to emphasize the importance of services from SESA in our district -- and the need for continued and increased funding for an agency created, by the legislature, to assist the state in guaranteeing students with low incidence disabilities a free and appropriate public education under IDEA 2004.

In my eight years as an educator in Alaska, as a teacher and now as the special education administrator for Sitka, I have found the expertise and support provided by SESA to be invaluable to students, teachers, paraprofessionals, and families. The training SESA provides in autism and other brain-based disabilities is of the highest quality, and has resulted in significant academic progress for our students. Our district is very fortunate to have talented and experienced special education providers – but we will always require support in providing relevant and effective services to students in our district who experience autism, hearing or vision impairments, multiple disabilities, significant physical/medical challenges, and who are emotionally disturbed.

Two specific and recent examples: This fall, the intervention and consult provided to our team by a SESA specialist in Emotional Disturbance was critical in preventing a student from dropping out of school. This morning, a parent came in to talk with a teacher to specifically thank her for the amazing year her daughter is having; her daughter is a child with autism. When I asked the teacher what changed things from the crisis state of the previous year, she said “SESA!”

SESA has provided in-service training for both special education and general education staff this year in best practices regarding Executive Function and Social Thinking Skills, Accommodations and Modifications in General Education, and Inclusion. The resources that SESA specialists and the SESA library provide are also very important for our teachers, families, and students – including books, technology, and connections to grants for students.

Please continue your support of this essential resource, so that we can continue to provide effective special education services to students in Alaska.

Sincerely,

Mandy Evans

Mandy Evans (907) 966-1253

Special Education Director

Sitka School District

Sitka, Alaska

---

**From:** Shirley Harris <shirley.harris@k12northstar.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 14, 2013 1:41 PM  
**To:** Tim Lamkin  
**Cc:** Patrick Pillai  
**Subject:** SESA Funding

TO: Tim Lamkin

I am writing in support of re-authorization of SESA along with a funding increase.

I am a special education teacher in Fairbanks North Star Borough School District. I have an endorsement in Low vision/blindness. I have worked closely with SESA in the past nine years here in FNSBSD and in the past 11 years throughout Alaska.

SESA has proven to be an extremely valuable resource providing the following services and funding:

- Teacher training
- Para-professional training
- Care provider training
- Parent training
- Direct instruction to students
- Library media resources/materials
- Federal quota for blind both administration and material distribution
- Dual sensory impaired (blind/deaf) funding and training
- Funding for traveling for Parent to National Conference (CHARGE Syndrome)
- Funding for me to travel to National Conference on Deaf/Blind

The districts throughout Alaska do have Special Education services available, and services are provided to our students. Still, the importance of SESA and the overall expertise provided by Patrick Pillai and his staff is something that is desperately needed throughout our state. Providing services to a "low incidence" population is

a difficult duty. It is critical to have a co-worker or a "go-to" person or group in which to question, brainstorm, and use as a sounding board. SESA provides all of this within a friendly professional cohort.

I find it a privilege to work with this group of dedicated professionals and feel the overall level of service within the state would be greatly impacted in a negative way if funding is eliminated, decreased even not increased.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, I know these are difficult financial times for out state and country. It is critical, however to never forget the ones we are providing services to.

Shirley Harris TVI/COMS

--

Shirley Harris - TVI/O&M  
Teacher For Visually Impaired  
Orientation & Mobility Specialist  
District Wide Tester  
(907) 452-2000 Ext. 415  
Cell: (907) 978-3529

This email and any files transmitted with it are confidential and intended solely for the use of the individual or entity to whom they are addressed. If you have received this email in error please notify the system manager. This message contains confidential information and is intended only for the individual named. If you are not the named addressee you should not disseminate, distribute or copy this email. Please notify the sender immediately by email if you have received this email by mistake and delete this email from your system. If you are not the intended recipient you are notified that disclosing, copying, distributing or taking any action in reliance on the contents of this information is strictly prohibited.

---

**From:** Wendy Jacobsen <wjacobsen@cordovasd.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 14, 2013 2:03 PM  
**To:** Tim Lamkin; Rep. Lynn Gattis  
**Subject:** SESA SB17 and HB87



**CORDOVA SCHOOL DISTRICT**

PO Box 1330 \* 100 Fisherman Avenue

Cordova, Alaska 99574-0140

(907) 424-3265 \* FAX (907) 424-3271

Cordova Jr/Sr High  
School  
Elementary

Mt. Eccles

(907) 424-  
3266  
(907) 424-3265

FAX (907) 424-  
5215  
X (907) 424-3117

FA

February 14, 2013

Dear Senator Gary Stevens and Representative Lynn Gattis,

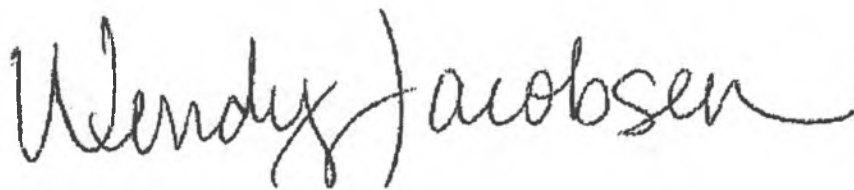
As a secondary special education teacher in a rural school district like Cordova, I'm writing this letter to encourage the reauthorization of SESA SB17 and HB87.

Special Education Service Agency (SESA) is an important agency for our students and the services they receive. As a rural school district, we do not have direct access to specialist for students with low incident disabilities. Our district, even though small, services students with low incident disabilities and without the support of SESA, I have to wonder if their families would consider living somewhere else so that their child can receive the support needed. I'm so thankful for the level of support SESA provides that allows our families to receive specialized services for their child and can consider Cordova their home.

As a teacher, I rely on the SESA specialist to provide training to our paraprofessional and regular education teacher, provide supplemental material (i.e. social skills curriculums or adaptive technology) and provide input to make transition plans successful for the students. Without the support of SESA, I truly believe our special education services would be incomplete.

I do encourage and hope that you will support the reauthorization of SESA SB17 and HB87.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wendy Jacobsen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the letter "n".

Wendy Jacobsen

Cordova Jr/Sr High School Special Education Teacher

---

**From:** John Conwell <jconwell@UCSD.net>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 14, 2013 10:48 AM  
**To:** Tim Lamkin  
**Cc:** Patricia McDaid (pmcdaid@sesa.org)  
**Subject:** SESA SB17 & HB87

ATTN: Senator Gary Stevens

SESA provides our district with much needed access to specialists that are otherwise unavailable given our size and location. As a small district, we provide services to students with disabilities from mild to severe. The specialists train our teachers and paraprofessionals while working directly with students to target individualized needs. This currently includes Autism, Early Childhood Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports, Multiple Disabilities, and Teacher/ Administrator Mentoring. They also focus on family involvement and building the valuable relationship between school and home. Each site visit from a specialist is concluded with a comprehensive report that guides the teacher and IEP team when considering services and practices for students.

SESA also has resources available for check-out including professional books, student materials, and assistive technology. Most recently we have depended on SESA books and videos to support teacher instruction in American Sign Language. Some students depend on sign as their main form of communication. This support from SESA not only allows for better instruction, but also decreases behavior problems because the students have a means of communicating effectively within their learning environment.

We have seen great progress with our students and SESA has been a large part of that success. I cannot stress enough the importance of continuing funding SESA to assist districts the support needed to guarantee students with low incidence disabilities a free and appropriate public education under IDEA 2004.

Jeannie Schiaffo, principal

Eagle's View Elementary School

Unalaska, AK

Given the remoteness of our district, the limited resources, and many hats instructors and administrators wear, special education can seem like an overwhelming proposition when we receive students with autism, multiple handicaps, hearing deficits, or other categories for which a generic special education teacher may have little more than academic experience. Fortunately, we have SESA with whom we can consult and receive direct services. The SESA specialists provide our district with materials, training, support in developing appropriate programs, and endless collegial support. Our special education program depends on the SESA specialists in order to provide support, knowledge, and expertise. We are grateful to have SESA as a resource.

Marti Rookala, special education teacher

Eagle's View Elementary School

Unalaska, AK

The Special Education Service Agency (SESA) provides indispensable assistance for rural school districts and their students with severe disabilities. Small districts do not have the "economies of scale" that the larger urban districts have with regard to hiring specialists in the fields of autism, severe cognitive delays and traumatic brain injuries. SESA provides experts who work with special educators and the families of severely disabled children to develop specialized programs that enable these children access to the school curriculum and programs. The Unalaska City School District wholeheartedly supports increased funding for SESA and its reauthorization!

John P. Conwell, Superintendent

Unalaska City School District

P.O. Box 570

Unalaska, AK 99685

[jconwell@ucsd.net](mailto:jconwell@ucsd.net)

Phone: 907-581-3151

FAX: 907-581-3152

---

**From:** Priscilla Goulding <pgoulding@sisd.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 13, 2013 8:43 PM  
**To:** Tim Lamkin; Rep. Lynn Gattis  
**Subject:** SESA SB17 and HB87

Dear Representatives,

I am an itinerant special education teacher for Southeast Island School District based in Thorne Bay on Prince of Wales Island. I serve children at six different schools and have had the privilege of working with two SESA specialists. I can't say enough about the high quality of service they have provided for students, families, and teachers in remote sites. So when I heard about the possibility of this terrific organization sunseting soon, I felt compelled to voice my support for continued funding.

While I have wondered from time to time why parents of a child with the low incidence disabilities might choose to live in such small communities without access to services, I have come to realize how safe some of these villages are for kids who are raised by the village and looked out for with caring understanding. SESA has been able to educate teachers, parents and improve the quality of the children's education. Their expertise is far beyond what a special education teacher can bring to the table. They have had training in each specific disability and contribute immensely to the IEP process and to the level of understanding of the school staff who work with the children. The SESA specialists I have worked with have brought books and DVD's out of the SESA library so that parents, teachers, and instructional assistants can learn more after the specialist leaves.

I urge you to support refunding SESA for the future in order to continue to provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education for students around the state with low incidence disabilities.

Priscilla Goulding

---

**From:** Maria Sackrison <maria\_sackrison@lksd.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 11, 2013 7:46 AM  
**To:** Riley Leonard; Tim Lamkin  
**Subject:** Fwd: Letter in support of SESA

**From:** Maria Sackrison <[Maria\\_Sackrison@lksd.org](mailto:Maria_Sackrison@lksd.org)>  
**Date:** February 11, 2013 7:40:36 AM AKST  
**To:** [riley.leonard@akleg.org](mailto:riley.leonard@akleg.org), [tim.lamkin@akleg.org](mailto:tim.lamkin@akleg.org)  
**Subject:** Letter in support of SESA

We receive tremendous services from SESA. Their help has made all the difference in the lives of the children, parents and school staff. We are in tremendous support of this phenomenal agency and could not do as well out here in these remote areas without them. They have figured out some "puzzles" that had not been figured out by other specialists from other places. Please make sure that any support you can provide them is available.

Thanks,

Maria Sackrison-Special Education Teacher Napaskiak School, Napaskiak, AK (LKSD)

1. The importance of funding a service that was created by the legislature to guarantee students with low incidence disabilities a free and appropriate public education under IDEA 2004.
2. The importance of funding the agency based on services provided and your continuing need for those services.
3. The need for training staff, including special education teachers, who need training in disability areas they do not have adequate experience in.
4. The importance of having a free service from SESA in the context of tight budgets.

# Bering Strait School District

P.O. BOX 225 • Unalakleet, Alaska • 99684 • (907) 624-3611 • Fax 624-4288

Rebecca Concilus, Director of Special Education

907-624-4278 • [rconcilus@bssd.org](mailto:rconcilus@bssd.org)

---

BREVIG MISSION • DIOMEDE • ELIM • GAMBELL • GOLOVIN • KOYUK • SAINT MICHAEL • SAVOONGA • SHAKTOOLIK  
• SHISHMAREF • STEBBINS • TELLER • UNALAKLEET • WALES • WHITE MOUNTAIN

**DATE:** February 10, 2013  
**TO:** Tim Lamkin  
**SUBJECT:** SESA SB17 and HB87

---

I'm writing to support the reauthorization of Special Education Service Agency (SESA).

Bering Strait School District relies heavily on SESA services and support for our students with low incidence disabilities. Due to the remote locations of our schools, we have limited access to services for our most severely handicapped students. SESA has helped fill some of the gaps through consultation, training, distance and on-site support from their experienced staff.

During onsite visits, they not only work directly with students, but also provide training to staff and parents. They help staff develop strategies and provide resources that tailor to individual needs of students.

Training and support from SESA are not limited to direct services during on-site visits. Our staff has received in-district, off-site and web-based training on topics related to Positive Behavioral Interventions & Support. We've also been able to access technical support through cameras in some of our schools that allow SESA specialists to give feedback and make recommendations regarding strategies and interventions for students on their caseloads.

SESA services are vital to helping meet the needs of children with low incidence disabilities in our school district and other districts in rural Alaska. I ask that the State reauthorize SESA's statute. I also ask that the State increase funding to allow SESA to sustain their ability to serve special needs students in rural Alaska.

Thank you,



Rebecca Concilus  
Special Education Director  
Bering Strait School District



# KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

**Pupil Services**  
**Clayton Holland, Director**

148 North Binkley Street, Soldotna, Alaska 99669-7553 Phone (907) 714-8881

Fax (907) 262-1374

To: Senator Stevens

From: Mr. Clayton Holland, Director of Pupil Services, KPBSD

Re: SESA

Date: 2/8/13

Dear Senator Stevens:

I am the Director of Pupil Services for the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District. I am writing you in support of the reauthorization of the Special Education Service Agency. SESA has been a valuable resource to our district when working with students with low incidence disabilities. On several occasions we have asked for their assistance with students that we have struggled to serve effectively. SESA has always been able to help our students and work productively as a team with both our staff and parents. The positive impact that SESA has on students, families, and schools in the more remote locations of the state must be even more substantial than here, where we do have access to more resources.

Respectfully,

Clayton Holland

Clayton Holland  
Director of Pupil Services  
KPBSD  
907-714-8899  
cholland@kpbsd.k12.ak.us

Superintendent's Office  
(907) 886-6332  
FAX: (907) 886-5130

Business Office  
(907) 886-6009  
FAX: (907) 886-5130

Special Education  
(907) 886-6020  
FAX: (907) 886-4122



**ANNETTE ISLANDS SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
P.O. Box 7 • Metlakatla, AK 99926  
Accredited by Northwest Accreditation Association

Metlakatla High School  
(907) 886-6000  
FAX: (907) 886-5120

C.R. Leask Sr. Middle  
School  
(907) 886-6003  
FAX: (907) 886-6019

R.J. Elementary School  
(907) 886-4121  
FAX: (907) 886-4120

Representative Ms. Lynn Gattis  
Chair House Education Committee  
Attention: Mr. Jim Ellis, Legislative Aide  
Alaska State Capitol  
Room 420  
Juneau, Alaska 99801  
February 7, 2013  
Regarding: HB85

Dear Honorable Gattis,

This letter is written in support of funding for the Special Education Service Agency, Anchorage, Alaska. The Special Education Service Agency (SESA) has provided quality services to our district since 1986. Throughout those years, SESA has been a consistent force in helping our district meet the needs of our special education students.

The Special Education Service Agency has sent highly qualified specialists that are trained in designing effective programs for students diagnosed as vision or hearing impaired, autistic, emotionally disturbed, and multiply disabled. These specialized programs have allowed our students to access their educational opportunities to the fullest extent possible.

Small school districts that serve low-incidence disabled students would find it challenging to meet the special needs of individual students without the expertise of the Special Education Service Agency, who are specifically trained and qualified to provide assistance to rural districts, such as ours.

As the Special Education Director of the Annette Islands School District, I can attest to the loss we would incur if the Special Education Service Agency would not be granted funding to ensure their existence.

In closing, the Annette Islands School District and our community can only offer our utmost respect and gratitude to Mr. Patrick Pillai, as well as his highly trained staff.

Professionally,

Susan Beardsworth  
Director of Special Education

Cc: Mr. Eugene Avey, Superintendent of Schools

---

**From:** Patrick Pillai <ppillai@sesa.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 07, 2013 7:21 AM  
**To:** Riley Leonard; Tim Lamkin  
**Subject:** Fwd: Support for SESA extension and funding increase

Bradley/Tim

Below is a letter of support for SESA. Thanks  
Patrick

On 2013-02-05, at 4:15 PM, Karla Jutzi <[KJutzi@alaskabvi.org](mailto:KJutzi@alaskabvi.org)> wrote:

A copy of my email is below. Best wishes on success with the Legislature!

Karla

**Karla Jutzi, Executive Director**

**Equipping Alaskans for success**

**Alaska Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired**

3903 Taft Drive

Anchorage, Alaska 99517-3069

Tel: 907-248-7770 Direct: 907.771.4311

[www.alaskabvi.org](http://www.alaskabvi.org)

[www.facebook.com/alaskabvi](http://www.facebook.com/alaskabvi)

<image001.jpg>

**From:** Karla Jutzi  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 05, 2013 4:14 PM  
**To:** 'james.ellis@akleg.gov'  
**Subject:** Support for SESA extension and funding increase

Mr. Ellis,

Please share with Representative Gattis and the Education Committee the strong support of the Alaska Center for the Blind & Visually Impaired for continuation and increased funding of the Special Education Service Agency. Our Center is the only organization in Alaska providing vision rehabilitation. We work with high school youth through senior Alaskans statewide to help them reach their goals for life and work, even after uncorrectable vision loss.

Ten percent of the Alaskans who are blind and visually impaired are youth under the age of 18 – some 1,500 young people statewide. A rural student with this low incidence disability might be the only one or one of a handful in their school district with this special need. SESA provides access to literacy, instruction in independent travel in their community, training for their teachers and assistants to support children’s development, and, in partnership with our Center, the appropriate assistive technology to allow them to keep up with their peers.

Alaskans with disabilities already have a more challenging route to employment and life goals than those of us without disabilities. To add to this a failure to provide the support necessary to access an equal education would be unconscionable. SESA plays the indispensable role of making sure Alaskan children with low incidence disabilities have the same shot at education and their ambitions as others.

Thank you for the Committee’s consideration of generous support for SESA’s good work for Alaska’s children.

Sincerely,

Karla Jutzi

**Karla Jutzi, Executive Director**

**Equipping Alaskans for success**

**Alaska Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired**

3903 Taft Drive

Anchorage, Alaska 99517-3069

Tel: 907-248-7770 Direct: 907.771.4311

[www.alaskabvi.org](http://www.alaskabvi.org)

[www.facebook.com/alaskabvi](http://www.facebook.com/alaskabvi)



**DILLINGHAM CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT**

*P.O. Box 170  
Dillingham, Alaska 99576*

January 31, 2013

Dear Senator Gary Stevens,

It is indeed a genuine pleasure to submit this letter of support to increase per student funding for the Special Education Services Agency (SESA). As you no doubt know, SESA was established by the Alaska Legislature to help Alaska School Districts meet the unique and diverse needs of students with low-incident disabilities as defined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

I have been fortunate to be able to request and receive SESA services for over the past 20 years. There have been times as both a classroom practitioner and a school district administrator that I have sought advice and services from SESA, and in all cases found their professional wisdom and responses to my queries to be invaluable.

The need for a special services organization, such as SESA, can best be explained by providing a typical example of what school districts encounter in rural and isolated Alaska villages. Example, Dillingham has five children with autism and four children with Down Syndrome. To locate and retain the services of a qualified professional in autism is quite expensive, and in many cases impossible. We also have a student that is blind and one that is hard of hearing. Dillingham Schools need centralized expertise in a variety of special service fields in order to provide adequate services for special needs children in their school district. SESA provides that expertise. SESA also provides staff training.

In conclusion, Dillingham City School District fully supports the increase in funding. The increase will assure that SESA is able to continue to seek and retain the services of highly qualified professional experts to address the growing demand we have for their.

Thank you for your interest, time and support of SESA. If I can be of any further assistance, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Danny Frazier, Assistant Superintendent

<u>Superintendent</u>	<u>Central Office</u>	<u>Business Office</u>	<u>Elementary</u>	<u>Middle/High</u>	<u>Alternative School</u>
Ph: 842-5223	Ph: 842-1046	Ph: 842-3318	Ph: 842-5642	Ph: 842-5221	Ph: 842-5023
Fax: 842-5634	Fax: 842-3756	Fax: 842-4145	Fax: 842-4313	Fax: 842-4395	Fax: 842-5024

REC'D 08JAN13

Margaret Kavanaugh

3260 Peninsula Rd

Kodiak, AK 99615

Senator Gary Stevens

305 Center Ave, Suite 1

Kodiak, AK 99615

Re: Re-Authorization of the Special Education Service Agency (SESA)

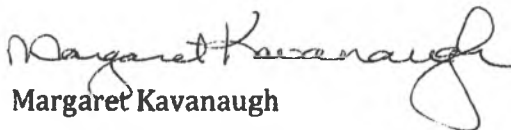
Dear Senator Stevens,

I am writing as a resident of Kodiak, a retired Kodiak Island Borough School District (KIBSD) special education teacher, and as a parent of an adult son with a disability. Over the course of my 23-year career with KIBSD I have consistently worked with specialists from the Special Education Service Agency (SESA), and fully support the reauthorization of SESA. I urge you to sponsor a bill in this regard.

As a special education teacher it is impossible to be knowledgeable in all the content areas necessary to adequately program for a child with a disability. It is even more difficult in areas of low incidence disabilities since every child is unique in terms of their cognitive, sensory, and medical needs. SESA specialists provide a critical service to Alaska's school staff, parents, and communities in this regard. The SESA specialists support teachers and paraprofessionals and create a sense of community by networking staff with resources across the state. This is a critical service to teachers who feel overwhelmed with encountering specific disabilities for the first time. Of extreme value to me as a classroom teacher was the sharing of the specialist's unique skill set honed from working in special education classrooms across the state of Alaska.

I have worked with many SESA specialists over my twenty-three year career and understand the value of their expertise with low incidence disabilities. I fully support legislative reauthorization of the Special Education Agency and urge you to sponsor a bill to reauthorize SESA.

Sincerely,

  
Margaret Kavanaugh

E-mail: [kavanaugh@gci.net](mailto:kavanaugh@gci.net)

Phone: 907-539-2950

**Tim Lamkin**

---

**From:** Tim Stathis <tstathis@aebsd.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 21, 2013 4:16 PM  
**To:** Ryan Wilson  
**Cc:** Tim Lamkin  
**Subject:** AEBSD Supporting SB17

**Honored Senator Stevens and Members of the Senate and House Education Committees:**

I am writing to earnestly convey to you the dire need for SB17 to successfully pass, for SESA funding to continue. SESA's service for our youth in the extremity of remoteness of our region is essential to the fulfilling of my promise to the parents of our Special Needs students, that ALL our students shall be provided an equal opportunity for excellence of education. We have an autistic child in the remote community/island of Akutan. SESA's intervention for this child has been a vital part of the child's development, positive self-esteem, and building identity. SESA support to our Teachers who work with our special needs students has, as well, been vital to our efforts. The costs of travel to Akutan are enormous (r/t ANC-Akutan is approximately \$1800), and these costs have been rising over the years; rising costs has a proportional negative impact on offered services. I therefore encourage increasing SESA's State funding to meet such rising demands (as I understand SESA has been flat funded for 15 years!). We cannot deny our pledge to provide for Alaska's youth no matter how remote the destiny of their upbringing. Please support everything SESA needs to continue with its mission.

Thank you.

Tim

--

**T. Stathis, Superintendent**  
**Aleutians East Borough School District**  
**Sand Point, Alaska 99661**  
[tstathis@aebsd.org](mailto:tstathis@aebsd.org) .  
wk. 907-383-5222  
c. 907-538-4962  
SKYPE username: timstathis

# TESTIFY ON SB17

---

**From:** Patrick Pillai <ppillai@sesa.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 19, 2013 6:31 PM  
**To:** Tim Lamkin  
**Cc:** Patrick Pillai  
**Subject:** Finalized list for testimony

New names added in green. All of those listed below will be calling in. I asked teachers and parents to keep it to two minutes or less.

1. PJ Ford Slack (SESA Board President and Principal in Sitka) will testify.
2. Margaret Kavanaugh, parent of a child with a disability and retired school teacher will testify.
3. Genevieve Hollins (SESA Business Manager) will be available online to assist with questions.
4. Eric Gephart (representing governor's council will testify)
5. Christine Cook who is a parent/teacher in Whale Pass on POW Island will testify
6. Jennifer Eubanks (special education teacher) will testify.

Thanks Tim!  
Patrick

--  
*Patrick Pillai, Executive Director*  
*Special Education Service Agency (SESA)*  
*3501 Denali Street, Anchorage AK 99503*  
*Ph: 907 334 1300 Fax: 907 562 0545*  
*TTY: 907 563 8284*  
[www.sesa.org](http://www.sesa.org)

-----  
The information contained in this email (including any attachments) is confidential and may be privileged. If you are not the intended recipient, do not read, print, copy, retain, distribute, or disclose its content. If you have received this email in error, please advise us by return email.  
-----