

State Board of Education & Early Development
Approved Meeting Minutes
October 9, 2024
Mat-Su Central School

Wednesday October 9, 2024

First Chair Sally Stockhausen acting on behalf of Chair Fields called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m.

Swore in new board member Kimberly Bergey.

Roll was called, and the following members were present to provide a quorum: First Vice Chair Sally Stockhausen (Acting as Chair), Second Vice Chair Lorri Van Diest, Military Advisor Lt. Colonel James Fowley, Student Advisor Joshua Pak, Member Barbara Tyndall, Member Pamela Dupras, and Member Kimberly Bergey

Chair Stockhausen called a quorum. Second Vice Chair Van Diest gave the invocation, and the board pledged allegiance to the flag.

Second Vice Chair Van Diest motioned, and Member Bergey seconded a motion to adopt the agenda of the October 9, 2024 meeting. Without further discussion the motion passed in a roll call vote. There were no potential conflicts of interest identified by board members.

Public Comment

Doug Gray, Director of the Alaska Staff Development Network (ASDN), highlighted the success of a two-year collaboration between ASDN and the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) on the MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports) Refresh Project. This initiative supported 18 school districts across Alaska by strengthening MTSS frameworks, improving literacy instruction, and providing high-quality professional development (PD) at no cost to educators statewide.

The project included:

- Intensive cohort-based training on classroom management, the science of reading, and MTSS systems of support.
- Development of robust K-3 MTSS plans that aligned with the Alaska Reads Act and statewide literacy goals.
- Specialized classroom management training for educators new to Alaska, benefiting 34 participants.

Gray emphasized the partnership's impact in advancing literacy outcomes and providing foundational support for long-term success. He also invited stakeholders to the upcoming MTSS Conference in January, which will host approximately 1,200 participants. A final evaluation report with further highlights will be shared upon completion.

Dr. Lisa Parady, Executive Director of the Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA), highlighted two key topics:

1. Collaboration on Alaska Educator Retention and Recruitment Center (AERRC):
 - Dr. Parady expressed enthusiasm for ACSA's partnership with DEED on the TRR (Teacher Retention and Recruitment) initiative.
 - She praised the collaboration with DEED staff and the establishment of the Alaska Educator

Retention and Recruitment Center, which aims to implement actionable solutions from the TRR playbook.

2. Concerns with Proposed Changes to the Broadband Assistance Grant (BAG):

- Dr. Parady emphasized BAG's critical role in promoting educational equity by ensuring digital access for rural and remote schools, bridging gaps with urban areas.
- She raised concerns about proposed regulation changes, particularly the resetting of a district's negotiated broadband capacity after a lapse in participation.
- Key issues include:
 - Disproportionate Impact: Rural and remote schools, often already facing higher internet costs and limited resources, could be significantly disadvantaged.
 - Workforce Shortages: Frequent staff turnover in rural districts increases the likelihood of lapses, potentially burdening districts with higher costs and limiting access to equitable internet services.
 - Administrative Challenges: Smaller districts often lack dedicated IT staff, making compliance with complex requirements like E-rate more difficult.
- Dr. Parady proposed:
 - Removing or amending the reset provision.
 - Implementing an appeal process to give districts recourse if resets occur.
 - Pausing the proposed regulations to prevent unintended setbacks for rural schools.

She concluded by emphasizing BAG's success in promoting equity and urging caution to avoid reversing progress in providing equitable internet access statewide.

Professional Development

Agenda Item 4 – State Board of Education Committee Reports and Discussion

4B. Culturally Relevant Career Technical Education

Member Van Diest, Chair of the Culturally Relevant and Career Technical Education (CTE) Committee, provided an update on the committee's recent meeting. The discussion centered on career guidance initiatives across the state, including an update from Dr. Monica Goyette on career guides and progress with the Rooted Alliance partnership involving the Department of Labor and DEED. A highlight was the upcoming Alaska Career and Technical Education Conference, which will include a dedicated day for stakeholders to discuss expanding career guide programs to other districts. Additionally, Lieutenant Colonel Fowley and Member Van Diest will present state awards recognizing outstanding culturally relevant CTE programs.

The committee also received updates on Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs) and funding allocations to support their directorships statewide. They explored goals for the year, particularly ways to highlight the successes of CTE programs across Alaska. While specific ideas are still in development, Member Van Diest expressed enthusiasm for the brainstorming session and emphasized the productivity of the meeting. The committee has scheduled its next meeting to continue this important work.

4C. Safety & Well-Being

Member Barbara Tyndall, Chair of the Safety & Well-being Committee, provided an update on the recent meeting, which began with reflections on the Health and Safety Conference held two weeks ago. The conference was described as positive and engaging, featuring impactful keynote speakers and breakout sessions, including one on "leading with steadiness in times of unsteadiness." Discussions focused on shared strategies and insights, with goals such as trauma-engaged schools, school safety, and addressing absenteeism being revisited and refined.

The meeting also explored positive behavior interventions and the importance of mitigating negative

influences. A standout session involved two FBI agents discussing the dangers of social media, highlighting a serious case in Alaska where a perpetrator was apprehended after victimizing hundreds of children. This discussion underscored the need to protect children online and address the risks posed by digital platforms. The committee plans to continue focusing on internet safety and screen time issues in future meetings, reflecting a strong commitment to ensuring student well-being. Tyndall expressed gratitude for the opportunity to address these critical topics and optimism about the committee's ongoing work.

4D. Tribal Compacting

Member Pamela Dupras, Chair of the Tribal Compacting Committee, provided an update on the committee's progress. She acknowledged the efforts of those involved in advancing tribal compacting and noted that the associated bill that's been written in legislation is currently under review. Additionally, she mentioned ongoing work related to reading standards for Alaska Native languages but refrained from elaborating to avoid preempting further updates on that topic.

4E. Effective Educators

Member Sally Stockhausen, Chair of the Effective Educators Committee, shared an update highlighting the committee's recent meeting. She commended the team for their significant efforts in overhauling the teacher certification system, which has required considerable adjustments from educators and districts. She expressed gratitude for their continued work to refine and improve the system over time. The committee also discussed the partnership with ACSA to sustain the Teacher Recruitment and Retention (TRR) initiative. Stockhausen emphasized the importance of ensuring the extensive work and research invested in the TRR project continues to have a meaningful impact rather than being forgotten. She expressed optimism about ACSA's ongoing contributions to this critical effort. Additionally, the committee reviewed plans for a teacher exit and retention survey, aimed at gathering valuable data to better understand why teachers leave or stay. Stockhausen concluded by praising the dedication and hard work of the team and expressed enthusiasm for the progress being made on these initiatives.

Work Session

Agenda Item 5 – Alaska Reads Act Highlights

Kathy Moffitt, Director of Innovation & Education Excellence, presented key updates on the Alaska Reads Act, focusing on its four components designed to enhance literacy statewide. The department is collaborating with districts like North Slope, Lower Kuskokwim, and Hoonah to create intervention plans for struggling schools, providing tailored support to improve outcomes. The Virtual Learning Consortium, a central professional development hub, offers resources like the "Keys to Literacy for Beginning Reading" course, which fulfills the science of reading endorsement. With 217 educators enrolled and 25 completions, along with over 2,000 participants in Dibels 8 assessment training, the consortium ensures educators are well-prepared. The District Reading Intervention Plan (DRIP), a required annual submission, emphasizes streamlined curricula and continuous professional guidance to improve literacy strategies across districts.

Deb Riddle and Becky Moran detailed DEED's early learning initiatives, including Head Start programs and Pre-Elementary Grants (PEG). Head Start supports 17 programs for children aged 0-5, while PEG, now in its three-year cycle, aids districts in establishing sustainable early learning programs. The Alaska Reads Act's early education components include updated standards aligned with national benchmarks, grants for programs targeting 4- and 5-year-olds, and funding eligibility tied to meeting specific certification requirements. Tools like TS Gold and ASQ help districts assess child development and program efficacy, ensuring alignment with Alaska's standards to support cognitive, social, and emotional growth. Commissioner Bishop highlighted pre-K as a legislative priority, with the department addressing challenges like funding and resources to build high-quality programs, supported by grants and updated regulations.

Kari Shaginoff and Christy Ford presented progress on Alaska Native reading standards under the Reads Act, emphasizing cultural narratives, oral traditions, and environmental literacy. Developed collaboratively with educators, language speakers, and cultural bearers, the standards focus on deep comprehension and foundational skills tailored to Alaska Native languages. Recommendations include creating instructional materials, training teachers, and revitalizing languages through localized approaches. The standards aim to

align with English while preserving cultural integrity. Discussions included extending standards beyond grade 3 and addressing the challenges of translating oral traditions into written forms without diminishing cultural significance. Commissioner Bishop confirmed plans for public review and input, with further discussions scheduled at upcoming board meetings. Student Advisor Pak praised the effort as a cultural revival, and Director Ford noted the scalability of the standards to support broader applications, including adult education.

Agenda Item 6 – Teacher Recruitment and Retention

Kelly Manning, Deputy Director of Innovation and Education Excellence, and Colleen Walker, Administrator for Teacher Education and Certification, presented updates on Alaska's teacher recruitment and retention efforts, with a focus on the Teacher Registered Apprenticeship program. The program aims to address teacher shortages by providing accessible, paid pathways to certification that integrate work experience, education, and mentorship. Developed as part of the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Playbook, the program involves districts offering wages and mentoring, DEED managing administrative tasks, and universities delivering instruction. The phased implementation includes a pilot launch in 2025, followed by expansion to additional districts and educator pathways like special education and school leadership roles. Member Van Diest raised concerns about the bachelor's degree requirement, emphasizing the need to reduce barriers for rural educators. Commissioner Bishop noted that while legislative action would be required to change degree requirements, apprenticeship programs offer on-the-job training to make certification more attainable.

Walker provided updates on efforts to modernize the teacher certification process, including the launch of the *Teach AK* system and the District Communication Hub. These platforms enhance transparency, allowing districts to track application statuses and access staff certification details in real time. Recent integrations with ETS and Nasdaq have streamlined processes by automating document uploads and identifying disciplinary actions. Walker also highlighted ongoing improvements, such as plans for integrating online payments and enhancing e-learning platforms for certificate renewal. Military Advisor Lieutenant Colonel Fowley emphasized the importance of improving certification transferability for military spouses. Walker explained Alaska's limited reciprocity agreements and fast-track processes for military-connected applicants, addressing some concerns about portability and processing efficiency.

Chair Stockhausen inquired about streamlining resources for apprentices and districts, particularly around navigating Education Preparation Providers (EPPs) and managing logistical elements like evaluation tools and retirement systems. Manning confirmed that DEED's apprenticeship coordinator will create centralized resources to simplify access to program information and funding. She also noted that districts can adapt existing evaluation tools for apprentices, with DEED ensuring compliance with U.S. Department of Labor standards. The pilot program, set to launch with six districts in January 2025, will test these logistical frameworks with 20–25 apprentices before broader statewide implementation.

Agenda Item 7 – Office of Education Advocacy

Commissioner Bishop provided an update on the newly established Office of Education Advocacy, which aims to position the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) as both a service and compliance organization. The office was created to centralize support for educational stakeholders, including parents, students, school districts, and elected officials. Its mission is to improve accessibility, provide guidance, and assist stakeholders in navigating the education system while maintaining accountability.

Key initiatives include:

- **Centralized Support:** A dedicated team in the Commissioner's office will handle inquiries, replacing the current rotational customer service model, to improve efficiency and responsiveness.
- **Stakeholder Assistance:** The office will empower stakeholders through personalized guidance, workshops, and resources to understand policies and regulations.
- **Compliance and Accountability:** DEED will continue to oversee district compliance with state and federal laws, while also introducing new regulations to address due process for complaints and appeals.

- **Improved Processes:** Existing mechanisms for accountability, such as audits and charter school appeals, remain in place. The department seeks public input on proposed regulations to enhance transparency and fairness in addressing complaints.

Commissioner Bishop emphasized the department's outward focus and commitment to supporting school districts and stakeholders to ensure the success of Alaska's education system.

Agenda Item 8 – Legislative and Budget Updates

Deputy Commissioner Karen Morrison presented a legislative update, summarizing key education-related bills passed since June 2023 and their impacts:

1. **House Bill 69 (June 21, 2023):** Enables first-class cities with populations under 400 to transition to second-class cities. The City of Tanana transitioned and joined the Yukon-Koyukuk School District within the Rural Education Attendance Area.
2. **House Bill 193 (March 28, 2024):** Increased broadband funding to support faster internet speeds for schools, benefiting 138 schools across 25 districts.
3. **House Bill 26 (April 11, 2024):** Restructured the Alaskan Native Language Council, transferred oversight to DEED, and added four native languages as official state languages.
4. **House Bill 148 (June 26, 2024):** Allocated Head Start funding, updated the Alaska Performance Scholarship program, and reauthorized the Alaska Workforce Investment Board's vocational education program, improving administrative efficiency.
5. **House Bill 202 (August 30, 2024):** Mandated staff training to administer naloxone for opioid overdose prevention and updated correspondence program reporting requirements, including allotment fund and curriculum reviews.
6. **Senate Bill 22 (June 27, 2024):** Established Juneteenth (June 19) as a state holiday.

The legislature adjourned May 15, 2024, after passing capital and operating budgets. Morrison provided further legislative details in board packets.

Member inquiries addressed key aspects of the legislation:

- **HB 202:** Member Van Diest asked about regulations for correspondence programs post-sunset date of June 30, 2025. Commissioner Bishop explained that existing regulations suffice, but a one-time report to the legislature is required. A template will help districts compile data on curriculum approval and allotment funds.
- **HB 230:** Chair Stockhausen inquired about the six-month separation requirement for retired teachers returning as substitutes. Commissioner Bishop confirmed this is a federal rule for reemployment within the same organization, though teachers can work elsewhere immediately. Stockhausen raised broader concerns about teacher shortages and flexibility, but these fall outside certification policies.
- **HB 230 Salary Placement:** Member Dupras questioned the limitations on recognizing out-of-state teaching experience. Bishop clarified that restrictions on credited experience have been repealed, allowing districts discretion based on collective bargaining agreements. However, salary placement for intra-state transfers remains subject to local hiring practices.

Morrison's update emphasized the legislative focus on modernizing education, improving infrastructure, and addressing teacher recruitment and retention challenges.

Monique Silverly, Division Operations Manager with Administrative Services for the Department of Education, highlighted key elements of the FY2025 budget, signed on June 27, 2024. The budget focuses on full statutory funding for education, infrastructure improvements, workforce initiatives, and resource optimization:

K-12 Foundation Program and Pupil Transportation

- **K-12 Foundation Program:** Fully funded at \$1.145 billion, with an additional \$174.7 million to support a \$680 Base Student Allocation (BSA) equivalent increase.
- **Pupil Transportation:** Fully funded at \$70.6 million, with an additional \$7.3 million for statutory formula distributions.

School Debt Reimbursement & REAA Fund

- **School Debt Reimbursement:** \$57.5 million allocated for municipal school construction bonds.
- **REAA Fund:** \$27 million designated for regional school construction projects.

Finance and Support Services

- Added a Program Coordinator II to manage the School Broadband Assistance Grants Program (\$116.6K).
- Transferred broadband grant management to Education Support and Administrative Services.

Innovation and Education Excellence

- **Investments and Adjustments:**
 - \$650K for statewide assessment support.
 - \$5 million for the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program (ANSEP).
 - \$1.5 million for teacher recruitment, retention, and certification.
 - Decreases: \$600K for Coding in Minecraft and \$750K for the CTE Initiative.
 - \$75K to establish the Alaska Reads Act Advisory Panel.

Arts Council (ASCA)

- Increased matching funds (\$155.3K UGF, \$35.4K FED) to fully leverage National Endowment for the Arts grants.

Mt. Edgecumbe High School

- Additional funding (\$449.2K) for recreation assistants, dorm management, food services, and utilities to address inflation impacts.

EED State Facilities Rent

- Consolidated space to save \$350K.

Libraries, Archives, and Museums

- Transferred the Live Homework Help component to Library Operations for efficiency (Net Zero Change).
- Increased federal grants for library and museum services by \$100K.

Capital Projects

- **School Construction Grant Funds:**
 - Newtok K-12 Relocation/Replacement: \$3.99M.
 - Minto K-12 Renovation/Addition: \$5.36M.
 - Nelson Island School Replacement, Phase 1: \$21.61M.
- **Major Maintenance Grant Funds:** \$62.76M for the first 26 priority projects.

This budget prioritizes foundational education funding, infrastructure improvements, and program realignment to enhance efficiency and optimize resources.

Agenda Item 9 – Mat-Su Borough School District Presentation

Randy Trani, Superintendent of the Mat-Su Borough School District (MSBSD), discussed various topics, including enrollment, board goals, graduation data, AK STAR and i-Ready reading results, CTE and AP data, and the district's future plans.

Key Points:

1. **Enrollment Trends:**
 - Current enrollment is slightly over 19,000, below the projected 19,400, marking a rare year of no growth.
 - Demographic trends suggest that jobs, not new housing, drive student population growth.
 - The correspondence program increased from 14% to 18%, reflecting changing family preferences.
2. **Board Goals:**

- Aim for 100% on-time graduation with all students prepared for diverse career and college paths.
- Ensure all students read at grade level by 3rd grade, support staff efficacy, and improve parent communication.
- Strive to be the best school district in the nation.
- 3. **Graduation and Financial Efficiency:**
 - MSBSD ranks second in Alaska for efficiently producing graduates, even when adjusting for funding disparities.
 - Graduation rates and resource allocation demonstrate strong district performance.
- 4. **AK STAR and i-Ready Data:**
 - MSBSD students showed consistent improvement in ELA, math, and science proficiency, outperforming the state average and other large districts.
 - i-Ready results show significant growth in reading, with all student demographics improving.
 - National comparisons highlight MSBSD's progress toward becoming a top-performing district.
- 5. **CTE (Career & Technical Education):**
 - MSBSD is a statewide leader, with 98% of CTE concentrators graduating.
 - Efforts to increase CTE enrollment have resulted in nearly all high school students participating.
 - CTE graduates show higher long-term earnings compared to non-CTE peers.
- 6. **Advanced Placement (AP) and College Readiness:**
 - AP participation and performance have surged, with MSBSD surpassing the national average for college-credit-earning scores.
 - The district emphasizes both career and college readiness, aiming to integrate CTE and AP pathways.
- 7. **Future Initiatives:**
 - Continue improving outcomes in reading and math while expanding CTE and AP opportunities.
 - Maintain a focus on growth, innovation, and comprehensive student preparation for diverse futures.

This overview underscores MSBSD's commitment to academic excellence, career readiness, and adapting to changing needs.

Agenda Item 10 - Break for Lunch and Mat-Su Central School Tour

Agenda Item 11 – Regulations for Public Comment

11A. Social Studies Standards

Kelly Manning, Deputy Director of the Division of Innovation and Education Excellence, and Kimberly Imel from the American Institutes for Research (AIR), presented on Alaska's updated social studies standards. The standards, last fully rewritten in 1998, underwent a comprehensive revision process to align with national best practices while addressing Alaska's unique cultural and educational context.

AIR facilitated the process, drawing on national expertise. Stakeholders, including educators, tribal partners, policymakers, and community representatives, engaged in iterative feedback loops through guiding principles, Alaska History, and educator working groups. The process emphasized inclusivity, cultural relevance, and alignment with the state's mission to close achievement gaps and provide equitable education.

The revision prioritized critical thinking, inquiry-based learning, and place-based education over rote memorization. Standards were developed with a focus on developmental appropriateness, coherence across grade levels, and flexibility for diverse teaching contexts. Educators ensured the standards reflected Alaska's cultural and geographical diversity while fostering connections across disciplines.

Three educators, Chaya Pike, Jessica Collins, and Owen Fulton, highlighted the collaborative process, emphasis on critical thinking, and the aim to create accessible and rigorous standards relevant to Alaska's students and communities. The standards balance national rigor with Alaska's unique needs, empowering educators to adapt them locally.

This presentation outlines updates to the social studies standards, focusing on key instructional shifts, thematic integration, and alignment with best practices. Key points include:

1. **Standards Overview**

- **Anchor Standards:** Emphasize essential skills and disciplinary knowledge tied to inquiry and action, inspired by the C3 Framework.
- **Content Standards:** Define what students should know and do at each grade level.
- **Inquiry Standards:** Complement content standards by focusing on critical social studies skills, tailored to grade bands.

2. **Key Instructional Shifts**

- **Thematic Social Studies:** Organized topics under themes to foster understanding and knowledge transfer beyond rote memorization.
- **Alaska Cultural Context:** Embeds Alaska history and tribal government across the curriculum, moving from occasional touchpoints to full integration.
- **Inquiry-Based Learning:** Promotes student-led, teacher-supported exploration of social studies, emphasizing critical thinking, argumentation, and civic engagement.
- **Civic Knowledge and Skills:** Embeds civics across the standards, ensuring students are prepared as informed citizens.

3. **Implementation Details**

- The updated standards emphasize collaboration between states, districts, and schools to integrate content and inquiry.
- Examples illustrate thematic organization, cultural embedding, and inquiry skills in action.

4. **Conclusion**

- The standards update aligns with best practices, integrating thematic, cultural, and inquiry-based elements into the curriculum.
- While the regulations remain unchanged, the revised standards reflect a modern approach to social studies education.

This comprehensive update aims to prepare students with the skills and knowledge for civic participation and lifelong learning.

11B. Student Representative to the School Board

Commissioner Bishop provided an update on the student representative process for the State Board of Education and Early Development, including a proposal to adopt a 30-day public comment period for revisions to the Advisory Board regulations.

Background

The discussion arose when a Board member inquired how students become representatives. Upon reviewing the regulations, it was noted that students are generally nominated by the Alaska Association of Student Governments (AASG), which provides a list of candidates for the Board to interview and select. However, concerns were raised about equitable representation for students from districts not affiliated with AASG.

Proposed Changes

To address this equity issue, the Board suggested a dual system where students from non-AASG districts could independently apply for the position, ensuring broader access to the representative role.

Student Advisor's Perspective

Student Advisor Pak shared his experience of being selected through AASG's process, which involves applying, interviewing with AASG Executive Board members and advisors, and eventually being interviewed by the State Board. Pak supports the proposed changes for equitable access but raised concerns about potentially losing the unique benefits of AASG representation. AASG facilitates student engagement and allows the student representative to serve on its Executive Board, providing valuable opportunities to connect with and report back to students statewide.

Discussion Points

- The question of whether non-AASG student representatives could still participate in AASG's Executive Board responsibilities would depend on AASG's bylaws.
- Smaller districts often lack the resources to participate in AASG, highlighting the equity challenge. Commissioner Bishop expressed willingness to collaborate with AASG and Student Advisor Pak to ensure representation and maintain the role's dual function of gathering and reporting student feedback.

Next Steps

The Board will open a 30-day public comment period to consider these revisions and explore ways to balance equitable access with maintaining the benefits of AASG involvement.

11C. Office of Education Advocacy

The Board is being asked to open a public comment period for proposed regulations related to the Office of Education Advocacy. These regulations are currently undergoing preliminary review by the Department of Law, which involves legal research and legislative evaluation. Once this review is complete, the proposed regulations will be made available for public input. Feedback gathered during the public comment period will be considered, and any necessary adjustments will be made before the regulations proceed to final adoption. The motion specifies that the process is subject to the Department of Law's preliminary review, a standard procedure for regulation projects. The regulations will only return to the Board if changes are made that alter their meaning or purpose. After public comments are addressed and adjustments are finalized, the regulations will undergo a final legal review as part of the adoption process. This approach ensures transparency and public engagement throughout the regulatory process.

Agenda Item 12 – Resolution for Consideration

12A. Cell Phone Restrictions

Member Van Diest presented a resolution advocating for restricting cellular device usage during school hours, citing extensive research and examples from other states and districts. The resolution is rooted in concerns about the negative impacts of smartphones on student learning, social development, and mental health, including increased distraction, cyberbullying, and decreased interpersonal communication. Data from studies and surveys highlighted issues such as excessive screen time, rising rates of cyberbullying, and the adverse effects of social media on mental health.

The resolution also reviewed actions taken in states like Florida, Virginia, California, and New York, as well as local initiatives in Alaska, such as the implementation of Yondr pouches and stricter phone policies in schools. Results from these programs indicated improvements in student engagement, behavior, and academic performance.

The resolution outlines seven key recommendations, including encouraging educators to address the negative impacts of phones, developing a model policy to limit their use during class, urging local school districts to adopt these policies, enforcing the restrictions with clear disciplinary guidelines, and providing professional development for staff. It also emphasizes maintaining open communication for emergencies, accommodating medical needs, and periodically reviewing the policy's effectiveness.

Student Advisor Pak shared his experience with a similar phone policy at his school, highlighting its benefits in improving behavior and focus, while also stressing the importance of balanced and practical

applications of technology. The resolution aims to create a learning environment that supports student well-being and academic success, grounded in evidence of the benefits of limiting phone use.

Agenda Item 13 – Proposed Regulation for Adoption

13A. Broadband Assistance Grant Regulations

Commissioner Bishop addressed the Broadband Assistance Grant (BAG) regulation, noting it was open for public comment, with feedback received in a letter and additional input shared earlier that morning. She clarified that while the regulations are being updated to align with statutory changes, including increasing capacity to 100 megabits and updating language, some concerns raised pertained to the statute itself, which falls outside the department's jurisdiction. Bishop emphasized the inclusion of an appeal process within the BAG regulations and introduced Grant Administrator Faye Tanner to provide further insights.

Faye Tanner, Program Coordinator at DEED's School Finance, addressed comments and concerns, including a letter from Senator Hoffman and Representative Edgmon of the Alaska Bush Caucus. Most concerns revolved around the initial negotiated capacity date, which is governed by statute rather than regulation. Tanner clarified that the updated regulation does not alter the determination of the initial negotiated capacity or its date, except for a proposed change favoring school districts. This exception allows districts with service gaps from 2014–2020 to select an earlier capacity date, potentially lowering their base cost for calculating internet cost increases.

Tanner reported on BAG program outcomes, highlighting that in FY 2024, 28 school districts applied, and 25 were funded, with North Slope, Unalaska, and Pribilof districts not receiving funds due to various reasons. In FY 2025, using the updated calculation method, North Slope and Unalaska districts were funded, while Pribilof negotiated lower costs, eliminating the need for BAG funding. A total of 25 districts covering 138 schools were funded, with Nome School District joining the program. Of the 138 schools, 127 upgraded their internet speed from 25 Mbps to 100 Mbps, partly facilitated by some districts switching to Starlink or other lower-cost providers.

Tanner emphasized that the updated regulation retains the need for an initial negotiated capacity date to establish a base for calculating funding increases, consistent with statutory constraints. The only proposed change is intended to benefit school districts.

Member Stockhausen clarified the main concerns raised earlier, focusing on the appeal process and funding. The appeal process is already in place, addressing that issue. However, concerns about funding are statutory and would need to be addressed through the legislative process.

Commissioner Bishop clarified that concerns raised during testimony included the definition of the base date for initial negotiated capacity. She emphasized that the regulations allow districts flexibility to choose any eligible year if there was service, which works in the districts' favor. The appeal process is in place, and the language in the regulation is designed to support districts. While open to suggestions for improvement, no substantial feedback has been received that would warrant further changes.

Assistant Attorney General Ryan Bravo outlined two options for the Board: proceed with adopting the regulation as scheduled or extend the public comment period to gather additional input, with the regulation voted on at a later meeting.

Business Meeting

Agenda Item 14 - Regulations for Public Comment

14A. Regulations for Social Studies

Second Vice Chair Van Diest motioned, and Member Tyndall seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development open a 30-day public comment period for the proposed revisions to 4 AAC 04.140. Content Standards and the proposed social studies standards. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

14B. Student Representative to the School Board

Second Vice Chair Van Diest motioned, and Member Tyndall seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development open a 30-day period of public comment on the proposed revisions to 4 AAC 03.025(c). Advisory members of state board. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

14C. Office of Education Advocacy

Second Vice Chair Van Diest motioned, and Member Tyndall seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development open a 30-day public comment period for the proposed regulations regarding the Office of Education Advocacy (proposed 4 AAC 10.010-10.900), subject to Department of Law preliminary review. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Agenda Item 15 – Resolution for Consideration

15A. Cell Phone Restrictions

Member Dupras motioned, and Second Vice Chair Van Diest seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development approve resolution of related to cell phone restrictions in Alaska schools, and the drafting of model policy to limit cell phone usage during school hours for local school boards to consider and adopt.

Member Van Diest expressed gratitude to fellow board members for supporting the resolution, which allows school districts to develop their own policies based on Department of Education guidance. While the board does not need to approve these policies, Van Diest looks forward to reviewing the guidance and encourages school boards to adopt policies on cell phone restrictions.

Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Agenda Item 16 – Proposed Regulations for Adoption

16A. Broadband Assistance Grant Regulations

Second Vice Chair Van Diest motioned, and Member Tyndall seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development approve the changes to 4 AAC 33.605 - 4 AAC 33.690, dealing with increased internet speed for districts through the School Broadband Assistance Grant program.

Commissioner Bishop expressed appreciation for the motion, noting it allows for extended feedback and consideration of additional language to enhance the regulation's workability. She clarified that the current regulation primarily aims to increase internet speed to 100 Mbps and update language.

Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Agenda Item 17 – Approve Special Assistant to the Commissioner

Commissioner Bishop introduced Bryan Zadalis, the new Special Assistant to the Commissioner and Public Information Officer (PIO). Zadalis shared that he is a lifelong learner, a University of Alaska alumnus, and has a background in marketing communications and state government. He expressed his appreciation for the impact of educators and his enthusiasm for supporting the Department of Education and Early Development in shaping future generations.

Member Dupras motioned, and Member Van Diest seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development approve the Commissioner's appointment of Bryan Zadalis as Special Assistant to the Commissioner and the Public Information Officer, effective immediately.

Member Van Diest expressed joy in getting to know Bryan Zadalis during the in-person meeting and appreciated his return to Alaska. She noted the special significance of Alaskans coming back home, reflecting on her own lifelong connection to the state.

Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Agenda Item 18 – Approve Location for June 3-4, 2025 School Board Meeting

Second Vice Chair Van Diest motioned, and Member Tyndall seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development approve the following date and location, for the in-person meeting school board meeting on June 3-4, 2025 in Ketchikan, Alaska. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Agenda Item 19 – Questions Regarding Standing Reports

- 19A. Innovation and Education Excellence
- 19B. Libraries, Archives & Museum
- 19C. Finance and Support Services
- 19D. Mt. Edgecumbe High School
- 19E. Attorney General

No questions were raised regarding standing reports.

Agenda Item 20 – Commissioner’s Report

Commissioner Dr. Deena Bishop reported on her first year with the board, providing updates on recent tragedies affecting Alaska school districts. She highlighted a landslide in Ketchikan, which delayed the school start by a week as school facilities were used for emergency services, and a fire in Stebbins that destroyed a school building. Deputy Commissioner Karen Morrison detailed DEED’s support for Stebbins, including setting up portable classrooms, assisting with child nutrition, and reviewing the district's FY26 CIP application for rebuilding, partially covered by insurance.

Dr. Bishop commended the leadership of superintendents in Ketchikan and Bering Straits for effectively managing these crises and noted Deputy Commissioner Morrison's personal connection with Superintendent Dodd, a new superintendent. She also acknowledged Member Van Diest’s contributions, marking her last in-person meeting, and expressed gratitude for her continued service.

Commissioner Dr. Deena Bishop presented updates on the Governor’s educational agenda and its alignment with the State Board of Education’s priorities. Her presentation, shared with various groups statewide, emphasized three key focus areas: empowering families, targeted investments, and ensuring safeguards and rights.

Key Points:

- **Empowering Families:** Highlighted initiatives like tribal compacting, flexible learning opportunities, and public school choice, particularly charter schools. She noted charter schools in Alaska perform exceptionally well, especially for students from poverty and nonwhite demographics.
- **Targeted Investments:** Shared positive outcomes from investments in early literacy (K-3), career and technical education, and workforce readiness, including apprenticeship programs and occupational endorsements. Early intervention efforts have led to substantial improvements in kindergarten and first-grade reading proficiency.
- **Safeguards and Rights:** Reinforced the state’s commitment to parental involvement, transparency, and the right to opt out of assessments, while addressing challenges like high school assessment participation rates.

Dr. Bishop also celebrated increased funding for public education, citing a nearly \$1,000 per-student increase from FY24 to FY25, significant investments in school construction and maintenance, and additional support for districts. She concluded by commending the progress made in the first quarter of the school year, recognizing the dedication of educators and the positive impact on Alaska’s students.

Member Van Diest expressed appreciation for Commissioner Bishop's report, highlighting how the alignment of Alaska's education priorities, the Governor's initiatives, and the board's goals creates a unified direction. She referenced a slide from Superintendent Trani about everyone "rowing" in the same direction, emphasizing that when all parties are aligned, progress can be made. Van Diest praised Bishop's student-centered focus in her speeches, reinforcing that the board's ultimate mission is to support students and remove barriers to their learning.

Agenda Item 21 – Consent Agenda

Second Vice Chair Van Diest motioned, and Member Tyndall seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development approve the minutes of the June 4-5, 2024 meeting, and the minutes of the July 1, 2024 meeting. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Board Comments:

Member Dupras thanked everyone for their efforts in organizing the meeting and expressed sadness that Lorri Van Diest would be leaving the board, praising her as a great model for new board members. Dupras also appreciated the research and efforts put into addressing cell phone usage in schools, recognizing its impact on instruction and student behavior. Additionally, Dupras was impressed with the progress being made, particularly with the positive impact of the Alaska Reads Act, and expressed hope that momentum would continue in promoting it across the state.

Member Van Diest expressed gratitude for the support from colleagues and acknowledged the team effort behind the cell phone resolution. She thanked Matsu Central for hosting the meeting and providing a tour, appreciating the hospitality of the nutrition services. She also highlighted her visit to Wasilla High School, where she was impressed by the CTE programs and fire science demonstrations. Van Diest supported the idea of school tours during future board meetings and praised DEED staff for their excellent presentations, especially the social studies presentation. She emphasized the importance of the reading and CTE initiatives and thanked everyone for their contributions.

Member Lt. Col. Fowley expressed gratitude to Matsu Central students for accommodating the Wasilla High Fire Science crew. He also praised a student at Snowshoe for his impressive reading and wished him well for Halloween. Fowley mentioned his work with Dr. Goyette on the Green to Teach program, which is aimed at teacher recruitment and retention, with a planned implementation in July 2025. He shared concerns about his hometown's military personnel mobilizing to assist Florida in the wake of another hurricane and asked for thoughts to be with those affected. Fowley concluded by thanking Member Van Diest for her guidance over the years, expressing his hope to follow in her footsteps.

Member Tyndall expressed deep appreciation for Member Van Diest's guidance and support throughout the year, acknowledging her impact on her. Tyndall thanked the staff for their help with her electronics and expressed excitement about the apprenticeship reports and teacher retention efforts, especially in her hometown of Fairbanks. She also highlighted the growing concern about cell phone usage and its impact on children, particularly with her grandchildren, and praised the ongoing work on this issue. Tyndall reflected on the CTE conferences she attended, which were transformative and showcased the positive work happening in schools across the state. She enjoyed reading with a student at Snowshoe Elementary and fondly remembered her time in the classroom. Tyndall concluded by commending Commissioner Bishop for her focus on students and her servant's heart.

Student Advisor Joshua Pak thanked Ms. Sharon Fishel for inviting him to speak at the Association of Alaska School Boards Safety and Well-being Summit, noting it was valuable to engage with students across Alaska about improving schools. He also shared his experience speaking at the Alaska Principals Conference, where he was one of the first students in 20 years to do so. Pak mentioned chairing the AASG Legislative Session Committee and appreciated the helpful legislative report provided by Deputy Commissioner Morrison. He looked forward to the upcoming fall conference and the transition to the new student advisor role. Pak expressed gratitude to Mat-Su Central School, board members, and DEED staff for

a great meeting and concluded by thanking Member Van Diest for her service, noting he would miss their collaborative work.

Member Stockhausen expressed gratitude to DEED staff for organizing a productive meeting and thanked Commissioner Bishop for her leadership and dedication. She welcomed new member Kim Bergey and acknowledged the significant effort involved in the social studies and native language reading standards. Stockhausen highlighted the impactful presentation by Jeff Utech and proposed discussing district guidance on AI tools in future meetings, emphasizing the importance of equity in education. She praised Student Advisor Pak for his thoughtful contributions and shared heartfelt appreciation for Member Van Diest, reflecting on their shared journey and collaborative friendship. Stockhausen advocated for including school tours with students and teachers present during board meetings, finding them enriching and insightful. She concluded by thanking Brad, Kathijo, and Bryan for their exceptional support with the meeting's electronic systems and logistics.

The board adjourned at 3:48 p.m.