

Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development
Approved Minutes
Juneau, AK
March 19 & 20, 2009

Work Session - March 19, 2009

The meeting was called to order by Chair Esther Cox. Chair Cox administered the Oath of Office to new board member, Janel Keplinger and to reappointed board member, Carol “Bunny” Schaeffer. Roll was taken. All board members were present except Lt. Col. Luu who was excused. Chair Cox welcomed member Keplinger and also Student Representative, Tim Rockey. Members have no conflicts with the day’s agenda. The commissioner requested that one item be added to the agenda, 33G which was the approval of the graduation waivers. There was no objection and the agenda was approved as amended by unanimous roll call vote.

Public Comment

Theresa Holt from the Governor’s Council on Disabilities and Special Education had concerns with the Work Ready and disabled persons taking the Work Ready exam, the accommodations allowed like spell check, and adding an additional test. She thanked Geri Benshoof for her work on the council and was pleased to see the upcoming regulation regarding autism.

Rhonda Gardner, Assistant Superintendent of the Anchorage School District, said the district supported the Eagle Academy Charter School, saying their scores were off the charts and that they had great leadership. She also indicated that the district supported the delay in implementing the Work keys and wondered if it might eventually be a replacement for the HSGQE. She noted that WIN did not need to be mandated when a district has other measurements in place.

Barb Angiak, President of NEA, said she was new to her office and that she had been a math teacher for 28 years in Bethel and that she was the first president of NEA elected from a rural background. She said that the department and Sondra Meredith had been very responsive to ongoing teacher certification problems and thanked them. She said she looked forward to a partnership with EED to continue school improvement. Board members congratulated her on her new position and said they were looking forward to working with her.

Annie Caulkins was speaking on behalf of the Alaska State Council on the Arts. She handed out a new publication called, *On Thin Ice* which described the status of the arts in public schools. She described that status as “grim” saying that 73% of the school districts have no arts program. She said that although there are some good programs, the statistics show less than 2% of the teachers are qualified to teach in the arts. The board had many questions believing that the arts should be part of the core. There was a discussion about successful arts programs like the Kennedy center programs.

Teacher Certification. Sondra Meredith was present to brief the board. She said that the stakeholders group met February 11 & 12. This was the first meeting to look at the overall certification process. She said they determined short term (3-6 month) goals, and long term (more than 6 month) goals and made recommendations. The group will be meeting again to further define their recommendations.

Commissioner LeDoux was excused to attend a Governor’s Press Conference. Les Morse took over for the commissioner.

Physical Education Standards. Cyndy Curran was present to brief the board. She said that at the Education Summit held in November, there was a working group in Student Health and Safety who had already discussed physical education and determined that Alaska needed physical education standards. EEd has issued a request for Proposal (RFP) for the work to be done to determine K-12 grade level expectations. It was noted that the governor also was interested in physical education in the schools.

Facility Insurance. Sam Kito was present to brief the board. He said that there had been several facility fires in the state recently and it has brought to light under-insurance issues. In most instances, the department has had to go back to the legislature to replace buildings. Schools are not being insured for replacement value. Jeff Bush, the Executive Director of the Alaska Public Entity Insurance, was also present and said the problem stems from getting accurate assessments and that self reporting was inaccurate. Board members made several suggestions, including a regulation to govern insurance, a sub committee to look into the situation, adding the amount of insurance to annual audits and having rural and urban centers work together. The department mainly wanted the board to be made aware of the situation and the department will continue to find solutions.

School Size. Eddy Jeans was present to brief the board on the size of student populations and the impact on school funding. Mr. Jeans said the information was being presented to increase awareness of student populations in the state. Of 508 schools in the state, 90 schools have fewer than 30 students, and 46 schools have fewer than 15 students.

Reinventing Schools Coalition (RISC). Rick Schrieber, Executive Director, was present to brief the board. RISC is a performance based system that some districts or schools within the state embrace. It began in Chugach School District in the 1990's as a way to move away from Carnegie Units. It's a self assessment tool that measures growth by leadership, shared vision, standards based design and improvement. Mr. Schreiber discussed the history of the program and answered board questions about its accountability.

Commissioner LeDoux returned after lunch and briefed the board on the press conference where he said the governor had chosen to not accept all the stimulus money because she could not certify how the funds were going to be spent. SEE NEWS RELEASE

RISC District/School Reports.

Bering Strait School District. Superintendent Jim Hickerson was present to brief the board, along with Perry Corsetti, Greg Johnson and Kim Johnson. Mr. Hickerson said his district was excelling with the program and noted that good, non vendor driven, staff development was needed. The district has been operating under its waiver for five years. He said teacher turnover had been greatly reduced and there had been much improvement in both principal and teacher access to instructional data. He said the waiver affected every part of their educational program.

Denali School District. Superintendent Kim Langton and Pete Hauschka were on-line. They reported that Cantwell School was the only site using the RISC model in core subject of reading, writing and math. There were 35 students who received credit based on movement. They received credit in other areas of study by seat time. Staff turn over has been minimal for the past five years. Wendy Battino, also on line, said that it's a matter of choice if only one school in a district uses the RISC model. Tri-Valley and Anderson schools decided to discontinue in the program, mainly due to community lack of support and not enough in-service for teachers.

Kuspuk School District. Superintendent Brad Allen was present to brief the board. He said they had 10 schools in the program and it's well supported by teachers, staff and communities. In five years the program has seen improved attendance, new adopted curriculum in K-12, staff turnover has been lowered, fifth and sixth year seniors are getting diplomas and student tracking has improved.

Lower Yukon School District – Alex Russin and Superintendent John Lamont were on line. They indicated that the community supported the RISC model program and there had been a good shift in how the district and the community functioned, they see growth, the self assessment tool has helped them to be better organized and attendance has risen to 85 -90%.

Mat-Su School District. Mid-Valley High School. Becky Huggins, Principal, was on line to brief the board. She described the school as a 6-12 standards based alternative school. She said the RISC program had helped with consistency, flexibility and transparency, it made a level start for students and there had been many celebrations to keep the momentum going. She said her student population was 59% free and reduced meals and described them as last chance students with academic struggles and some homeless students and a general mix. They have a strong partnership with Job Corps. She described their philosophy as “win small, win quick win often”.

Audited waivers for minimum expenditure for instruction requirement. Eddy Jeans was present to brief the board. There were three district requests for a waiver for the 70% minimum expenditure for instruction requirement resulting from audits. The districts were Hydaburg, Lower Yukon and Southeast Island. These districts are not going to meet the 70% requirement after the audits. Mr. Jeans described the amount of funds that would be withheld from each district if the waivers were not approved. Audits turned up added expenses due to legal fees expended, operations and maintenance and errors due to mismanagement.

Mr. Jeans also briefed the board on the status of board's resolution regarding the 70% minimum expenditures for instruction requirement. He said the bill had been moved from House Education to House Finance. He said that Senate Bill 285 had given EED much more authority in oversight and there was a good possibility that it would pass this year or next.

Alaska Education Plan. Commissioner LeDoux was present to brief the board saying the revised draft Alaska Education Plan, dated March 5, 2009, and is the direct result of the Statewide Education Summit held in November 2008 in Anchorage. Groups provided goals and action steps for their topics. In addition, a group met to craft a vision statement, a mission statement, and a list of graduation outcomes for Alaska students. Staff at EED has summarized the summit's working documents into three broad topics, in order to provide greater focus and eliminate redundancy: world-class schools; community, culture and family; and student health and safety. The wording of the vision statement, mission statement, and list of graduation outcomes was changed very little for the draft plan.

The department placed the draft plan and a comment form on its web site on January 26 and sent the links electronically to chambers of commerce statewide, the state PTA, the state home school association, the NEA-Alaska, the University of Alaska, state education associations (which then sent the information to their members, such as district school boards), the media (twice), Native organizations, principals, and superintendents (twice).

Ninety-six people opened the electronic comment form but only 79 people completed it. Several others responded on paper. The department reviewed the comments and revised the draft plan to incorporate some of the comments.

Commissioner LeDoux described the plan as an invite to become part of student success. Board members made a few wording edits.

Executive Session. Shirley Holloway moved and Bunny Schaeffer seconded a motion for the board to go into executive session for the purpose of discussing matters of attorney client privilege.

The board came out of executive session and recessed until the next day.

Continuation of Work Session March 20, 2009

The meeting was called back to order by Chair Cox at 9:15 a.m. All members were present except Col Luu who was excused. Bunny Schaeffer disclosed that she was the parent of a Mt. Edgecumbe High School student and a Mt. Edgecumbe High School Board Member. Item 33G was added to the day's agenda for the approval of the RISC graduation waivers for the following school districts: Bering Strait, Denali, Kuspuk, Lower Yukon, and Mat-SU

Chair Cox reported that the board had an early morning meeting with the House Education Committee and described it as a great meeting, saying the committee wants to hear loud and clear and often from the board.

Shirley Holloway moved and Pat Shier seconded a motion to accept the day's agenda. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Federal Stimulus. The commissioner briefed the board on the governor's press conference the day before and the status of the federal stimulus package. He said that he and Les Morse, Deputy Commissioner went to Washington, DC for the CCSSO Legislative Conference and while there met with Vice President Biden, the US Secretary of Education Duncan at a large meeting about the stimulus. While at the meeting, President Obama also joined the meeting. The President said states would be held accountable in NCLB but would be allowed leeway. Previously there were no waivers allowed. The commissioner said he recently held a teleconference for superintendents to update them on the stimulus.

Deputy Commissioner Les Morse gave a detailed description of what the department knew about the stimulus. He described money that would be coming from different groups as formulas, stabilization funding, and competitive grants. Margaret MacKinnon, Title I Administrator, was present to brief the board on Title I monies. She said one half of the money would be available in the spring for two years. Concerns were the limitation of carry-over funding, impact of set-asides and waivers, and tracking of where the money goes. Money for school improvement would be targeted to Level 4 schools, those in greatest need and capacity to use the funds. Concerning technology, distribution would be in the summer through September 2011 derived from 50% formula and 50% competitive grants. There would be \$190,000 additional funding for the homeless through formula or competitive

grants and has to be distributed within 60 days of signing. Every district is required to have a homeless liaison to identify those who are homeless. Paul Prussing described special education money saying it would require tracking and would double special education funding for the next two years and would be used for professional development and other ways that does not build infrastructure.

Les Morse said there were competitive grants available for teacher incentives and longitudinal data systems like the Unity Project.

The state fiscal stabilization funds have to insure that states are making progress toward rigorous assessments, PreK-college data systems, improving teacher effectiveness, and intensive support in lowest performing schools.

Fund amounts from the discretionary stabilization fund is 18.2% or \$20.7 million for Alaska of which \$900,000 can be used for education; innovation funds include \$750 million nationally for projects that are already working – only school districts are eligible for these funds, not states; and incentive funds from the secretary of education equals \$4.3 billion nationally in competitive grants.

The commissioner said states have to accept funds in order to apply for the grants. The governor has asked the legislature to approve these funds first. The deadline to accept the stabilization funds is April 3, after which the application can be submitted. The legislative process will be a public process and USDOE will make public any misuse of funds. He noted that superintendents deal with federal grants all the time and they know what happens when rules aren't followed. He complimented the department staff for their efforts to understand the stimulus which changes every day.

Mt. Edgecumbe High School (MEHS) Policy Manual. Bill Hutton, MEHS Superintendent, was present to brief the board. This was the second time the board reviewed the new, proposed MEHS Manual. Mr. Hutton reported that, with regard to the proposed policy manual, all public comment had been considered and many comments had been incorporated in the proposed manual. Mr. Hutton said there was nothing contentious in the manual and the MEHS advisory board had approved the proposal at its last meeting. The state board agreed that the intention of the appointment of a State Board of Education & Early Development member to the MEHS Advisory Board was to be a voting member, and requested that the manual reflect that intention in the composition

of the advisory board, bringing the advisory board to nine members. Mr. Hutton said that once the manual was approved by this board, the school would then update its student handbook to reflect the manual. He said it would also include grading and how parents can access school information.

Eagle Academy Charter School renewal. Mary Meade, Principal, (Anchorage School District) and Cyndy Curran, were present to brief the board. Stability in students & staff, the Spaulding Program for Language Arts, and standards based report cards were described as the schools strengths. Ms. Meade said there was a 25% - 30% ethnic diversity among its military students which equated to about 6% of the total enrollment. There is a 16 hour volunteer requirement of parents, per family each year. Maximum enrollment is 175 (K-6), and they have no sports teams. Admission is by lottery and they enroll students in the first three quarters, but not the fourth quarter. Commissioner LeDoux interjected that the President is very supportive of Charter Schools and wants state to remove barriers to them.

Ayaprun Elitnaurvik Charter School. Cyndy Curran was present to brief the board. Ayaprun Elitnaurvik is aYup'ik Immersion Charter School in the Lower Kuskokwim School District (Bethel). It is the only charter school that has an Alaska Native language immersion program. It is housed in two buildings with 171 students in K-6 grades, with very good community support. Village elders are a regular part of the academic program. The school has made AYP for two consecutive years (2006 & 2007). This year it is at a Level 1.

Regulations. The board was being asked to consider two regulation proposals for public comment. One was clean-up to the Title 1 regulations, 4 AAC 06, bringing them in alignment with the federal regulations, the other was bringing special education regulations, 4 AAC 52, into alignment with federal regulations for IDEA and by adding a parental consent provision for a nurse practitioner to diagnose autism in school districts.

The board also considered the public comment for two regulations that they were being asked to adopt. 4 AAC 06.715, Work Ready would delay the implementation date for one year, and 4 AAC 33.310, Quality School Grants, would streamline the smaller grant process.

Business Meeting

Regulations

There was no discussion regarding two regulation proposals to go out for public comment. Bunny Schaeffer moved and Shirley Holloway seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development open a period of public comment on proposed amendments to regulations related to 4 AAC 06.802, 4 AAC 06.855, 4 AAC 06.870, 4 AAC 06.880, and 4 AAC 06.895 relating to school and district accountability. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Shirley Holloway moved and Pat Shier seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development open a period of public comment on 4 AAC 52.130(o), regarding Criteria for determination of eligibility and 4 AAC 52.200, Parental Consent. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

There were two proposals for the board to adopt. Pat Shier moved and Phil Schneider seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development adopt proposed amendments to regulations related to 4 AAC 06.715 and 4 AAC 06.717, Work ready/college ready transitional skills curriculum and benchmark assessments. There followed a discussion about using the WorkKeys as a replacement for the HSGQE exam. The commissioner said it was time to evaluate the assessment system and he looked forward to the dialogue. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Shirley Holloway moved and Pat Shier seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development adopt the proposed regulations 4 AAC 33, Quality School Funding Grants. There was a discussion regarding accountability with these grants. Ms. Holloway noted that there was good accountability with the new data system. Mr. Jeans noted that none of schools who apply for these grants are in improvement status. The proposal was amended to not include the edits in section 33.320. so as to include all grants, no matter the amount. The motion was approved by a 4-3 vote.

Three school districts were requested waivers from the 70% minimum expenditure for instruction requirement for fiscal year 2008, after audited

financial statements. There was no discussion. The following motions were made: 1) moved by Shirley Holloway and seconded by Phil Schneider, I move the State Board of Education & Early Development approve the Hydaburg City School District's FY2008 financial statement waiver request for the 70% minimum expenditure for instruction requirement in accordance with AS 14.17.520(d). The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote; 2) moved by Bunny Schaeffer and seconded by Phil Schneider: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development approve the Lower Yukon School District's FY2008 financial statement waiver request for the 70% minimum expenditure for instruction requirement in accordance with AS 14.17.520(d). The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote; and 3) moved by Phil Schneider and seconded by Shirley Holloway, I move the State Board of Education & Early Development approve the Southeast Island School District's FY2008 financial statement waiver request for the 70% minimum expenditure for instruction requirement in accordance with AS 14.17.520(d). The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

The Alaska Education Plan. Cyndy Curran was present to brief the board and review the edits made as a result of the work session. Commissioner LeDoux thanked the board for their support and those at the department who worked on the document. He specifically cited Eric Fry and Cyndy Curran. He said he was looking forward to the action teams and their work. Pat Shier moved and Janel Keplinger seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development approve the Alaska Education Plan. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Mt. Edgecumbe High School Policy Manual. Bill Hutton, Mt. Edgecumbe High School (MEHS) Superintendent was present to brief the board. He indicated that the paragraph regarding the advisory board composition would be changed to include the appointed member of the State Board of Education & Early Development (as a voting member), which would bring the advisory board to nine members instead of eight. Pat Shier moved and Janel Keplinger seconded the following motion: I move that the State Board of Education & Early Development approve the Mt. Edgecumbe High School Manual, version 2009. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

The board discussed its appointments to the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and the Public School Trust Advisory Board. Janel Keplinger said she was willing to be on both, taking the place of former board member Sylvia Reynolds.

Standing Reports

Assessment, Accountability & Information Management Report. Erik McCormick was present to brief the board. He said that the department had awarded the assessment contract to Data Recognition Corporation (DRC) again. It will run through March 2016. The department is piloting an online assessment system in 50 schools in two grades. He noted that this was a NAEP year with 45 districts participating in 270 schools in grades four and eight. This fall, he expects a revised developmental profile for kindergarten to be on-line. It will align with the Early Learning Guidelines (ELGs). The Unity Project has a grant to build data warehouses and improve district reporting. The alternate assessment window will be open February 23 – April 10. He noted also that the department expected approval for the Science Assessment sometime in March. He gave the windows for the SBAs, HSGQE and the TAC meeting.

Budget and Legislation Report. Eddy Jeans was present to brief the board. He reviewed the current budget amendments and the status of some of the bills before the legislature. He said the Military Interstate Compact was moving along and he thought it might pass this session. Pat Shier said he was content with having the commissioner carry the board's message on compulsory school age. Bunny Schaeffer noted that there was already a law that was difficult to enforce in the rural areas. Janel Keplinger said that just extending the age to 28 without anything attached to it, will not work. Phil Schneider said that Representative Munoz and Senator Davis believed that it would reduce the drop-out rate. Board members agreed that they should have a work session and develop a position on compulsory school age.

Attorney General's Report. Neil Slotnick was present to brief the board. He reviewed the status of current legislation.

Mt. Edgecumbe High School (MEHS) Report. Bill Hutton was present to brief the board. Tiffany Creed, President of the MEHS student body was online to also report. Ms. Creed reported on sports and other school activities. Mr. Hutton said there was a new emphasis on healthy choice for drinks, snacks and highly caffeinated drinks being sold by school groups and generally promoting healthy choice and approved by the national school lunch program. The board inquired about an exit survey of students and Mr. Hutton said he would be able to give a report at the June meeting. The report would focus on where students went after MEHS.

Library, Archives & Museums Report. Linda Thibodeau was present to brief the board. She introduced Jim Simard, Head of the Historical Collections, and Dan Cornwall, Head of Library Information Services. Each gave a brief description of the services provided by their library divisions. Dan Cornwall gave demonstration of SLED and the virtual library and how each can help with curriculum lessons and lesson development. Jim Simard demonstrated the digital archives site.

School Improvement Report. Les Morse, Deputy Commissioner, was present to brief the board. He reported on a summary of findings from the instructional audit validation study. He said that the department had contracted with independent auditors to conduct district instructional desk audits in three districts in March. Reports will be given to each district. He also briefed the board on district improvement activities and technical assistance to districts. Curriculum alignment to the GLEs is being conducted by Curriculum Designers, Inc., and work is being done with Alaska Staff Development Network and the Rural Alaska Principal Preparation Program Support (RAPPS). He said there was a summer leadership institute being planned for late May.

Commissioner's Report. Commissioner LeDoux was present to brief the board. The commissioner thanked Dan Owen, staff assistant to the Senate Education Committee for attending the board's meeting. He said EED has a small department with a very large task. Stimulus, Moore lawsuit, legislative issues and school improvement keeps EED busy. He said there were three areas in school improvement: dropout prevention (standing committee on graduation), preschool pilot project (developing and RFP) and the technology component (rural broadband access). He said he was concerned with the Permanent Fund Distribution (PFD) distribution date and how it affected school attendance in the rural communities. Some schools loose students for up to a month. He said he had speaking engagements in Bethel and Chevak coming up. He said he would like a discussion on an honors diploma recognizing academic achievement representing excellence. Tim Rockey said he thought it was a great idea and he and the board indicated they would like to see it pursued with a discussion at the June board meeting. The commissioner said he was interested in the department doing an annual report about excellence in education in the state. He mentioned that he had also met with the elementary and secondary principals and had encouraged them to be involved with staff development.

School Violence Demonstration Program. The School Violence Demonstration Program is available through the Southeast Regional Resource Center (SERRC). It helps students understand the concepts of responsibility, authority, justice, and privacy, history, importance and relevance of the U.S. Constitution, and how to

engage in the public process to change laws and/or policies. Joan Pardes, Communication Director at SERRC was present to brief the board and gave a brief demonstration of how the program worked. The program is funded through the Center for Civic Education and Coordination by SERRC. To date, more than 200 upper elementary schools teachers and more than 5,000 students have participated in the program in Alaska.

Consent Agenda. There were seven items on the Consent Agenda, including the approval of the RISC graduation waivers for five school districts (33G). Phil Schneider moved and Tim Rockey seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development approve the consent agenda consisting of: 1) the Eagle Academy Charter School Application; 2) the Ayaprun Elituarvik Charter School Application; 3) two appointments to the Museums Collection Advisory Board; 4) the minutes of the December 4 & 5, 2008, meeting; 5) the minutes of the January 16, 2009, meeting; and 6) the capital improvement program lists. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote. (note that Dr. Holloway had been excused for the day from the meeting.)

Bunny Schaeffer moved and Janel Keplinger seconded a motion to approve all the waiver districts with the exception of Denali School District. Ms. Schaeffer said she felt that Denali didn't know what they were reporting on, they were too vague and there were no assessment results for the district. Cyndy Curran said that the district waivers actually didn't need approval and all the information was not included. The motion to approve all except Denali was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Board Comments.

Pat Shier - He said he was glad to hear about the work on the Unity Project and welcomed Ms. Keplinger and Mr. Rockey.

Geri Benshoof – She said people are always talking about what is wrong with education and she was proud of Alaska. She said the commissioner and his staff were excellent problem solvers and she appreciated them all. She encouraged the commissioner to recognize excellence in education in the form of an annual report and welcomed the new members and said she appreciated the Chair.

Tim Rockey – He said he supported the arts increasing standards and spending the stimulus money. He also said he enjoyed the Alaska Education Plan and wished the best to the students of Kalstag (whose school had burned). He was excited about the

AASG meeting at MEHS, the honors diploma and was happy to represent Alaskan students on the board.

Phil Schneider – Showed pictures of his new son, Max, which he said was his reason for being on the board. He thanked the board for their discussion.

Janel Keplinger – thanked the board for her opportunity to serve, and applauded the team work and effort “behind the scenes.”

Bunny Schaeffer – She said she pulled the Denali waiver because she felt if the staff did not know what was going on and how wee the students to know. She thanked Pat his hospitality and thanked the staff for their work.

Shirley Holloway, via the Chair – said she would like to know when the department is having meetings in Anchorage and Fairbanks so she could drop in if she was there. She expressed a desire for a September board retreat to set board priorities so to be ready in January for the legislature. She said she was willing to serve on the certification advisory committee.

Esther Cox – said she during the past two month she met with the arts council, attended the CTE conference, and met with the library group. She noted that she would like to hear a Title IX report and requested an assessment work session for June and was interested in an integrated arts report also. She thanked Dottie for the new handbook. She also requested a listing of names and emails for legislators. And thanked the staff for a great job on this meeting.

The meeting was adjourned by mutual consent.

