

**Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development**  
**Approved Minutes**  
**September 23, 24 25, 2013**  
**Nome, AK**

*September 23, 2013*

The board participated in an afternoon retreat at the Norton Sound Regional Hospital in Nome, AK.

**Work Session**

*September 24, 2013*

The meeting was called to order by Chair Jim Merriner at 8 a.m. at the University of Alaska Fairbanks Northwest Campus (UAF NW) Conference Room. The Oath of Office was administered to the incoming Military Advisor to the board, Lt. Col. Douglas Hays. Everyone welcomed Lt. Col. Hays. All members were present with the exception of Janel Keplinger, who was excused. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. The Chair asked if there were any disclosures. There were none.

Superintendent Steve Gast, Nome Public Schools, welcomed the board to Nome. Two second-grade dance students and an elder drummer provided a wonderful sample of Native dancing that is being done in the elementary school.

**Public Comment**

Christie Reinhart, Executive Director of the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education, was present to advocate for the repeal of the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam. Regarding the number of students on Individualized Education Programs whose scores are getting lower on the HSGQE, she noted that of the 700 IEP students who took the HSGQE last year, 400 had to re-take the exam and only 152 passed, and some of those students never got diplomas. She also recommended that the age be moved to 14 for an IEP team to meet and get the student ready for the exam.

Nancy Mendenhall, a previous UAF NW Campus Director, said she was happy about the attention to pre-school happening now as she felt it was very important. She felt more attention was needed for bilingual instruction, culturally based curriculum and orientation for new teachers in rural areas. She thanked the board for coming to Nome.

Barbara Amarok, an educator who received her Ph.D. from UAF and a member of the Nome School Board, said that preparation for teachers in tune with community culture and state standards was very important. She also emphasized the need for more cultural courses for educators, so they are better prepared to help students.

Tammie Wilson, State Representative, updated the board on the work of the Sustainable Education Task Force and expressed concern about how to measure a student's progress and whether the state tests were appropriate for the measure. She said that one size didn't fit all and suggested several tests with relative data that measures Alaska's uniqueness. She said she was on a rural trip visiting communities and talking with constituents. Ms. Hull, board member, asked about testing addressing local needs and drilling down in the data for each student. She said she was looking at the costs for broadband, and at how the university trains teachers so districts don't have to go out of state to recruit. Mr. Shier indicated that Dr. Heather Ryan, who is the new Dean of the College of Education at the University of Alaska Anchorage, is adamant about local educators and will be beneficial in her new role. Rep. Wilson ended by asking if one test can measure a student's progress as proficient or if different tests were needed.

**Mt. Edgecumbe High School Language Arts Curriculum.** Because of many technical problems with connections to Sitka, this agenda item was moved to the October 28, 2013, agenda.

**Nome School District Presentation.** Superintendent Steve Gast introduced some of his staff: Doug Walrath, Director of NACTEC; Robin Johnson, Tech Coordinator; John Berkley, Director of Federal Programs; Don Stamback, Human Resources; Scott Handley, Principal; Bob Grimes, Principal; and board President Betsy Brennan.

Nome staff presented a very well done iMovie that highlighted many aspects of the district. The dropout rate has been reduced from 9% to 3.3%; they use APEX credit recovery system so students are able to keep up their work and graduation track; they have a five-year strategic plan that is constantly reviewed; and a successful pre-school program with 55 students enrolled and 66 in kindergarten. They also use a K & 1/2 for a transition class with the same teacher for two years. They have a goal that 90% of their students will be reading at grade level in third grade. They have a one-week culture camp for new teachers each summer, which is funded through a grant. They conduct iPad classes for teachers and have a one-to-one initiative for iPad use. Since Nome is situated on the ocean, all students take swimming lessons in the school pool. The district enjoys many partnerships such as: Nome Eskimo Community, which is project and STEM based from grades 7-12; a ROTC program through the Sitna Corporation; Head Start; and the Northwest Alaska Career & Technical Center (NACTEC). Mr. Gast said their major challenges are around bandwidth, state testing times, energy and maintenance costs, student transportation, and professional development. He indicated that enrollment was up 15 students this year. Dual classes are offered in Math 107, Biology and small engines. Mr. Shier asked how the district does so much. Mr. Gast said the board and leadership figures out how to best make things happen. A lot of listening takes place, he has done a listening tour in the town, and the strategic plan is a living document. He also noted that tribal members take a keen interest in education. There are 701 students and they are a single-site community. The teacher turnover is about 8-10 each year; there is 70% local contribution and a lot of in-kind from the city. He also noted they had six students involved in the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program this year.

**Thematic Teaching Grant.** Woody Woodgate, project coordinator this year, and Karen Ladegard, project coordinator the previous two years, were on video to brief the board. Again,

the connection was poor and difficult to hear. This is the third year of the three-year, \$1.5 million grant. The legislative goals that the Iditarod Area School District has used to create and continue the thematic teaching project have been to: 1) establish a pilot project for the purpose of developing and implementing culturally relevant and theme-based curriculum materials and strategies for students in K-12, and 2) make available the materials and strategies developed during the thematic teaching project to other school districts in the state on request.

Curriculum is developed that is relevant to local history while supporting state and national standards. It is the mission to develop and make available to educators quality thematic teaching units designed to engage students and improve student learning, and to make them available for other districts in Alaska to copy, modify, and use as it fit their local needs. This year, the goal is to move toward promoting district-wide teacher created lesson plans to engage students and increase student proficiency. A video showed students engaged in a theater project. This year, the program will focus on developing more creative projects and provide professional development using the new standards and cultural standards, digitizing historical information and thematic projects into a digital warehouse, and targeting specific areas of proficiency.

**University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) Advanced Education Program.** Deborah Lo, Ph.D., Dean of Education at UAS, was online to brief the board regarding a new program that responds to the interests of certified teachers to add an advanced endorsement in elementary education. The program aligns to standards established by the Association of Childhood Education International, the Alaska Literacy Blueprint, the Alaska Professional Content and Performance Standards, and the Alaska Standards for Culturally-Responsive Educators.

**Regulations.** There were two regulations the board was being asked to open for public comment. 4 AAC 33.090, District-operated statewide residential educational programs. Heidi Teshner, School Finance Manager, was present to brief the board. This project would align regulatory language with SB47. AS 14.16.200 was amended during the fiscal year 2013 legislature under SB47 to allow for residential schools rather than residential programs; remove the limit on the number of residential schools that may be approved by the department; and allow for district-wide residential schools as well as residential schools that have variable-length terms but still operate for a full school year.

4 AAC 06.713, Early Literacy Screening. Dr. Susan McCauley, Director of Teaching & Learning Support and Rebecca Hattan, Assistant Attorney General, were present to brief the board. Ms. Hattan said the board had originally seen this project in June and had voted to send it out for public comment. After more consideration, the department felt that the proposal needed more clarification, and that one of the tests didn't meet the requirements. They were now asking the board to send out a supplemental notice regarding the proposal. The alternate version:

- 1) clarifies the required frequency of literacy screening;
- 2) provides two tracks by which a literacy screening tool may be approved by the department; and
- 3) clarifies the manner in which data should be reported to the department.

Ms. Hattan explained that the board would have to rescind its original motion and then move to open a period of supplemental public comment on the proposal.

The meeting was recessed, and the board spent the remainder of the afternoon touring schools and the NACTEC facility.

***September 25, 2013***

The meeting was called to order by Chair Merriner at 8:00 a.m. All members were present except Janel Keplinger, who was excused. The agenda was approved as presented. The Chair asked if there were any disclosures. There were none. The business meeting was resumed.

**Regulations. Residential Programs.** Esther Cox moved, and Pat Shier seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development open a period of public comment on amendments to 4 AAC 33.090, District-operated statewide residential educational programs. There was no discussion. The motion was passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Early Learning. Sue Hull moved and Pat Shier seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development rescind its action of June 7, 2013, in adopting the proposed amendments to 4 AAC 06.713, Early Literacy Screening. Mr. Shier said he appreciated the department hearing the will of the board. The motion was passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Carol Schaeffer moved and Esther Cox seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development open a period of supplemental public comment on the proposed alternate version of 4 AAC 06.713, Early Literacy Screening. Ms. Hull said she hoped the districts would pay attention to this regulation proposal and give feedback. The motion was passed by unanimous roll call vote.

**Teaching & Learning (TLS) Report.** Dr. Susan McCauley, Director of TLS, was present to brief the board. Dr. McCauley described the efforts being taken by the department to support the implementation of the English language arts and mathematics standards. She said that during the past two months staff used many different methods of communication, including VTC and face-to-face. She also described the redesign of the web site, making it one-stop-shopping for resources. The site can be used by educators, parents, or the public interested in locating a resource. She also said the division was focusing on awareness of the educator evaluation regulations by having ongoing presentations to stakeholder groups and working with Northwest Ed to develop templates. They are developing optional tools that will be helpful to smaller districts with limited capacity. She indicated that the certification office is fully staffed with seasoned staff.

Ms. Hull inquired about the role of Education Northwest (Ed NW) and Ms. Cox inquired about developing the model. Dr. McCauley said there are two districts that are leading the way, Kenai and Kodiak, and Ed NW works with the department and the districts in a combined effort. Dr. McCauley said they are all working toward a 2015 goal for implementation. She said those who would be impacted, including students, are in the working group. When the 2015 date was questioned, Ms. Schaeffer said she had attended the teacher quality meeting, and was reminded that data can't be accessed if it hasn't been gathered. She said the meeting was excellent and

provided a lot of information. Regarding Alaska Learning Network, a partnership with UAS, Dr. McCauley said the first board meeting was to be held soon. Enrollment is near 300, which is double from last year. The courses are made in Alaska and off the shelf, and they are developing more all the time. Much support is provided so students can be eligible for the Alaska Performance Scholarship. Dean Lo, at UAS, Dean of Education, is spearheading the effort and will give a full report to the board at its December meeting. Ms. Cox said she felt that districts were struggling with the many changes that have come recently. Ms. Hull said she felt that doing it in partnership with many was working well. Ms. Williams inquired if a workshop could be done at the upcoming Alaska Association of Student Government meeting. Col. Hays said he didn't understand where the consternation was coming from and inquired if it was coming from the best. Ms. Hull said the current standards were not preparing students for what comes after school; they only went to 10<sup>th</sup> grade. The new ones are a significantly ramped-up and include 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

**Assessment, Accountability & Information Management Report.** Erik McCormick, Director of Assessment, was present to brief the board. Mr. McCormick reported on the recent test coordinator training being conducted by the department, saying that all but two districts were in attendance. He said all districts except one will attempt to test WorkKeys electronically in grade 11, and there would be limited field testing in the spring for grades 3-8 and 11 in state assessments. The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium will allow a 12-week testing window, if implemented. He said the department is encouraging testing by mid-October of all machines that will be used for testing in time for the Request for Proposal for a testing vendor. The contractor will work with districts that cannot accomplish this. Voluntary pilot testing in math for grades 3-8 will be in March with a focus on technology and delivery systems. iPads will not be used yet.

Mr. McCormick said that 92% of schools are either 5, 4 or 3 on the Alaska School Performance Index (ASPI). The commissioner said it's the first time he has heard schools talking positively about their ratings and working on attendance issues. Ms. Cox said she was excited about the new star system and felt it is a positive move because it recognizes what is good. The RFP was released in August and its purpose is to find a vendor to assist with delivery of the tests and do the reports for a wrap-around service by spring 2015. Interested vendors are invited to submit requests regarding cost options. A contract will be awarded and be in place for 2014-2020. The RFP deadline is in early November. Mr. Shier inquired about the evaluation committee for the RFP and wondered if it was made up of only state employees or if there was a value to having a board member sit on the committee. It was discussed that General Services lays out the requirements for the committee and that the scoring was a legal process. Deputy Commissioner Morse noted that the board is the governing body that sets the regulation, and the regulation indicates that the commissioner selects the test, saying the board's participation could be a conflict of interest. Ms. Hull said it appears that it is an administration function, but asked when the board would be involved. The commissioner said it would be a first to involve the board in the decision. Ms. Hull said she wanted to talk about policy decisions related to the test selection. Mr. Fields said the board did weigh in on the standards and the test is based on the standards. Ms. Hull said she believed it was still a policy issue that the board should be involved in. Mr. Morse read 4 AAC 06.737, which stated that the commissioner decides what test is used, and the next step for the board would be to set the cut scores and participation guidelines. Ms. Hull said

she believed the board should be involved, and felt the board would not be in a good place if they are not involved. She said she didn't want to get into the "weeds" of the process, but she wanted the decision to come to the board after the commissioner made his choice.

Regarding the performance group, Mr. McCormick said they were still fleshing out how the test will be scored. He said adaptive testing has a three-grade range. Regarding broadband, Mr. McCormick said the reason they have two tech-ready tools is to see where help is needed. They are working with GCI in problem areas, and most districts have the capacity somewhere in the four-week test window.

**Mt. Edgecumbe High School (MEHS) Report.** Randy Hawk, Director of MEHS, was present to brief the board. He indicated that MEHS was a four-star school. Enrollment is currently at 403. The HSGQE scores were well above the state average, especially in writing and math. Proficiency scores are also above average: 87.3% in math and 76.5% in writing. He said the new heating system was complete and the next step would be the digital controls. The old powerhouse has been torn down, making way for the new aquatics center. The conceptual design will be the next phase. There are four vacancies on the advisory board, so the state board will be asked to appoint new members in the near future. Mr. Hawk discussed the new members of the teaching staff and their positions.

**Rural Coordinator Report.** Chris Simon, Rural Coordinator, was present to brief the board. He described the various ways he was reaching out to rural communities. He had several upcoming rural meetings including Alaska Federation of Natives, First Alaskans Institute, Rural Alaska Community Action Program, Boys Into Men coaching, and the bilingual conference. He discussed the Rose Urban Exchange and how they were opening up some new sites.

**Libraries, Archives & Museums Report.** Linda Thibodeau, Director, was present to brief the board. Regarding the SLAM Project, Ms. Thibodeau said that in November they would announce the Percentage of Art Program for the new facility. Construction is a bit behind schedule due to some defective materials, and they still need a \$30M appropriation to finish the project. Regarding the Stratton Building in Sitka, she indicated that there was a need for more dollars to properly repair the structure. The Online with Libraries (OWL) grant was extended to a fourth year for more training projects. While in Nome, she said she had spent time with the library and museum directors and reviewed the archival records, and she appreciated the opportunity to do that.

**Attorney General's Report.** Rebecca Hattan, Assistant Attorney General, was present to brief the board. She said it had been a very busy litigation period. There were a cluster of issues in Superior Court, and several intensive funding issues and hearings to attend. So far, all have been affirmed in the department's favor, but there are several more to go.

**Commissioner's Report.** Commissioner Hanley was present to brief the board. He said that EED had a lot on its plate and education was moving forward in Alaska. The board had been proactive in its stand on residential schools and was ahead of the legislature (SB47). He said the work now at the department was focusing on following up with support and workshops on what has been put into place. He said he was thrilled to be in Nome to see what was taking place and

was very impressed and felt it was important to see the many positive aspects of the district. He is looking forward to the upcoming legislative session, and was excited about the AKLN partnership with UAS. He said Roxy Mourant's position had been taken by Kelly Sorensen, and she was working in partnership with Dean Lo. He said the enrollment numbers were exciting. He said that Chris Simon, the Rural Coordinator, was keeping in touch with Chevak's school district concerning the artifacts that were disposed of, was in the loop, and would attend the community meeting.

**Consent Agenda.** Esther Cox moved and Sue Hull seconded the following motion: approval of the minutes of the June 6 & 7, 2013; approval of the endorsement program in Elementary Education for the University of Alaska Southeast; and approval of the following appointments to the Mt. Edgecumbe High School Advisory Board: appoint Doreen L. Deaton and Lorain DeAsis to fill three-year terms as Parent Representatives; Regina Johnson to fill a three-year term as the Alumni Representative; and Ty Mase to fill a three-year term as the Alaska Public School Administrator to the Mt. Edgecumbe High School Advisory Board, beginning this date and ending on September 1, 2016. There was no discussion. The motion passed by unanimous consent.

### **Board Comments**

Carly Williams said that Summer AASG was in August and she was looking forward to the fall meeting in Juneau on October 17-19. She said they were working hard on the suicide prevention project and she was eager to present it to the board.

Sue Hull said she was interested in pursuing paperless board documents. She asked about doing some work on the board's vision. She thanked the commissioner and staff for all the testifying they were doing during the interim, thanked the commissioner for his work with the Chevak district, and thanked all the folks in Nome for the warm welcome.

James Fields thanked the Chamber, UAF, and the museum for their hospitality while in Nome.

Carol Schaeffer thanked the people of Nome, saying it was an awesome place and she was impressed with the community involvement in the schools. She thanked NACTEC for the tour and the Chamber.

Col. Hays said he was pleased as a parent to see this process.

Pat Shier welcomed Col Hays. He said the legislative reports had been interesting, saying what would happen if federal funds were cut would be huge. He said the high-stakes testing is also huge. He thanked TLS for their work and Nome for the welcome.

Esther Cox handed some information regarding the Construction Academy. She said she was done with her summer tour job on the railroad and was enjoying it a great deal. The most-often asked questions were: why she came to Alaska, why she stayed, and why Juneau was the capital. She said she had a fun time on the Nome tour with the NACTEC folks and thanked Nome for its hospitality.

Jim Merriner reminded board members that the Alaska Association of School Boards' fall conference was October 8-10.

The meeting was adjourned at noon.