

Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development
Approved Minutes
June 5-6, 2014
Anchorage, AK

Work Session

June 5, 2014

Chair Jim Merriner called the meeting to order at 8 a.m. in the Anchorage School District boardroom in Anchorage. James Fields was absent. Attendees recited the Pledge of Allegiance. The board approved the agenda. Board members had no disclosures of conflict of interest.

Public Comment

Ron Fuhrer, the NEA-Alaska president, opposed the proposed Type B certification regulation, saying it would lower the bar for superintendents. Mr. Fuhrer submitted 103 written comments from educators opposing the proposed regulation.

Bob Williams, a teacher, opposed the proposed Type B certification regulation, saying districts can hire chief administrators as an alternative to superintendents.

Sean Williams thanked the board for giving his daughter, Carly Williams, the opportunity to serve as student advisor.

Peggy Cowan, superintendent of the North Slope Borough School District, supported the proposed Type B certification regulation, saying the state needs to expand the pool of superintendent applicants. She cited 15 superintendent vacancies this year. She thanked the department for supporting districts.

Kim Hewitt of the Alaska Home Educators Alliance said technology should be included in the courses that students can challenge for credit. She said Alaska's K-4 standards are developmentally inappropriate. She is concerned that state-mandated early literacy screenings must be done at a school.

Bruce Johnson, outgoing executive director of the Alaska Council of School Administrators, supported the proposed Type B certification regulation, citing vacancies. He said he also could support a department waiver for superintendent candidates.

Phil Schneider approved of the repeal of the high school exit exam, citing capable employees who have general educational development certificates rather than high school diplomas.

Christie Reinhart, executive director of the Governor’s Council on Disabilities and Special Education, said that students who took the alternate assessment will not be able to get a retroactive high school diploma now that the exit exam has been repealed. She said students are placed on a non-diploma track at an early age, and schools may have made assumptions about which students could pass the exit exam.

Jack Walsh, superintendent of the Craig School District, supported the proposed Type B certification regulation, saying that non-teachers can be trained to evaluate teachers.

Rena Witter, a teacher in the Lower Kuskokwim School District, opposed the proposed Type B certification regulation, saying that superintendents must know what teachers do and guide teachers through challenges.

Dr. Steve Atwater, superintendent of the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District, supported the proposed Type B certification regulation, saying that superintendents rarely evaluate teachers (principals do). A chief administrator wouldn’t be allowed to evaluate principals. The proposed regulation would open leadership opportunities for rural residents.

Todd Poage, superintendent of the Alaska Gateway School District and president of the Alaska superintendents’ association, said there should be more than one track for being eligible for a superintendency.

Rep. Paul Seaton said he prefers that all 11th-graders be required to take the WorkKeys career-readiness assessment. (A new statute allows students the choice of SAT, ACT, and WorkKeys.)

Dr. Norman Eck, superintendent of the Northwest Arctic Borough School District, supported the proposed Type B certification regulation, saying that the skill set for superintendents is very different from that of teachers.

Diane Scribner, a teacher, opposed the proposed Type B certification regulation.

Rep. Lynn Gattis supported the proposed Type B certification regulation, saying rural districts need a broader pool of superintendent applicants.

Andy Holleman, president of the Anchorage Educators Association, opposed the proposed Type B certification regulation, saying it sent the message that a superintendent doesn’t need classroom experience, for which there is no substitute. That concluded public comment.

Agenda Item 1. School construction/major maintenance. Elizabeth Nudelman, the department’s director of School Finance, reviewed her memo and supporting documents on the topic. In answer to board questions, Nudelman said the department reviews districts’ six-year capital improvement plans; districts decide which projects to submit for grants; the statutory scoring system does not create an absolute priority for life-safety projects; there are limits on the number of applications per district; and there is a two-part evaluation system, first by department

staff and then by a review committee selected by the commissioner (seven members) and legislators (two members).

Esther Cox asked for a discussion at the September board meeting about establishing term limits for the bond reimbursement and grant review committee.

Agenda Item 2. Praxis II scores. Sondra Meredith, the department's administrator of Teacher Education & Certification, reviewed the three uses of Praxis II content area exams in Alaska: to add endorsements, to achieve status as a highly qualified teacher, and for Professional level certification. Ms. Meredith reviewed the nature and purpose of recent regulatory changes.

The board directed the department to draft proposals regarding whether a minimum score on a content area exam should be required for all endorsements. Sue Hull said Alaska should have a valid method for setting Praxis II cut scores. The board requested more information and recommendations regarding whether teachers should be required to demonstrate proficiency in teaching reading.

Agenda Item 3. Highly qualified requirements for teaching online courses. Esther Cox said it was premature to address the topic. The board declined to provide further direction.

Agenda Item 4. Joint meeting with University of Alaska regents. Chair Merriner appointed Esther Cox and Kathleen Yarr to a joint State Board/UA Regents working group to address dual-enrollment and dual-credit courses. Commissioner Hanley said the working group could determine a standard memorandum of understanding between the university and school districts.

Agenda Item 5A. Proposed assessment regulations. Erik McCormick, director of Assessment, Accountability & Information Management, reviewed the effect of House Bill 278 on assessment regulations. Additionally, the board was asked to adopt by reference the June 2014 edition of the *Alaska Supplement for WorkKeys Assessment*, which sets state-allowed accommodations for students with disabilities and limited English proficiency.

Barbara Thompson said she hopes the department will promote WorkKeys assessments, which are valuable to employers and others. Chair Merriner noted that removing the requirement that all 11th-graders take WorkKeys assessments will require changes in the point system of the Alaska School Performance Index.

Department staff addressed concerns about retroactive high school diplomas not being available to students who took alternate assessments. Less than 1 percent of tested students took alternate assessments, suggesting that the alternate tests are serving appropriate students, staff said. The department has regulations and guidelines regarding which students should take the alternate assessment.

Agenda Item 5B. Proposed Internet speed regulation. Linda Thibodeau, director of Libraries, Archives & Museums, reviewed the regulation, which establishes a process of determining eligibility for, and distributions under, a new state law (HB 278) that funds the improvement of Internet speed at public schools. It is funded at \$5 million for fiscal year 2015 (July 1, 2014 to

June 30, 2015). Valerie Oliver, the state's E-rate consultant, said the upgrade will allow districts to deliver instruction by interactive videoconferences.

Agenda Item 5C. Proposed regulation to challenge courses. Marcy Herman, special assistant to the Commissioner, reviewed the proposal, which stems from HB 278. Staff answered questions about the definition of secondary students (grades 7 to 12) and explained that districts will determine the tests and set the standard for a passing grade. The board asked that the proposed regulation specify the subject areas that can be challenged.

Agenda Item 6A. Accountability regulations up for adoption. Dr. Susan McCauley, director of Teaching & Learning Support, reviewed her memo. The proposed regulation relates to Alaska's waiver from the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The proposed regulation addresses concerns about treatment of alternative schools and graduation rates for small schools in the Alaska School Performance Index. The U.S. Department of Education asked the department to change its proposed point value for various graduation rates for alternative schools; the department agreed to do that, and the U.S. Department of Education has approved the proposed changes.

Agenda Item 6B. Type B superintendent certificate regulations up for adoption. Dr. Susan McCauley, director of Teaching & Learning Support, said the proposed regulation alters only one requirement for the certificate. All other requirements would remain, including a recommendation from a superintendent preparation program; such programs often require teaching experience for entry. Commissioner Hanley said the rigor for the proposed Type B certificate is higher than what is required for chief school administrators.

Esther Cox said she opposed the proposed regulation and would prefer a waiver option. The state shouldn't try to increase the pool for superintendents by lowering the standards to become a superintendent, she said. The superintendent should be the educational leader of the district.

Kenneth Gallahorn said the proposed regulation raises the bar; superintendents are the chief executive officers of districts. Lt. Col. Hays said superintendents without teaching experience could learn their evaluation duties.

Department staff said that if the board prefers a waiver process, the criteria needs to be defined.

Agenda Item 7. Executive session. The board went into executive session to evaluate the Commissioner's performance, citing AS 44.62.310(c)(2), specifically the provision related to subjects that tend to prejudice the reputation and character of any person, provided the person may request a public discussion."

The board adjourned at 4 p.m.

Business Meeting

June 6, 2014

Chair Merriner called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. All members were present. James Fields and Kenneth Gallahorn were present by telephone. The board approved the agenda as presented. Board members had no disclosures of conflict of interest.

Agenda Item 8. Officers. Chair Merriner said he would not be able to serve another term as chair. Sue Hull nominated Esther Cox as chair; Kathleen Yarr seconded. The board approved Esther Cox as chair by unanimous consent. Esther Cox nominated James Fields as first vice-chair; Barbara Thompson seconded. The board approved Jim Fields as first vice-chair by unanimous consent; Barbara Thompson nominated Sue Hull as second vice-chair; Esther Cox seconded. The board approved Sue Hull as second vice-chair by unanimous consent.

At this point, Kenneth Gallahorn and James Fields were no longer present by telephone.

Agenda Item 9. Meeting schedule. By unanimous consent the board approved the following schedule of meetings: Sept. 18-19, 2014, in Anchorage; Oct. 29, 2014, video-teleconference; Dec. 4-5, 2014, in Anchorage; Jan. 26, 2015, video-teleconference; March 19-20, 2015, in Juneau. The first week in June, the dates to be determined, in Fairbanks.

Agenda Item 10A. Proposed assessment regulations. Erik McCormick, Director of Assessment, Accountability & Information Management, said students will have at least four opportunities to take the SAT and ACT a year. There will be a window of opportunity for online and paper WorkKeys tests. The state will pay for WorkKeys tests for any seniors who did not take them as juniors (the law takes effect July 1, 2014).

Barbara Thompson moved: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development open a period of public comment on changes to 4 AAC 06.710, Statewide student assessment system; 4 AAC 06.715, Work ready/college ready transitional skills curriculum and benchmark assessments; 4 AAC 06.717, College and career readiness assessments; 4 AAC 06.720, Program evaluation; 4 AAC 06.737, Standards-based test; 4 AAC 06.755, High school graduation qualifying examination; 4 AAC 06.758, High school graduation qualifying examination results; 4 AAC 06.759, High school graduation qualifying examination: remediation; 4 AAC 06.771, High school graduation qualifying examination reexamination; 4 AAC 06.772, High school graduation qualifying examination waivers; 4 AAC 06.773, Waiver for entering the public school system late; 4 AAC 06.774, Rare or unusual circumstances; 4 AAC 06.775, Statewide assessment program for students with disabilities; 4 AAC 06.777, Students that have passed another state's competency examination; 4 AAC 06.780, Procedures for appeal from a denial of a waiver from the high school graduation qualifying exam; 4 AAC 06.789, Requests by parents for high school graduation qualifying examination waivers, exemptions, and appeals; 4 AAC 06.790, Definitions.

Sue Hull seconded. The board members present approved the motion unanimously.

Agenda item 10B. Proposed Internet speed regulation. Linda Thibodeau, director of Libraries, Archives & Museums, provided an amended version of the proposed regulation to correct certain dates. She requested a 30-day comment period and a board teleconference in the summer to consider adoption, to allow the department to prepare the program for the upcoming school year.

Sue Hull moved: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development open a period of public comment on amended version 1 of 4 AAC 33.600 through 4 AAC 33.690, regarding funding for Internet services. Kathleen Yarr seconded. The board members present approved the motion unanimously.

Agenda Item 10C. Proposed challenging courses regulation. Staff presented an amended regulation to reflect the board's direction that the challengeable subject areas be specified. Commissioner Hanley noted that districts are free to allow students to challenge courses in other subject areas.

Barbara Thompson moved: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development open a period of public comment on amended version 1 of 4 AAC 06.065 regarding challenging courses for secondary school course credit. Esther Cox seconded. The board members present approved the motion unanimously.

Kenneth Gallahorn rejoined the meeting by telephone for Agenda Item 11A and Agenda Item 11B.

Agenda Item 11A. Accountability regulations up for adoption.

Barbara Thompson moved: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development adopt the amended version of the proposed amendments to 4 AAC 06.812 Alaska school performance index, 4 AAC 05.815(c) Annual measurable objective, 4 AAC 06.825 Graduation rate, 4 AAC 06.845 School improvement plan, 4 AAC 06.868(d) Focus school status, 4 AAC 06.899 Alternative school definition.

Sue Hull seconded. The board members present approved the motion unanimously.

Agenda Item 11B. Type B superintendent certificate regulations up for adoption. Board members discussed the pros and cons of a waiver process as an alternate route to Type B superintendent certification; they also discussed expanding the definitions of required experience for the Type B superintendent certificate.

Esther Cox moved to postpone the vote. There was no second.

Sue Hull moved: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development adopt the proposed amendments to 4 AAC 12.345(a) Administrative Certificate (Type B).

Barbara Thompson seconded. The motion failed. Voting not to adopt were Carly Williams, Sue Hull, Esther Cox, Kathleen Yarr, Barbara Thompson, and Jim Merriner. Voting to adopt were Lt. Col. Hays and Kenneth Gallahorn.

Jim Merriner asked staff to set an agenda item for September about the issue of evaluation of principals.

Agenda Item 12. Teaching & Learning Report. Sondra Meredith, Administrator for Teacher Certification, was present to review the division's written report. Barbara Thompson requested an update on career and technical education. Jim Merriner requested an agenda item at the September meeting for visioning. Regarding a public comment about early literacy screenings, Commissioner Hanley said test vendors don't decide who gives the screenings; districts could train parents to give the screenings.

Agenda Item 13. Assessment, Accountability & Information Management Report. Erik McCormick, Director of Assessment, was present to brief the board about his written report. He reviewed the process for creating the new assessments, the Alaska Measures of Progress. Deputy Commissioner Les Morse said HB 278 has 62 sections; the department might present more proposed regulations in September and December.

Agenda Item 14. Budget and legislative report. Marcy Herman, special assistant to the Commissioner, and Heidi Teshner, director of administrative services, reviewed their written reports. The board and staff discussed the studies that HB 278 requires. Barbara Thompson requested a staff report on the effect of funding decreases to the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project.

Date of summer teleconference. The board selected 9 a.m. July 30 as the time and date for a teleconference to consider adopting the proposed Internet speed regulation.

Agenda Item 15. Rural Coordinator report. Chris Simon, rural education coordinator, reviewed his written report. He said nine items in HB 278 have a positive impact on rural education.

Agenda Item 16. Mt. Edgecumbe High School report. Outgoing Superintendent Randy Hawk reviewed his written report. He discussed why students leave the school, including emergencies, breaking of rules, and expense of traveling to Sitka after the winter break. The board's September agenda will include an item on Mt. Edgecumbe's proposed teacher evaluation system. Superintendent Hawk reviewed Mt. Edgecumbe's accreditation report; the school is now accredited.

Agenda Item 17. Libraries, Archives & Museums Report. Linda Thibodeau, director of Libraries, Archives & Museums, said the SLAM building will be completed in two years. The old museum building will be torn down in August. Thibodeau reported on the Alaska State Archives' unprecedented agreement with the National Archives to receive territorial documents.

Agenda Item 18. Attorney General's Report. Assistant Attorney General Rebecca Hattan reported on the Ketchikan borough's lawsuit against the state regarding school funding. The arguments have been concluded; the superior court judge has six months to present a ruling, after which it can be appealed to the state supreme court.

Agenda item 19. Commissioner's Report. Commissioner Hanley said the department is focused on helping districts implement the new standards, accountability system, and educator evaluations. The department currently does not intend to mandate new science standards, although districts are free to adopt new standards. The department is implementing the Alaska Digital Teaching Initiative. Commissioner Hanley praised staff member Helen Mehrkens, who is retiring, for her work on career and technical education.

Agenda Item 20. Consent Agenda.

Esther Cox moved: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development approve the consent agenda consisting of the following: approval of the minutes of the March 13 & 14, 2014, meeting; approval of the minutes of the April 23, 2014, meeting; and approval of the Major Maintenance Grant Fund List.

Sue Hull seconded. Board members present unanimously approved the consent agenda.

Board Comments

Carly Williams thanked the board.

Barbara Thompson thanked the staff, board, and public who commented.

Sue Hull praised Carly Williams and Lisa Miller, and thanked everyone.

Kathleen Yarr thanked everyone.

Esther Cox said Fred Villa of the University of Alaska praised department staff member Don Levine for his work implementing the state's career and technical education plan; called attention to an article on construction academies in Alaska Contractor magazine; and requested a consideration at the September meeting of the state's math and science high school credit requirements. She thanked Carly Williams, Bruce Johnson, and Randy Hawk, and welcomed Lisa Miller.

Jim Merriner noted a letter from Carol Comeau, former Anchorage School District superintendent, supporting the University of Alaska Southeast's proposed superintendent preparation program. He noted a letter from the Southeast Island School District thanking the department for the Artists in Schools Program at Thorne Bay School. He thanked the staff, Lisa Miller, the public who commented, Randy Hawk, Bruce Johnson, Commissioner Hanley, and Carly Williams.

The meeting adjourned by unanimous consent at 2 p.m.