

State Board of Education & Early Development
Draft Meeting Minutes
October 8-9, 2025
Virtual Meeting

Wednesday October 8, 2025

Chair Stockhausen called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

Roll was called, and the following members were present to provide a quorum: Member Barbara Tyndall, Member Kimberly Bergey, Member Kathryn McCollum, Student Advisor Amber Sherman, Military Advisor Lt. Colonel James Fowley, Chair Sally Stockhausen, and Member Pamela Dupras. Member James Fields was excused absent.

Professional Development

Agenda Item 1 – State Board of Education Committee Meetings

The board convened into committee meetings.

- 1A. Safety and Wellbeing
- 1B. Tribal Compacting
- 1C. Effective Educators
- 1D. Reading
- 1E. Culturally Relevant Career Technical Education

Work Session

Agenda Item 2 – Strategic Plan Review –

Commissioner Bishop provided a summary of the committee work and outlined the history, progress, and next steps in reviewing Alaska's Education Challenge — the state's strategic plan built around five shared priorities:

- 1. Support all students to read by grade level.
- 2. Increase career, technical, and culturally relevant education.
- 3. Close the achievement gap.
- 4. Prepare, attract, and retain effective educators.
- 5. Improve student safety and well-being.

She reviewed the origins of the plan, which began in 2016 under Governor Bill Walker and Commissioner Johnson, with input from over 1,400 Alaskans and a statewide stakeholder group of 100 participants. Nearly ten years later, the State Board of Education has directed a review of these priorities to assess progress and determine next steps.

The timeline includes:

- Last year: formation of subcommittees and initial feedback sessions.
- Current meeting: committee reviews of actions, data, and progress.
- October: compiling feedback and documentation.
- December: presenting completed reviews and recommendations to refocus priorities.

Board members expressed appreciation for the committee work and data-driven discussions:

- Member Fowley thanked the CTE committee for uncovering positive data trends.
- Member McCollum highlighted the value of committee discussions and their focus on the core mission of educating students.
- Chair Stockhausen commended the collective progress and expressed enthusiasm for the continued work.

Commissioner Bishop closed by thanking the board, emphasizing servant leadership, and reiterating the department's commitment to supporting schools statewide and refining focus areas to continue improving Alaska's education system.

Agenda Item 3 – Administrative Orders and Process for DEED

- 3A. Administrative Order 359
- 3B. Administrative Order 360

Commissioner Bishop and Administrative Services Director Dawn Hannasch briefed the State Board of Education on two new Administrative Orders (AOs) issued by the Governor on August 4, 2025. AO 359 and AO 360 which aim to increase government efficiency, transparency, and reduce regulatory burdens across all state agencies.

Administrative Order 359 – Government Efficiency and Zero-Based Budgeting

Presenter: Dawn Hannasch, Administrative Services Director

- Purpose: AO 359 mandates an annual government efficiency review and establishes zero-based budgeting for all executive departments.
- Key Goals:
 - Improve efficiency and transparency.
 - Reduce costs and streamline operations.
 - Require every expenditure to be justified annually (no automatic carryovers).
- Areas of Focus:
 - Grant funding to non-state entities (e.g., school districts).
 - Accounts payable and administrative costs.
 - Modernizing IT and AI systems.
 - Identifying services that could be outsourced or simplified.
- Transparency Requirement: The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) must publicly release annual details of agency fund allocations and recipients.
- Timeline:
 - Phase 1 (by November 2025): Process review of accounts payable and grants management.
 - Phase 2: Licensing and certification process review (timeline TBD).
- DEED's Response:
 - Formed a team led by Monique Siverly to work with OMB and a vendor.
 - Will map current processes, identify efficiencies, and recommend improvements.
- Outcome: Continuous, annual review process designed to increase accountability and responsible resource use across state government.

Administrative Order 360 – Regulatory Review and Reduction

Presenter: Commissioner Deena Bishop

- Purpose: AO 360 directs agencies to review state regulations and guidance documents to remove outdated, unnecessary, or burdensome requirements.
- Goal:
 - Phase 1: Collect stakeholder feedback and establish a baseline inventory of existing regulations.
 - Phase 2: Achieve a 15% reduction in discretionary (non-statutory) regulations.
 - Phase 3 (by FY27): Reach a 25% total reduction while maintaining legal compliance.
- Leadership:
 - Deputy Commissioner Karen Morrison serves as DEED's regulation liaison, coordinating

- training and review across all divisions.
- **Process & Transparency:**
 - Stakeholder engagement includes public meetings, virtual hearings, and opportunities for written feedback.
 - DEED must document how public input is incorporated or, if rejected, explain why.
 - Progress updates are publicly available via DEED's website, newsletters, and superintendent meetings.
 - The State Board of Education remains the final authority on adopting or amending regulations through the formal Administrative Regulations Act process.
- **Engagement Examples:**
 - Early stakeholder meetings (e.g., English Language Learners, Libraries, Archives & Museums) scheduled at varied times for accessibility.
- **Intent:**
 - Ensure regulations support student learning, family engagement, and school flexibility.
 - Maintain accountability and transparency while eliminating unnecessary administrative barriers.

Conclusion

Commissioner Bishop emphasized that AOs 359 and 360 share a common goal:

To make Alaska's government more efficient, transparent, and responsive to Alaskans' needs, particularly within education. She reiterated DEED's commitment to stakeholder-driven, meaningful change that upholds accountability while enabling schools and communities to better serve students.

Member Fowley asked Commissioner Bishop for an estimate of how many regulations might come before the Board for review under Administrative Order 360 if the 15% reduction target is met.

Commissioner Bishop responded that DEED is tracking the review process through Smartsheet and noted that the education sector has a large volume of regulations; approximately 430 currently under review. However, it's still unclear how many of those will ultimately generate comments or proposed changes.

Chair Stockhausen acknowledged the significant workload this effort represents, and thanked the Commissioner and staff in advance for their extensive work.

Agenda Item 4 – Budget and Legislative Updates

Dawn Hannasch presented DEED's Fiscal Year 2026 budget, highlighting major funding areas, recent legislative changes, and the department's continued investment in Alaska's students, schools, and educational opportunities.

1. K–12 Foundation Funding

- The Foundation Program remains Alaska's primary method of distributing education funds, totaling approximately \$1.3 billion for FY26.
- House Bill 57 implemented two key permanent changes:
 - Increased Base Student Allocation (BSA) from \$5,960 to \$6,660 per student — a \$700 increase, now codified in statute (previously only one-time funding).
 - 10% permanent increase in pupil transportation funding, providing ongoing support for student transportation costs.
- **Payment Structure Change:**
 - First 9 months of FY26 payments will reflect the new BSA.
 - Final 3 months will reconcile actual foundation formula calculations, ensuring more equitable district cash flow.
- Monthly disbursements continue by the 15th of each month.

2. Pre-K Average Daily Membership (ADM)

- DEED continues to expand pre-K inclusion in district ADM counts, reflecting Alaska’s commitment to early learning.
- Anchorage began reporting pre-K ADM in 2023; two more districts joined in 2024, and all remaining districts in 2025.
- Projected ADM for FY26: 124,679.35, down slightly from 127,478.03 in FY25.
- Data collection occurs in October over a 20-day period, with final reporting in early 2026.

3. Major Maintenance and School Facilities

- FY26 includes \$17.2 million from the general fund to support Regional Education Attendance Area (REAA) school construction and maintenance.
- Total major maintenance funding: over \$39 million.
- DEED increased funded projects from 3 to 6, addressing roofing, heating, structural repairs, and safety upgrades.
- Additional funding supports:
 - William N. Miller K–12 School and a Newtok K–12 School (supplemental funding).
 - Northwest Arctic Borough K–12 School (partial award for critical repairs).
- These investments demonstrate progress in addressing deferred maintenance and improving learning environments across urban and rural districts.

4. Expanding Educational Opportunities

- House Bill 148 provided a 4.6% increase in student financial aid, expanding post-secondary access.
- Continued funding for:
 - Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS)
 - Alaska Education Grant
 - Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs
- These initiatives support career readiness and lifelong learning pathways for Alaska students.

5. Budget Reductions and Adjustments

- Legislative reductions in FY26 include:
 - \$1.5 million reduction to Teacher Recruitment and Retention programs.
 - \$1.2 million cut to Career and Technical Education.
 - \$132,600 reduction to the Board and Commissioner Travel Budget, limiting outreach to rural communities.
- Despite reductions, DEED preserved programs that directly support workforce readiness and education-to-employment initiatives, such as:
 - Teacher and principal apprenticeship development.
 - Career guidance expansion in rural areas.
 - Electrical and plumbing career programs.
 - Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs).

6. Closing Remarks

DEED remains committed to responsible fiscal management, transparency, and collaboration with the State Board. The department will continue to uphold Alaska’s priorities of accountability, efficiency, and measurable improvement in student outcomes, ensuring every student receives an excellent education, every day.

Chair Stockhausen asked about the status of unused Alaska Performance Scholarship funds. Commissioner Bishop explained that funds are retained and invested, with students having up to eight years to use them, and that recent legislation has expanded eligibility to include career and technical education, increasing usage.

Member Fowley inquired about reductions to Teacher Recruitment and Retention (TRR) and Career and Technical Education (CTE) funding. Program Coordinator Monica Goyette reported that the TRR reduction

ended the contract with the Alaska Council of School Administrators, though some mentoring programs were sustained through Title IIA funds. CTE grant funding to districts was also reduced, leaving a smaller amount prioritized for electrician and plumbing training.

Chair Stockhausen emphasized the importance of holding future Board meetings in rural communities to hear directly from educators, families, and students. Commissioner Bishop agreed and noted that while funding allows for one in-person meeting, the Board could consider redirecting travel funds to support a rural location.

Legislative Update

Jacob Almeida, Special Assistant and Legislative Liaison, provided an update on recent legislative actions affecting the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED).

- **HB 174 (REAA Fund/Mt. Edgecumbe Teacher Housing):** Governor vetoed the bill on July 30, citing concerns about expanding the fund's use beyond its traditional purpose for capital and major maintenance projects. The legislature has not indicated plans to override the veto when it reconvenes in January 2026.
- **Special Session (August 2–September 1):** The governor called a special session to address education priorities previously introduced in six bills (HB 59, 76, 204; SB 66, 82, 182). Proposals included:
 - Expanding charter school authorization,
 - Allowing open enrollment across districts,
 - Adjusting funding for districts with higher-than-expected enrollment,
 - Increasing pupil transportation funding (originally proposed at 20%),
 - Establishing a tribal compacted school pilot project, and
 - Creating education-related tax credit incentives.
 Despite DEED's repeated requests, no bills advanced during the session.
- **Funding Action:** The only legislative action taken was an override of the Governor's partial veto, which raised the Base Student Allocation (BSA) increase from \$500 to \$700 per student in the FY26 operating budget.
- **Education Task Force:** HB 57 also created a Joint Legislative Education Task Force to review education funding and report findings by January 2027. The task force met first on August 25, receiving an overview from Legislative Finance. DEED will continue to serve as a resource for upcoming meetings, with the next tentatively scheduled for October 30.
- **Federal Disparity Test Appeal:** DEED has filed a formal appeal with the U.S. Department of Education regarding the federal disparity test and is actively engaged in that process. The legislature has shown strong interest in this issue and is expected to discuss it during upcoming task force meetings or the next regular session.

In conclusion, Almeida stated that the department remains ready to work with the legislature in the upcoming session to advance the Governor's education priorities through existing legislative proposals and looks forward to presenting the department's annual report to the legislature in March.

Agenda Item 5 – Regulations for Public Comment

5A. SPED Vision Impairment 4AAC 52.250

Don Enoch, State Administrator for Special Education, presented proposed amendments to 4 AAC 52.250 (Special Education – Vision Impairment) and related supervision regulations.

- **Supervision Regulations:**
 - Add video conferencing as an approved method for supervising distance special education staff.
 - Change supervision frequency from once every three months to once per month to ensure more consistent oversight, particularly for intensive students.
 - The change replaces the previous "rare circumstance" provision, which had become standard practice, ensuring supervision aligns with student needs.

- **Vision Impairment Regulation:**
 - Revise definition language by removing the word “physical” from “physical eye condition,” as requested by the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).

These updates aim to modernize supervision practices and ensure compliance with federal guidance.

Agenda Item 6 – Regulations for Consideration

6A. Local Contribution

Commissioner Bishop and DEED staff addressed public confusion surrounding the proposed *Local Contribution Regulation Amendment*, which seeks to align state regulations with existing statutes to ensure equitable school funding across Alaska while maintaining compliance with federal requirements (particularly the *federal disparity test* that measures funding equity between districts).

Key Points:

- **Purpose of the Regulation:**
The amendment is not a new policy but a clarification to match state law requiring equitable funding between the highest- and lowest-resourced districts. Alaska’s state statute caps disparity at 23%, while federal law allows up to 25%.
- **Public Misunderstanding:**
There has been widespread misinformation suggesting the regulation would restrict districts’ ability to raise local funds. In reality, it applies only to *municipal and borough government contributions*, not private fundraising, grants, or tribal support.
- **Funding Clarifications:**
 - Local taxes collected by municipalities are subject to the state’s equity rules.
 - Special revenue funds, grants, and tribal contributions (earmarked for specific purposes such as literacy or after-school programs) do not count toward the disparity test.
 - The regulation does not impact school or community fundraising efforts.
- **Appeal and Compliance:**
Alaska remains in appeal with the U.S. Department of Education over its federal disparity test results but continues to work collaboratively under an approved process.
- **Public Comment Feedback:**
The department received extensive public input revealing misunderstanding of the regulation’s intent. In response, DEED will recommend the State Board take no action at this time and instead continue stakeholder collaboration for further clarification.
- **Board Discussion Highlights:**
 - Member Fowley used the Sitka School District as an example to clarify which funds count toward the disparity test.
 - Commissioner Bishop and Director Heineken explained that accounting practices and intended use of funds determine whether they are included.
 - Members noted the timing of the public comment period coincided with budget vetoes and federal funding concerns, likely increasing confusion.
 - Commissioner Bishop emphasized the goal is not to limit innovation but to ensure fairness and transparency in how local revenue is recorded and applied.

Conclusion:

The department will pause action on the regulation, improve communication with districts, and refine guidance to support equitable funding while maintaining local flexibility and innovation.

6B. Early Education Program Standards

Deborah Riddle, Operations Manager for the Division of Innovation and Education Excellence, presented revisions to the *Early Education Program Standards* prompted by feedback received during implementation of the Reads Act and review of district applications for .5 ADM (Average Daily Membership) approval.

Key Points:

- The department found that some original standards created barriers for districts seeking to qualify for the .5 ADM funding.
- Conditional approvals were granted to districts that demonstrated intent and partial readiness, allowing them time and departmental support to meet full standards.
- Two main standards caused consistent challenges:
 - **Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation** – changed from *required* to *recommended*.
 - **Coaching Requirement** – remains important but allows districts additional time and support to meet expectations.
- All standards remain in place but have been reorganized to be more achievable, with clearer guidance and resource links.
- The language was revised to be less rigid and more supportive, replacing mandatory phrasing (“shall,” “will”) with more guiding, flexible terms.

Conclusion:

The updates make the early education standards more accessible and realistic for districts, supporting program improvement and compliance over time rather than setting immediate, restrictive barriers.

Agenda Item 7 – UAA Master of Science in School Psychology Program, Conditional Accreditation Approval

Commissioner Bishop introduced the presentation from the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) regarding its *Master of Science in School Psychology Specialist Program*. The program was previously reviewed in June 2025, and the board had requested revisions to align with current practices. UAA returned to present its updates and request provisional state approval through June 30, 2029.

Presentation Highlights:

- Colleen Walker (DEED) explained that the program addresses Alaska’s workforce shortage of school psychologists and supports the development of professionals qualified for Type C certification.
- Dr. Hattie Harvey (UAA) outlined revisions made in response to the board’s prior feedback, including updates to seven course descriptions, learning outcomes, and admissions criteria. Revisions emphasized individualized student support, comprehensive service delivery, and community investment rather than social justice advocacy language.
- New materials include sample syllabi (notably for *School Crisis Response and Intervention*) and letters of support from the Program Advisory Board and the Governor’s Council on Disabilities and Special Education.
- UAA has accepted 16 students from nine districts, many currently working in Alaska schools, to support a “grow your own” approach to addressing workforce needs.

Board Discussion:

- Member McCollum expressed appreciation for the revisions and the addition of crisis response training but sought assurance that the program would remain focused on student and community needs rather than national advocacy agendas.
- Dr. Harvey emphasized that coursework focuses on collaboration, consultation, and relationship-building with families and schools to improve outcomes.
- Chair Stockhausen and other members affirmed the critical need for qualified school psychologists in Alaska and commended UAA’s efforts to address workforce gaps.

Chair Stockhausen called the meeting to recess.

Thursday October 9, 2025

Chair Stockhausen called meeting to order at 8:33am.

Roll was called, and the following members were present to provide a quorum: Member Barbara Tyndall, Member Kimberly Bergey, Member Kathryn McCollum, Member Pamela Dupras, Military Advisor Lt. Colonel James Fowley, Student Advisor Amber Sherman, and Chair Sally Stockhausen.

Chair Stockhausen called a quorum. The board pledged allegiance to the flag and Member McCollum gave the invocation.

Chair Stockhausen called for a motion to adopt the meeting agenda. Member Bergey moved to adopt the agenda as written, and Member Dupras seconded the motion. Lt. Col. Fowley suggested adding a discussion item about holding one annual in-person meeting at a location off the road system. Commissioner Bishop advised that the topic could be discussed during the board comment period at the end of the meeting. With no further discussion, the motion to adopt the agenda passed unanimously by roll call vote.

There were no potential conflicts of interest disclosed.

Public Comment

1. Jason Weber, Superintendent, Valdez City Schools.

Superintendent Jason Weber expressed strong opposition to the proposed regulations affecting in-kind municipal contributions to school districts. He warned that redefining “in-kind” support could discourage or reduce municipal assistance, harming districts that depend on it, particularly where school–city relationships are weaker.

Weber emphasized that in Valdez, the changes would jeopardize key programs serving both traditional and homeschool students, undermine already underfunded transportation vital for student safety in extreme winter conditions, and further strain the food service program, which is operating at a deficit despite recent meal price increases.

He also criticized the proposal as a move away from local control, arguing that Alaska’s diverse communities require flexibility, not uniform state mandates. Weber urged the Board to reject the proposal, prioritizing student safety, nourishment, and community partnerships that sustain local schools.

2. Susan Nedza, Superintendent, Hoonah City Schools

Superintendent Susan Nedza spoke in support of improving special education services but expressed concerns about the financial impact of proposed regulation changes that would require monthly (instead of quarterly) supervision for special education staff. She noted that this change, even with the allowance for virtual supervision, would significantly increase district costs under already tight budgets.

Nedza also addressed the local contribution regulation, urging the Board to return it to DEED for further review and discussion. She criticized the prior process, particularly the emergency regulation proposal over the summer, as abrupt and confusing. Nedza emphasized that the handling of in-kind contributions is complex and, if left unchanged, could severely harm districts like hers. She concluded by thanking the Board and reiterating her hope for a more open and collaborative review process.

3. Katie Parrott, Senior Director, Anchorage School District / President-Elect, Alaska Association of School Business Officials

Katie Parrott spoke on behalf of school finance and operations professionals statewide, as well as parents of Alaska public school students. She expressed appreciation for the Board’s and Commissioner’s decision to pull back and revise the proposed regulations, noting relief at hearing that the intent behind the regulations differs

from the written language, which she said caused widespread confusion and concern.

Parrott emphasized that the clarifications provided verbally by DEED must be reflected in the official language or formal guidance, as districts and the public can only respond to what is written. She cited this lack of written clarity as the root of much of the perceived misinformation surrounding the issue.

She also condemned a recent DEED social media post that publicly criticized district leaders and elected officials by name, accusing them of spreading misinformation. Parrott described the post as unprofessional, divisive, and harmful to trust, saying it discouraged open communication and collaboration. She urged the Board to promote professionalism, transparency, and unity between the department, school districts, and communities to move forward productively.

4. Frank Hauser, Superintendent, Juneau School District

Frank Hauser testified in strong opposition to DEED's proposed regulation change regarding local contribution calculations, describing it as harmful to school district budgets and unnecessary for federal compliance. He referenced DEED's own July 14, 2025, letter to the U.S. Department of Education, which stated that Alaska is already in compliance with federal guidance and accounting standards without the need for any regulation change.

He also noted that in a July 24 Alaska Beacon interview, the Commissioner expressed confidence that the state's appeal of the federal disparity determination would succeed—again, without mentioning regulatory changes. Hauser argued that this proves the regulation change is not federally required, calling the effort a “ruse” that undermines public education. He explained that the federal disparity test does not actually measure fairness, since it excludes districts above the 95th and below the 5th percentile, roughly 45% of Alaska's districts.

He warned that creating another version of the regulation (“version 3.0”) would only worsen the harm to REAAs, homeschool, and correspondence students, urging the Board to end this regulatory effort entirely rather than continuing to revise it.

5. Megan Gunderson, Director of Technology, Valdez City Schools

Megan Gunderson, a parent and district administrator, spoke to condemn a recent DEED social media post that publicly criticized a school district and named specific employees, displaying the message over an image of a dumpster fire labeled “putting out the fire.” She said while clarifying misinformation is appropriate, targeting individuals or districts is not and represents a serious breach of professionalism.

Gunderson emphasized that such behavior damages the partnership between DEED and Alaska's school districts, describing the post as intentional, reviewed, and reflective of leadership tone, particularly troubling given the Commissioner's reported public approval of it. She added that similar conduct by a district employee would result in termination, underscoring how unacceptable and harmful the post was.

She concluded by urging the State Board of Education to recommend higher standards of professional and respectful communication from DEED leadership, noting that districts should not fear retaliation or ridicule for engaging in public advocacy.

6. Nicole Herbert, Chief Financial Officer, Juneau School District

Nicole Herbert urged the State Board of Education to direct DEED to stop pursuing the proposed changes to the local contribution regulation entirely, rather than sending them back for revision. She stated that the widespread confusion around the issue stems not from misunderstanding by districts, but from DEED's lack of clear, consistent, written communication.

Herbert cited conflicting guidance from DEED, for example, differing interpretations about whether certain municipal funds could be used for after-school programs, illustrating inconsistent enforcement and unclear rules.

She noted that for over a year, school business officials have sought clarification on what counts toward local contribution (e.g., student fees, tribal contributions, or local grants), yet DEED has failed to update its FAQ page or provide formal answers, fueling uncertainty.

She also criticized DEED's recent social media post targeting a specific district, saying it reflected a lack of professionalism and collaboration. Given the department's limited engagement and unresponsiveness over the past year, Herbert expressed no confidence that further review would yield better results and warned that continuing the process would prolong confusion and erode trust.

She concluded by urging the Board to end the regulation effort so that districts can refocus on their core mission; educating Alaska's students.

7. Andy Ratliff, Chief Financial Officer, Anchorage School District

Andy Ratliff spoke in opposition to the proposed regulation change to local contributions, thanking DEED for deciding to pull back the proposal and gather more information before proceeding. He noted that the current version is vaguely worded and widely misunderstood, as reflected in the over 600 public comments received.

Ratliff acknowledged some clarifications shared during the recent work session but emphasized that any future version must clearly define what is allowable to avoid confusion. He stressed that, as written, the regulation would reduce services for students, and school leaders have a responsibility to inform their communities of potential impacts.

While he recognized that more collaboration with DEED could help, Ratliff urged the Board not to approve the current proposal, expressing his commitment to work with the department in a professional, cooperative manner to ensure all Alaska students have access to a quality education.

8. Phil Burdick, President, Sitka School Board

Phil Burdick thanked the Board for its service and addressed Commissioner Bishop's comment about districts spreading misinformation. He clarified that Sitka's communications were not misinformation, but efforts to inform the community about possible financial impacts of the proposed local contribution and in-kind donation changes.

Burdick explained that the district received no guidance or clear definitions from DEED despite requests for clarification, so they discussed worst-case scenarios to budget responsibly and keep families informed.

He also thanked Board Member Fowley for asking detailed questions during the previous day's meeting, saying those provided the clearest explanations districts had received so far. Burdick concluded by supporting the decision to return the proposal to the Board and suggested the state reconsider how it handles Impact Aid going forward.

9. Kelly Lessons, Anchorage School Board Member and Parent

Kelly Lessons, a parent and Anchorage School Board member, thanked the Board for the opportunity to comment and expressed appreciation for the Commissioner's recommendation to rescind the proposed regulation for now. However, she voiced ongoing concerns about the clarifications discussed the previous day, particularly that operational funding might not be allowed as a local contribution under future regulations.

Lessons warned this could jeopardize Anchorage's locally supported funding for transportation and pre-K programs, both of which are already underfunded. She supported continued collaboration with stakeholders on any future revisions but emphasized that many important details still need to be resolved.

Business Meeting

Agenda Item 8 – Questions regarding Standing Reports

- 8A. Innovation and Education Excellence
- 8B. Libraries, Archives & Museum
- 8C. Finance and Support Services
- 8D. Mt. Edgecumbe High School
- 8E. Attorney General
- 8F. Office of Education Advocacy

Board Member Dupras raised concerns about Administrative Order 359 and its potential impact on school districts. She noted that while zero-based budgeting could reduce waste and sharpen priorities, it might also be time-consuming and resource-intensive for districts already facing financial strain. She also pointed out that the AO359 report suggested districts should expect closer scrutiny of how state grants are spent, which could require additional staff training and administrative costs.

Commissioner Bishop clarified that zero-based budgeting applies only to the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) and the state budget process, not to individual school districts. Local districts retain autonomy over their budgeting practices, determined by their school boards.

Addressing Dupras's follow-up concern, Bishop explained that grant oversight and compliance requirements already exist within current federal and state frameworks. Any new reviews would largely be a restatement or reinforcement of existing regulations, not additional burdens. DEED's role, she said, is to communicate clearly with districts and ensure they understand and reaffirm existing assurances and compliance standards, such as those required by the Office for Civil Rights.

Agenda Item 9 – AI Presentation

Anthony White, DEED Computer Science Content Specialist, presented Alaska's newly developed K–12 Artificial Intelligence Strategic Framework, designed to guide districts in responsibly integrating AI into education. The framework aligns with DEED's mission to provide an excellent education for every student and supports Alaska's Education Challenge priorities, including expanding career, technical, and culturally relevant learning opportunities.

Developed collaboratively by the Alaska K–12 AI Advisory Group—which includes technology directors, university faculty, and AASB representatives—the framework's vision is to empower all Alaskan students and educators to ethically and effectively engage with AI, fostering creativity, critical thinking, and responsible digital citizenship.

The framework is built on seven guiding principles: human-centered design, fair access, transparency, oversight, security, ethical use, and cultural responsiveness. It offers practical tools and resources such as model board policies, sample handbook language, academic integrity guidelines, and community FAQs to support immediate district implementation.

A dedicated DEED website will serve as the hub for AI-related resources, including professional development opportunities and up-to-date guidance.

Endorsing this framework will:

1. Provide statewide consistency and support for districts already implementing AI, such as Fairbanks North Star Borough School District.
2. Strengthen Alaska's competitiveness for federal AI education grants by demonstrating a cohesive statewide strategy.

White concluded by seeking the Board’s endorsement of the Alaska K–12 AI Framework and thanked members for their consideration.

Member Fowley asked how Fairbanks’ AI work compared to the framework. Mr. White said Fairbanks informed much of the model and provided key examples of policy and resources. Chair Stockhausen commended the balanced approach and asked about training opportunities; Mr. White noted AI professional development occurs at state conferences and that he hopes to build educator cohorts and partnerships to expand training.

Member Bergey emphasized protecting personally identifiable information (PII), updating educator ethics guidance, and providing policy templates and age-appropriate safety education for students. Member Dupras and Chair Stockhausen supported adding age-based best practices and ethical considerations to avoid developmental impacts. Mr. White agreed and said these recommendations will be incorporated as the framework and resources evolve.

Agenda Item 10 – Regulations for Public Comment

10A. SPED Vision Impairment 4AAC 52.250

Member Bergey motioned, and Member Tyndall seconded the following motion: I move to approve a 30-day period of public comment on revisions to 4 AAC 52.250. Special Education Aides, 4 AAC 52.252. Program Supervision, and 4AAC 52.130. Criteria for Eligibility (Visual Impairment). Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Agenda item 11 – Regulations for Approval

11A. Local Contribution

Member Dupras motioned, and Member McCollum the seconded the following motion: I move that the State Board of Education & Early Development take no action on the proposed regulation amendments to 4 AAC 09, regarding the financing of public schools and the required local contribution, and direct the Department to seek further input and collaboration with stakeholders.

Board Discussion – Local Contribution Regulation

Member Dupras expressed concern about public comments suggesting the issue be dismissed, questioning whether it should instead be addressed further. Commissioner Bishop clarified that the regulation relates to Alaska state law ensuring equitable funding among districts—not federal Impact Aid—and aims to prevent funding disparities between wealthier and poorer areas. She noted the legislature and the upcoming task force will determine the future of the state’s funding formula.

Member Bergey observed that with the task force in place, additional related work may be forthcoming and suggested it may be premature to act now. Commissioner Bishop agreed that continued information gathering and district engagement are important, particularly regarding how “in-kind” contributions are defined and reported.

Member Fowley recommended that DEED collaborate with a representative group of districts and return with an update or proposed actions by the March meeting, possibly using an approach similar to the AI framework’s development. Chair Stockhausen agreed this fits within the board’s motion directing further stakeholder collaboration and requested regular updates at future meetings.

Commissioner Bishop affirmed DEED’s intent to rebuild trust with districts, continue engagement with superintendents and business officials, and provide updates to the board as the department gathers information and coordinates with the legislative task force.

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

11B. Early Education Program Standards

Member Bergey motioned, and Member McCollum seconded the following motion: I move to approve the updated Early Education Program Standards as adopted by reference in 4 AAC 60.190(b). Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Agenda Item 12 – Conditional Accreditation Approval for UAA Masters in Psychology Program

Member Bergey motioned, and Member Tyndall seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development approve the University of Alaska Anchorage's request for provisional state approval of its Master of Science in School Psychology – Specialist program through June 30, 2029. During provisional approval status, the University of Alaska Anchorage is required to provide annual updates on their progress toward NASP accreditation at the state board's winter regular meeting.

Board Discussion – UAA School Psychology Program

Member McCollum expressed concern about a required reading in the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) School Psychology program, *Integrating Intersectionality, Social Determinants of Health and Healing: A New Training Framework for School-Based Mental Health*. She stated the article promotes critical race theory and social justice activism, which she felt was inappropriate for required coursework. McCollum said the piece encourages school psychologists to become advocates and activists to dismantle systemic inequities, which she believes is divisive. She asked whether an alternative certification path could be considered that does not rely on the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), citing concerns with NASP's philosophy.

Member Bergey agreed, stating that parts of the material prioritize specific student groups rather than ensuring equal treatment for all children, which conflicts with the profession's code of ethics. She suggested hearing student perspectives on the content.

Student Advisor Sherman suggested the course could still expose students to such material for awareness without endorsing it, emphasizing that understanding differing viewpoints can be valuable for professional readiness.

Chair Stockhausen noted she viewed the article through a special education lens, interpreting advocacy as supporting marginalized students with disabilities to ensure equitable access and opportunity.

Commissioner Bishop explained that while NASP is the recognized national accrediting body, Alaska law allows flexibility for commissioner-approved certification programs. She noted that any such changes would require university-level and board discussion.

Member Fowley asked about the impact on graduates' ability to transfer credentials to other states if NASP accreditation were removed. Commissioner Bishop responded that reciprocity varies by state, and Alaska's regulations are often more restrictive than others.

Dr. Hattie Harvey from UAA clarified that NASP is currently the only national accrediting body for school psychology programs and that required readings are still in draft form. She emphasized that the program's focus is on evidence-based practices and student learning outcomes, not on endorsing specific ideological perspectives. She acknowledged that readings could be adjusted by instructors.

McCollum reiterated her concern that the article promotes social activism rather than traditional student advocacy and urged UAA to reconsider its inclusion.

Chair Stockhausen concluded by clarifying that the board's vote concerns the program's framework and outcomes, not specific course materials or readings. Dr. Harvey confirmed that individual course content can be revised as needed.

The motion failed to pass in a roll call vote with 3 No, 3 Yes, and 1 abstain.

Board Discussion – Next Steps Following Motion Failure (UAA School Psychology Program)

After the motion to approve UAA’s School Psychology program framework failed, Member Bergey asked what next steps were available to UAA.

Commissioner Bishop explained that while the current motion failed, UAA could revise the program’s content or framework and bring a new version back for board consideration at a future meeting. A revised submission would be treated as a different proposal. She also clarified that board members who voted “no” could file a motion to reconsider if they wished to reopen discussion.

Member McCollum asked whether the board could request UAA to revise the program and return it for review, or if UAA must initiate that process. Commissioner Bishop confirmed that either could occur and requested a short recess to consult with legal counsel on the appropriate procedural steps under *Robert’s Rules of Order*.

Following the break, Chair Stockhausen announced that the board would add two motions to the agenda to allow UAA an opportunity to address the board’s concerns. These motions would be taken up after the Commissioner’s report later in the meeting.

Agenda Item 13 – Approve Appointment of Mt. Edgecumbe High School Director/Superintendent

Member Bergey motioned, and Member Tyndall seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development approve the Commissioner’s appointment of David Langford as Superintendent of the Mt. Edgecumbe High School, effective immediately.

Superintendent David Langford thanked Commissioner Bishop and Chair Stockhausen for the opportunity to address the Board and expressed appreciation for his official ratification after serving since July 1. He acknowledged that while the transition has had challenges, Mt. Edgecumbe is moving forward steadily and gaining stability.

Langford shared his long history with Mt. Edgecumbe, noting that he was the first teacher hired when the school reopened in 1985 and helped rebuild it from the ground up—hiring staff, developing curriculum, and establishing operations. After spending 30 years as an education consultant working internationally, he returned to help stabilize and strengthen the school.

His current priorities include:

- Student safety as the foundation for all decisions and improvements.
- Staff recruitment and retention, filling multiple positions from last year’s vacancies.
- Enhanced dorm and food services, both receiving positive feedback.
- Facility maintenance, including new dormitory roofs scheduled for installation next summer.
- Renewed academic focus to support student success.

Langford concluded by reaffirming his goal to leave Mt. Edgecumbe High School in a stronger position than when he arrived.

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

Agenda Item 14 – Approve Appointment of Office of Education Advocacy Project Coordinator

Member Bergey motioned, and Member Tyndall seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development approve the Commissioner’s appointment of Paul Reid as Program Coordinator of the Office of Education Advocacy, effective immediately.

Paul Reid introduced himself as the new Office of Education Advocacy Project Coordinator, noting his 27 years in Alaska education, all in the Mat-Su Valley, where he also raised his two children. Drawing from his experience as a high school principal, Reid emphasized the importance of customer service and community connection in schools.

He shared that his new role is a natural fit, allowing him to be transparent, honest, and supportive of families and educators. Reid said the work has been very rewarding, as people appreciate having someone to listen to their concerns and help connect them to the right resources. He concluded by expressing his gratitude for the opportunity and excitement about the positive response the office has received.

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

Agenda Item 15 – Commissioner’s Report

15A. Alaska System of Academic Readiness (AK STAR) and Alaska Science Assessment Results

Commissioner Bishop presented statewide results from the AK STAR (Alaska System of Academic Readiness) and Alaska Science Assessments for English Language Arts (ELA), Math, and Science. She explained that AK STAR blends MAP Growth assessments with the federally required spring summative test, providing three years of student learning data.

Participation rates were around 80.5%, below the 95% goal, as parents retain the right to opt out. Results show that about one in three Alaska students are meeting state standards in ELA and math, with most students approaching proficiency and in need of additional support.

Cohort data show some improvement over time, particularly in early grades. The Commissioner noted positive trends in reading, but highlighted that math remains a challenge, with nearly half of students performing below grade-level expectations. She emphasized Alaska’s rigorous, state-developed standards, which are higher than many national benchmarks.

The science assessment, administered in grades 5, 8, and 10, showed stronger performance overall compared to ELA and math.

Looking ahead, the Department will focus on:

- Reviewing assessment frameworks and item patterns to ensure alignment between instruction and testing.
- Identifying priority standards and creating guides for academic language to improve student comprehension.
- Supporting districts through professional development and data analysis to target instructional needs.

Commissioner Bishop concluded by thanking teachers and principals for their work and reaffirmed the Department’s commitment to improving academic achievement and student outcomes statewide

Board Discussion – Academic Performance and Math Focus

Member Dupras asked how the Department is leveraging successful districts’ strategies to help others improve, noting her experience in Kodiak where strong professional development led to high math performance. She emphasized the importance of sharing best practices among districts.

Commissioner Bishop agreed, explaining that DEED is working to better connect districts, encourage peer collaboration, and highlight success stories statewide. She said improvement efforts work best when districts analyze their own data and engage with others, rather than receiving top-down direction from the Department. She added that DEED plans to more intentionally identify and share districts’ effective practices, and support local efforts through targeted resources.

Member McCollum asked how the Board could support a greater statewide focus on math achievement. Commissioner Bishop suggested the Board could issue a resolution or strategic goal similar to those supporting reading proficiency or other initiatives, which would help DEED align resources and efforts toward improving math outcomes.

Members Fowley, Bergey, and Dupras expressed strong support for a formal math focus or resolution, noting that making it a written goal would help track progress and sustain emphasis statewide. They referenced research showing that early math proficiency predicts long-term academic success and agreed that math should be prioritized alongside reading.

Deputy Director Kelly Manning added that the Department has worked with its assessment vendor to release statewide results earlier, now available to districts in late July and publicly in early September.

Chair Stockhausen concluded by confirming board support for adding a math focus, potentially through a resolution or inclusion in the Alaska Education Challenge strategic plan.

Motion to amend the agenda for UAA Masters in Psychology Program

Member McCollum motioned, and Member Bergey seconded the following motion: I move that the State Board of Education and Early Development amend its agenda to add an item to consider providing the University of Alaska Anchorage an opportunity to take into consideration the Board's feedback and submit materials related to its Master of Science in School Psychology Specialist program. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Member McCollum motioned, and Member Bergey seconded the following motion: I move that the State Board of Education and Early Development provide the University of Alaska Anchorage an opportunity to take into consideration the Board's feedback and submit materials related to its Master of Science in School Psychology Specialist program at a future board meeting for provisional state approval.

Member McCollum emphasized the importance of ensuring that all approved programs are beneficial, non-divisive, and designed in the best interests of students, both those enrolled and those they will later serve. She stressed the need for high-quality training that supports communities effectively and cautioned against adopting programs that could risk federal funding due to promoting controversial or noncompliant theories.

Chair Stockhausen thanked UAA for presenting the proposed program again, recognizing the urgent statewide need it addresses and expressing hope for a collaborative solution to move the initiative forward.

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

Agenda Item 16 – Consent Agenda

16A. Approve the Minutes of July 1, 2025 SBOE Meeting

Member Bergey motioned, and Member Tyndall seconded the following motion: I move that the State Board of Education and Early Development approve the consent agenda consisting of the approval of the minutes of the July 1, 2025, board meeting. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Board Comments

Member Tyndall thanked Commissioner Bishop for the testing update and acknowledged the significant effort involved. She expressed support for increasing school psychologists and counselors, appreciating Member McCollum bringing forth the article and shared concerns on the topic. She also thanked Member Bergey for raising concerns about AI oversight in education, finding the discussion informative.

Reflecting on prior work with career and technical education (CTE) programs, she emphasized the importance of

connecting industry and education and maintaining a forward-looking approach. She concluded by expressing gratitude to the board and Chair Stockhausen for their leadership and dedication.

Member McCollum thanked Chair Stockhausen for her leadership and noted the challenge of navigating large board document packets, suggesting that motions be easier to locate during meetings. She expressed appreciation for the two days of discussions, particularly the data review presented by Commissioner Bishop, and emphasized the need to prioritize math improvement while continuing progress under the Alaska Reads Act. She also recognized Member Sherman for her contributions and insights related to school psychology, and concluded by expressing gratitude to the board and wishing everyone a good week.

Student Advisor Amber Sherman expressed gratitude for the opportunity to serve on the State Board, noting the experience has been educational and valuable for both herself and other students she represents. She thanked Commissioner Bishop for clarifying information about local contributions, and appreciated the insights shared during public comments.

Amber also voiced hope that the UAA school psychology program can reach a resolution that satisfies the board, emphasizing her personal interest in becoming a school psychologist and her desire to see more accessible in-state certification options for students pursuing that path.

Member Dupras expressed appreciation for the opportunity to represent Alaskans and acknowledged the value of reviewing extensive public comments. She thanked Commissioner Bishop for prioritizing data-driven presentations, emphasizing that the state's focus should remain on the quality of education for Alaska's students. Dupras reflected on how new initiatives and changes impact schools directly and highlighted the importance of supporting educators to ensure they can provide the best possible instruction.

Member Lt. Col. Fowley expressed appreciation for the public engagement regarding the local contribution process, noting it provided valuable opportunities to learn and ask questions. He thanked those who submitted comments, emails, or testimony and acknowledged fellow board members for their patience as he sought clarity. Fowley said he looks forward to DEED's continued work to improve communication and transparency, suggesting updates such as revised FAQs to help address public concerns.

Member Bergey expressed appreciation for the public participation and emphasized that greater community involvement leads to stronger communication and continuous improvement in Alaska's education system. She encouraged Member McCollum not to lose hope with navigating board materials, noting it becomes easier with time. Bergey highlighted the importance of engaging students in discussions about their learning data, which can improve motivation, attendance, and academic outcomes. She voiced enthusiasm for upcoming math goal-setting efforts and collaboration among districts to share successful strategies, reducing duplication of effort. She closed by thanking DEED staff for their thorough and well-prepared reports.

Chair Stockhausen thanked DEED staff for their extensive work preparing materials for the committee meetings and strategic plan review, and expressed appreciation to the public for submitting comments and engaging in discussions. She commended DEED for developing a comprehensive FAQ resource on local contributions and looked forward to the outcomes of collaboration between DEED, districts, and stakeholders to meet state and federal requirements.

She proposed exploring an in-person meeting in a rural district next fall to ensure the voices of rural Alaskans are heard, noting the importance of including those perspectives even if not done annually due to travel costs. Stockhausen also thanked UAA for its presentation and expressed optimism about the school psychology program, emphasizing its potential benefits for Alaska's students and school communities.

The board adjourned at 12:10 p.m.