

State Board of Education & Early Development
Approved Meeting Minutes
December 3, 2025
Virtual Meeting

Wednesday December 3, 2025

Chair Stockhausen called the meeting to order at 12:00pm.

Roll was called, and the following members were present to provide a quorum: Member Barbara Tyndall, Member Kimberly Bergey, Member Pamela Dupras, First Vice Chair James Fields, Member Kathryn McCollum, 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 Tyndall gave the invocation.

Chair Stockhausen called for a motion to adopt the meeting agenda with addition of item number 7 in the business meeting to University of Alaska Anchorage Early Childhood Education Annual Update. Member Bergey moved to approve the agenda, adding the University of Alaska Early Childhood Education Annual Update as Item 7, with all subsequent items renumbered accordingly. Member Dupras seconded the motion. 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. Tanya Kitka, a Mt. Edgecumbe High School alumna (Class of 2002) and current Alumni Advisory Board member, relayed concerns from parents, students, alumni, and staff about current conditions at MEHS. She reported widespread dissatisfaction with dorm life, including reduced recreational opportunities, overly restrictive policies, lack of dorm security, and concerns about privacy such as mail being searched. Parents feel excluded from recent changes, lack trust in leadership, and believe their concerns are not being adequately addressed, leading some to withdraw their children from the school. She noted that students with strong academic and behavioral records are leaving because they feel treated unfairly. Kitka also shared concerns that staff and teachers may fear retaliation for raising issues. She urged the State Board of Education to more closely examine conditions at MEHS, citing a disconnect between administrative reports and family experiences, and referenced the Board's authority to form an ad hoc committee to investigate. She emphasized the need for transparency, adequate staffing, and rebuilding trust with families.

2. Rachel Moreno, a Sitka resident and former intermittent employee at Mt. Edgecumbe High School from 1990 through January of last year, spoke about the school's long history of academic and professional success among its alumni, including leaders in healthcare, law, education, and other fields. She noted that MEHS was previously recognized as a top high school by *U.S. News & World Report*. Moreno expressed serious concern about a recent and alarming decline in both student and staff morale. She highlighted significant reductions in cultural programming, stating that the Culture Room is now inadequately staffed to serve the full student body, despite the critical role cultural activities play in supporting student identity, reducing homesickness, and preventing attrition. She characterized the current situation as a drastic deterioration in student life and educational quality, citing failure to replace retiring teachers as neglect. She urged those in authority to take responsibility and act to restore the school's programs, staffing, and overall quality.

3. Heather Lgeik'i Mills, a former Mt. Edgecumbe employee, longtime educator, cultural and Tlingit language teacher, and current parent of MEHS students, spoke passionately in support of the school's mission while

expressing urgent concern about its current condition. She emphasized Mt. Edgecumbe's critical role in serving Alaska Native students from across the state and in fostering cultural identity, belonging, and leadership. Citing the school's strong legacy of producing influential Native and state leaders, she warned that Mt. Edgecumbe is being weakened at a time when its role is foundational for future leadership and community strength. Mills pleaded for the State Board of Education to establish an ad hoc committee to intervene, review conditions, and help restore the school, stressing that for rural communities, their children and Mt. Edgecumbe are essential voices and pathways to opportunity.

4. Harriet Beleal, a Mt. Edgecumbe High School graduate from 1953, expressed deep concern about current conditions at the school, particularly low staff morale, insufficient staffing, and reports of students leaving early. She emphasized the school's long history of producing leaders and said it is disheartening to see its current challenges. Beleal urged the State Board of Education to investigate staff morale and overall conditions, including whether adequate professional, dormitory, and support staff were in place before the school year began. She stressed the importance of mental health counseling, recreation opportunities, and creating a welcoming environment to keep students engaged and enrolled. She also questioned whether the removal of a mental health clinician was due to state funding issues, noting the Board had previously been assured the position would remain, and strongly supported the creation of an ad hoc committee to review these concerns.

5. Kristen Homer, a nurse practitioner who has managed the Mt. Edgecumbe High School Student Health Center for 14 years, spoke as an individual healthcare provider to express serious concerns about student safety and well-being following recent leadership changes. She reported that between November 12 and November 26, eight students were admitted to Mt. Edgecumbe Medical Center for suicidal ideation, including four medication overdoses, and that at least 40 students have withdrawn this year—double the number at the same time last year. She stated these figures are unprecedented in her experience. Homer attributed the situation to budget-related staff reductions and the decision, just days before students arrived, to eliminate the behavioral and mental health services coordinator role in the dorms, leaving no licensed or female mental health provider available. She described repeated efforts to raise concerns with administration, which she felt were minimized or inadequately addressed, including being told that the number of suicide-related admissions was not significant. Homer characterized the situation as an ongoing crisis and urged the State Board of Education to investigate school operations and provide support to protect students' mental health and safety.

6. Andrew Friske, a retired Mt. Edgecumbe High School administrator with over 20 years of service in residential life and student activities, and a parent of a graduate, testified that he retired due to serious concerns about chronic understaffing and its direct impact on student safety. He stated that Mt. Edgecumbe is currently experiencing an active student safety crisis, citing more than 40 student withdrawals in the first three months of the school year and warning that attrition could exceed 25% by January based on past patterns. Friske reported unprecedented levels of suicidal ideation and attempts, far above what he observed over two decades, along with significantly reduced supervision, fewer activities, and severe staff loss—only 4 of 14 residential staff remain. He described the school as destabilized, with widespread community concern about its future. Friske urged the State Board of Education, as the school's governing body, to establish an ad hoc committee focused on student safety and school stability to ensure transparency, ask critical questions, and obtain a full and accurate picture before further crises occur.

7. Dorothy Chase, a Mt. Edgecumbe High School alumna (Class of 1992), parent of five MEHS students, and current member of the Mt. Edgecumbe Advisory School Board, echoed previous testimony expressing serious concern about current conditions at the school. She stated that budget issues and staffing cuts were already evident last year but have had a far greater negative impact on students than anticipated. Chase highlighted concerns raised at the first advisory board meeting this year, particularly regarding student safety, reduced activities, and limitations on students' ability to participate in basic off-campus activities. She emphasized alarm over increasing reports of suicidal ideation, noting that even one case should be considered serious, especially given the high suicide rates among Alaska Native populations. While acknowledging that leadership changes occurred quickly, she stressed the need for transparency and urged the State Board of Education to conduct a

deeper review of all concerns raised. She emphasized that the situation is affecting students, staff, and families, and asked the Board to act to address issues and help restore Mt. Edgecumbe High School to the strong, trusted institution it has historically been.

Work Session

Agenda Item 1 – Presentations

1A. Alaska Bible College Annual Review

Matthew Lindquist, Academic Dean, Alaska Bible College provided the annual update on Alaska Bible College's Educator Preparation Program, reaffirming the program's mission to prepare Alaska-born, Alaska-trained educators who will teach in Alaska, grounded in best educational practices and a Christian worldview. He highlighted a new Future Educators of Alaska Scholarship, funded through donations and internal support, which offers full tuition coverage for the elementary education program with the goal of helping students graduate debt-free.

Lindquist described enhancements to the program's structure, including a refined literacy pathway aligned with the Alaska Reads Act, new coursework in instructional scaffolding and literacy to better serve high-need and Title I students, and a sequenced approach that integrates theory, classroom practice, and extended student teaching experiences. He reported progress toward CAEP accreditation, with a virtual site visit scheduled for January and an anticipated accreditation decision in June.

Student outcomes were noted as strong, including a 100% pass rate on Praxis II exams and positive employer feedback for program completers, all of whom are currently teaching in Alaska. Challenges with Praxis I math and writing performance among incoming students are being addressed through added tutoring and test preparation supports.

Additional updates included expanded community partnerships, increased adjunct faculty with current classroom experience, ongoing program improvement based on data and advisory council feedback, and exploration of expanded field experiences in rural Alaska. Lindquist concluded by emphasizing the program's commitment to continuous improvement, strong candidate support, and preparing educators who can effectively apply both the art and science of teaching in diverse Alaska classrooms.

Member Dupras asked about student retention rates in the Alaska Bible College Educator Preparation Program and whether candidates are primarily long-term Alaska residents. Matthew Lindquist responded that all candidates have strong ties to Alaska, having lived in the state for at least 12 years. He reported an overall program retention rate of about 50%, with most attrition occurring in the first year after introductory education and child development courses, which he said indicates the program is functioning as intended by allowing students to determine early whether teaching is the right career path. Lindquist noted that nearly all students who progress beyond the midpoint of their sophomore year remain in the program, with only two exceptions due to personal circumstances, and stated that the program is satisfied with its retention outcomes.

Board members and Matthew Lindquist discussed ways to better publicize the Future Educators of Alaska Scholarship. Lindquist explained that promotion to date has included social media and outreach to local partners, and emphasized that the scholarship covers all education coursework with minimal requirements beyond completing the program and committing to teaching in Alaska. He welcomed assistance from the Board in expanding awareness, suggesting venues such as the Alaska Reads Conference.

Board members offered several outreach ideas, including sharing scholarship information through school counselors and career coaches, connecting with military education centers and separating service members, and promoting the opportunity within Alaska homeschool networks. Lindquist expressed appreciation for these suggestions and noted that full CAEP accreditation would allow students to use GI Bill benefits, which has already generated interest.

In response to additional questions, Lindquist clarified that the program prioritizes in-person instruction, though some courses are available through distance networks. He stated that the program can accommodate student teaching placements outside the Mat-Su region, including in other Alaska communities, with virtual advising and in-person observations as needed.

1B. University of Alaska Anchorage Early Childhood Education Annual Update

The University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) provided an annual update on its Early Childhood Education (ECE) program, which is currently under provisional state approval, and formally requested an extension of that provisional accreditation through December 31, 2028 to align with the specialized accreditation timeline. UAA reported significant progress toward CAEP accreditation, having completed key quality assurance system configurations, submitted its formal CAEP application, and positioned the program for a self-study in 2027 and a site visit in 2028.

UAA detailed enhancements to its quality assurance and continuous improvement processes, including refinements to assessments, surveys, and data use to inform curriculum and instructional decisions. The program has updated its final portfolio assessment model and strengthened faculty engagement in data-informed improvement. The ECE curriculum is fully aligned with the Alaska Reads Act, with a sequenced literacy pathway covering birth through age eight, and the program now reports 100% pass rates in literacy coursework aligned with state requirements.

The program reported dramatic enrollment growth, increasing by approximately 270% since 2022, with 145 students currently enrolled in the bachelor's program. A major driver of growth is UAA's registered apprenticeship model, with nearly 80 apprentices enrolled across the state, 60% of whom are Alaska Native, and partnerships with 21 employers including school districts, Head Start, and childcare providers. The program is also expanding dual enrollment and pre-apprenticeship pathways for high school students statewide through initiatives such as Project Yeti and Project Seastar.

UAA highlighted strong community and advisory board engagement, noting increased meeting frequency, stable and representative membership, and active collaboration with state agencies, foundations, and school districts. The university also celebrated renewed national accreditation of its associate degree, strong faculty collaboration, and improved institutional systems to support program growth. Looking ahead, UAA plans to expand apprenticeship pathways into educational leadership and special education while continuing statewide collaboration to strengthen Alaska's early childhood education workforce.

Board members and University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) leaders discussed enrollment trends, retention, licensure barriers, accreditation status, and future program development for UAA's Early Childhood Education program.

UAA reported promising enrollment and retention trends among rural and Alaska Native students, particularly within the apprenticeship pathway. Alaska Native participation has consistently remained at or above 60%, with steady growth since fall 2024. Retention efforts emphasize a high-touch, individualized support model that closely monitors student progress, adapts instruction, and addresses barriers such as developmental math challenges among adult learners. Early data indicate improved persistence, with course redesigns underway where pass rates are lower.

The Praxis I exam was identified as a continuing statewide barrier. UAA does not see writing or math as isolated trends, but Praxis I overall remains challenging, with an estimated 70% first-time pass rate. UAA has mitigated barriers by allowing use of historical SAT/ACT scores already on record when possible and is working collaboratively through the Alaska College of Education Consortium. Board members suggested reinstating Praxis prep courses, which UAA previously offered, and UAA indicated openness to reintroducing them.

Members also raised concerns about alignment between K–12 and postsecondary expectations in foundational

skills. UAA leadership noted that alignment discussions are occurring on a district-by-district basis, such as through Anchorage’s Academy of Anchorage Project, and agreed that broader statewide coordination would be beneficial.

Regarding military benefits, UAA confirmed that GI Bill and Tuition Assistance funds are not currently available due to the program’s provisional accreditation status. However, alternative funding options—including apprenticeships and scholarships—are available, and GI Bill eligibility would follow full accreditation. Provisional status reflects CAEP requirements for three cycles of data; the program has just entered its first cycle and does not anticipate seeking further extensions.

Board members commended UAA for progress in science-of-reading-based instruction and asked about endorsements. Graduates do not yet automatically receive reading or special education endorsements, but UAA is actively exploring ways to embed these credentials into degree pathways, potentially through an extended five-year model. The EDEC A320 course has been submitted for approval to meet Alaska Reads Act requirements, which, once approved, will allow students’ readiness to be reflected on transcripts.

Finally, UAA leadership confirmed that future expansion—including the possibility of a K–8 program—is under discussion, with planning focused on timelines and faculty capacity to support sustainable growth.

Agenda Item 2 – Typhoon Halong Update

Commissioner Bishop provided an update on Typhoon Halong, which struck Western Alaska in mid-October 2025 and caused extensive coastal flooding, infrastructure failure, and widespread displacement. A Major Disaster Declaration was issued on October 22, 2025, enabling federal assistance.

The storm severely affected multiple regions, particularly communities within the Lower Kuskokwim, Lower Yukon, and Northwest Arctic Borough school districts, as well as other Western Alaska villages. Numerous schools served as emergency shelters. Kipnuk and Kwigillingok remain fully evacuated due to catastrophic damage, leaving both schools non-operational. Additional impacts including flooding, power outages, and school facility damage were reported in Nightmute, Napakiak, Kotzebue, Kivalina, and communities in the Yupiit and Bering Strait school districts.

All displaced families have transitioned out of congregate shelters into short-term housing, primarily hotels in Anchorage and Bethel, with additional placements across several districts and in boarding schools statewide. As of mid-November, approximately 617 individuals remain in hotel-based temporary housing in Anchorage. The next phase of recovery focuses on securing longer-term temporary housing for families whose home communities will require extended rebuilding.

Maintaining educational continuity has been a central priority. Displaced students are enrolled in receiving districts, with Anchorage School District intentionally clustering students to preserve cultural connections and provide targeted supports. Elementary students are placed at Anchorage Native Cultural Charter School and College Gate Elementary’s Yup’ik immersion program, while secondary students attend Wendler Middle School and East High School’s Extended World of Education program. Boarding school options have also been expanded statewide to accommodate students from Kipnuk and Kwigillingok. DEED is additionally exploring a proposed rural placement option in the Bristol Bay region using winter dormitory housing, which remains under development.

DEED established a centralized Disaster Recovery website to provide districts and families with access to guidance on facilities, finance, student services, behavioral health, and McKinney-Vento homeless education resources. The department is assisting districts in documenting damages to ensure eligibility for FEMA Public Assistance and U.S. Department of Education Project SERV funding, while coordinating closely with McKinney-Vento liaisons to ensure displaced students are promptly enrolled and supported.

DEED staff conducted on-site assessments in several impacted communities to evaluate facility damage, support

district leadership, and deliver supplies. These visits identified opportunities to strengthen future emergency responses, including better coordination of relief workers housed in schools, clearer communication protocols, and a stronger role for school districts within Incident Command structures.

State and federal coordination continues, including requests for IRS waivers to allow employment flexibility for retired teachers, J-1 visa flexibility for educators serving displaced students, USDA waivers to redirect food commodities, and ongoing collaboration with the U.S. Department of Education to secure federal recovery funding.

Lt. Col. Fowley described the Alaska National Guard's immediate response to Typhoon Halong, noting that during the first 72 hours both the Army and Air National Guard were heavily engaged in rescue operations. Helicopters and HC-130 cargo aircraft were deployed as soon as conditions allowed, and rescue personnel conducted high-risk operations, including rappelling to evacuate people from floating homes. He characterized the initial response as extremely chaotic but lifesaving.

He explained that operations have since transitioned from crisis response to long-term recovery, which he expects will continue for years. Lt. Col. Fowley relayed feedback from FEMA, through General Sachs, indicating that Alaska's response was among the strongest they have seen. Unlike many disasters where FEMA leads initially, Alaska state agencies took early leadership, with FEMA later integrating to fill gaps. He expressed pride in Alaska's coordinated response while acknowledging that an internal debrief is planned to identify improvements for future emergencies.

Chair Stockhausen thanked Lt. Col. Fowley, the Governor, and all federal, state, and local agencies involved for their efforts in supporting impacted individuals, families, and communities. She expressed hope for community recovery and reunification and noted that the board looks forward to continued updates in future meetings.

Agenda Item 3 – Administrative Orders 359/360 Update

Deputy Commissioner Karen Morrison provided an update on Administrative Orders 359 and 360. Administrative Order 359 focuses on an annual statewide government efficiency review to ensure state resources are used effectively and core services are delivered efficiently. The goal is to modernize workflows, reduce inefficiencies, and improve transparency across executive branch agencies. The Office of Management and Budget is leading this effort in partnership with Salonis, a firm specializing in organizational workflow analysis. Initial focus areas include grants management and accounts payable, aiming to identify opportunities for automation and modernization. The initiative is in its early stages, with a long-term framework being developed to support ongoing annual efficiency reviews.

Administrative Order 360 requires agencies to review their regulations and guidance documents to reduce unnecessary, outdated, or confusing requirements. The benchmarks set by the order are to reduce regulations by 15% by the end of 2026 and by 25% cumulatively by the end of 2027. DEED has engaged stakeholders extensively, holding 18 meeting days with two sessions each day, along with three dedicated sessions for Libraries, Archives, and Museums. Five stakeholder meetings remain, with the final session scheduled for December 18, 2025. A dedicated webpage provides schedules, materials, and survey links for ongoing feedback from stakeholders. DEED's internal teams meet weekly to review regulations intentionally and align their work with project goals. The first set of recommended regulatory revisions is due to the Department of Law on January 5, 2026, after which updates will be implemented with State Board involvement. Overall, both administrative orders are designed to strengthen accountability, enhance operational efficiency, and ensure meaningful stakeholder participation in regulatory and operational improvements.

Agenda Item 4 – University of Alaska Anchorage, Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) Teacher and Principal Turnover Data Presentation.

Dr. Dana DeFeo and Noah Burke from the University of Alaska Anchorage's Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) presented updated statewide data on teacher and principal turnover in Alaska. Their work, conducted through the Center for Alaska Education Policy Research (CAPER), draws on two DEED

administrative datasets, the Certified Staff Database and the Staff Accounting Database, and builds on prior studies, including those by REL in 2019 and 2021. The purpose of the research is to provide policymakers with actionable information to address teacher and principal retention statewide.

The presentation highlighted turnover trends at both the school and district levels. At the school level in 2024, 28% of teachers and 35% of principals left their schools, while at the district level, turnover was slightly lower at 17% for teachers and 27% for principals. Trends indicate a general upward trajectory over the past decade, with a temporary dip during the pandemic considered anomalous. Rural schools consistently experience higher turnover than urban schools, and principal turnover is generally higher than teacher turnover, except in urban areas.

Noah Burke introduced an alternative analysis considering teachers who work at multiple schools. By assigning each teacher to their primary school, the data illustrated the range of choices educators make at the end of each school year: staying at the same school, moving within the district, moving to another district, or leaving the profession entirely. This method reinforced the overall trends observed in the standard school-level analysis.

The presenters emphasized that turnover is not uniform and varies by context, highlighting the importance of nuanced, data-driven policy interventions. Future work includes synthesizing these data into a comprehensive report and linking them with the statewide educator survey launching in February 2026. This survey will collect input from all in-service teachers in Alaska to explore factors influencing retention decisions, such as leadership, benefits, and community characteristics. The ultimate goal of this research is to inform policies and interventions that reduce turnover, improve retention, and strengthen the educator workforce across Alaska.

During the discussion, Chair Stockhausen asked whether the upcoming statewide teacher survey will allow comparisons with the prior TRR survey from 2020 or 2021 to identify trends. Dayna DeFeo from UAA explained that the new survey is more comprehensive, covering many of the same questions but with additional capacity to analyze responses by teacher characteristics, such as experience level, community type, and school setting.

Member Dupras asked about turnover differences between early career and experienced teachers and trends of concern. DeFeo confirmed that early career teachers are much more likely to leave within their first five years, a trend consistent in Alaska and nationally. She noted that higher turnover is a concern given Alaska's reliance on out-of-state hires and the competitive national market for teachers.

James Fowley asked whether NAEP scores correlate with teacher retention. DeFeo said they have not explored this yet but could consider school-level NAEP data in future analyses. Member Tyndall asked about retirement's role in turnover, and DeFeo confirmed it contributes to attrition. She noted that the forthcoming statewide survey will include questions about retirement plans, offering additional context.

Member Bergey asked why early career teachers leave and whether teachers move into principal roles. DeFeo said the survey will explore reasons for leaving, including anticipated departures, and track patterns over time. Prior research indicates that student poverty is a strong predictor of teacher turnover. They also plan to examine how many teachers transition into administrative roles.

Member McCollum emphasized the importance of separating retirements from other types of departures. DeFeo acknowledged challenges with data from different agencies but confirmed the survey will ask teachers whether they plan to retire, providing a starting point to distinguish retirements from other exits.

Overall, the discussion highlighted the survey's potential to provide nuanced insights into teacher turnover, reasons for leaving, career progression, and the role of retirement, which will inform future retention strategies and policy decisions.

Agenda Item 5 – Regulations for Public Comment

5A. 4 AAC 34.055: Update Alternate ACCESS proficiency levels

The board was informed that a 30-day public comment period will be requested for Regulation 4 AAC 34.055, which updates the alternate ACCESS proficiency levels for English language learners. Deb Riddle, DEED's Division Operations Manager, explained that the alternate ACCESS assessment is designed for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. Unlike the standard ACCESS assessment, students taking alternate ACCESS currently do not have an established exit score for leaving English learner status. The proposed regulation would set such exit scores, based on analysis of student performance on the Dynamic Learning Maps assessments, consultation with a technical advisory committee, and review of practices in other states, ensuring appropriate benchmarks for Alaska's students.

Agenda Item 6 – Regulations for Approval

6A. SPED Vision Impairment 4AAC 52.250

DEED advised the board that it will be asked to approve revisions to special education regulations related to visual impairment, including 4 AAC 52.250 (Special Education Aides), 4 AAC 52.252 (Program Supervision), and 4 AAC 52.130 (Eligibility Criteria for Visual Impairment). Commissioner Deena Bishop noted that these regulations have completed public comment and are ready for board action, with Division Operations Manager Deb Riddle available to answer questions.

Don Enoch, State Special Education Director, explained that the revisions are limited in scope and primarily focus on supervision requirements. The changes clarify that supervision should occur monthly, rather than quarterly, to ensure consistency, and allow video conferencing as an additional method for providing supervision. He summarized public comments received from the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education and the Special Education Advisory Panel, which expressed concerns that the changes may not sufficiently address supervision issues, could reduce in-person oversight, may negatively impact student outcomes if video supervision increases, and might conflict with IDEA by affecting IEP team authority.

Enoch emphasized that the regulations address supervision of staff, not the delivery of student services. He clarified that decisions about services and instructional methods remain the responsibility of IEP teams and are not altered by these regulatory changes.

The board discussed whether the proposed supervision regulations should require some minimum level of in-person, on-site supervision in addition to allowing video conferencing. First Vice Chair James Fields acknowledged that moving to monthly supervision is an improvement but expressed concern that supervision conducted entirely by video could reduce effectiveness, suggesting that a required minimum number of on-site visits each year might add value and prevent shortcuts.

Don Enoch explained that various options, including on-site requirements, were discussed during development, but the proposal ultimately allows districts flexibility to determine how supervision is provided. He noted that COVID exposed situations where districts were unable to meet supervision requirements at all because video conferencing was not permitted, and that some districts continue to struggle to provide supervision due to travel and staffing constraints. Allowing video conferencing helps ensure supervision occurs consistently, particularly in small or remote districts.

Chair Stockhausen and Commissioner Bishop emphasized the balance the regulation is trying to strike: increasing the frequency of supervision while maintaining flexibility for districts that rely on contracted or remote providers who may not offer on-site services. Bishop added that stakeholder feedback was mixed, with some districts concerned about the increased workload from monthly supervision, even as others supported stronger oversight.

Enoch clarified that the regulation focuses on supervision of staff, not the delivery of student services, and cited examples where remote specialists providing direct services were more effective than on-site paraprofessionals with limited oversight. He acknowledged that adding a minimum on-site requirement could be considered in the future but could also significantly limit provider availability.

After the discussion, Fields stated that his concerns had been addressed and that he was comfortable with allowing video conferencing without adding a mandatory on-site supervision requirement.

Business Meeting

Agenda Item 7 – University of Alaska Anchorage Early Childhood Education

Member Dupras motioned, and Member Bergey seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development to approve the University of Alaska Anchorage's request for an extension of provisional state accreditation until December 31, 2028. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Agenda Item 8 – Regulation for Public Comment

8A. 8A. 4 AAC 34.055: Update Alternate ACCESS proficiency levels

Member Bergey motioned, and First Vice Chair Fields seconded the following motion: I move to approve to open a 30-day period of public comment for regulations for AAC 34.005 to update the alternate access proficiency levels. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Agenda Item 9 – Regulation for Approval

9A. SPED Vision Impairment 4AAC 52.250

Member Bergey motioned, and Member Tyndall seconded the following motion: I move to approve the 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 10 – Commissioner's Report

10A. AK Challenge Review

The Commissioner presented her report to the State Board as an Alaska Education Challenge Review, offering both an update and a reflection on progress, lessons learned, and next steps. She began by thanking superintendents, educators, and DEED staff for a strong fall semester and for their continued collaboration, including biweekly superintendent meetings and extensive staff efforts supporting districts impacted by storms and facility damage. Appreciation was also extended to first responders and DEED teams working on FEMA documentation and recovery.

The Alaska Education Challenge Review traced the initiative's origins from 2016–2017 through its formal adoption and evolution, emphasizing the Board's direction to ground decisions in data and long-term student outcomes. The Commissioner highlighted the comprehensive report provided to the Board, noting that the presentation focused on key findings while encouraging a full review of the detailed data, which will continue to be updated and shared with legislative education committees.

In reviewing Strategic Priority 1, ensuring students read at grade level by the end of third grade, the Commissioner described the READS Act as the most significant instructional shift in Alaska in decades. Implementation highlights included universal screening, individual reading improvement plans, extensive educator professional learning, and increased use of evidence-based materials. Early results show promising growth, particularly in kindergarten and first grade, with Alaska students outpacing national growth rates, though overall proficiency remains below desired levels. AK STAR assessment data indicate modest gains and the need for continued analysis of cohort trends and instructional practices.

Strategic Priority 2, expanding career, technical, and culturally relevant education, showed strong progress through increased CTE funding, new programs of study, expanded partnerships with industry, tribes, the University of Alaska, and the Department of Labor, and broader access to the Alaska Performance Scholarship for CTE pathways. While data are limited largely to Perkins-funded programs, evidence points to increased student engagement, graduation, and alignment with workforce needs.

The Alaska Education Challenge Review also addressed Strategic Priority 3, closing achievement gaps while maintaining rigor. The Commissioner emphasized the importance of both annual growth for all students and catch-up growth for those who are behind, rather than lowering expectations. Efforts included updated standards, expanded literacy and instructional supports, attendance initiatives such as Strive for 5, and strengthened tribal partnerships to support culturally relevant education. Graduation and proficiency data show incremental improvement, though gaps persist across student groups.

Strategic Priority 4 focused on educator recruitment and retention, highlighting significant progress in grow-your-own pathways, teacher and principal registered apprenticeships, certification modernization, and regulatory alignment that has reduced processing times and increased transparency. Updated data show rising turnover, particularly among principals, reinforcing the need for continued focus in this area.

Strategic Priority 5 addressed student safety and well-being, including expanded PBIS implementation, trauma-engaged school practices, attendance initiatives, and recent Board action on limiting cell phone use to protect learning environments.

The Commissioner concluded the Alaska Education Challenge Review by noting that meaningful progress has been made across all five priorities, while acknowledging limits in influence, data, and capacity. She recommended continuing the Alaska Education Challenge framework, maintaining committee-based work, and refining a small number of clear, measurable SMART goals aligned to student learning outcomes. She thanked the Board for its direction and partnership and invited discussion on next steps.

Chair Stockhausen thanked the Commissioner and DEED staff for an outstanding presentation and comprehensive report, expressing strong support for continuing all five Alaska Education Challenge strategic priorities while significantly narrowing the number of goals under each. She emphasized that having many goals diluted focus and endorsed developing two clear, measurable SMART goals per priority to better direct the work. She also raised the need to reassess board committees to ensure they align directly with the strategic priorities, noting some had drifted off track, and suggested allowing board members an opportunity to realign committee assignments.

Commissioner Bishop agreed, noting that working through the process revealed gaps and misalignment, and proposed surveying board members to gather input on committee structure, priorities, and preferences. She suggested using the January meeting to finalize committee assignments and begin defining SMART goals for the next two years, rather than automatically placing new members into existing committees without considering individual strengths and interests.

Board members broadly supported the shift toward fewer, more focused goals. Members emphasized the need for goals that are measurable, clearly tied to academic achievement, and aligned with postsecondary expectations. Several noted that success with focused literacy efforts under the READS Act demonstrated the value of this approach and suggested replicating it in math, CTE, and graduation initiatives. Members also stressed the importance of ensuring safety, well-being, and social-emotional efforts are clearly connected to academic outcomes.

Stakeholder engagement was highlighted as essential, with members urging continued public and educator input as goals are refined. Commissioner Bishop affirmed that superintendent feedback, public engagement, and transparency would remain central, noting regular superintendent meetings and follow-up communications. Discussion also focused heavily on attendance as a critical, cross-cutting issue affecting all priorities, with consensus that a SMART goal on attendance would fit well under Priority 5 and positively impact other areas.

Board members underscored the role of families, community trust, and school “customer service” in improving attendance and engagement, particularly for families with past negative experiences in schools. The need to better educate and align local school boards statewide was also emphasized, citing the READS Act as a successful

model for coordinated change.

The conversation concluded with agreement on the importance of focus, alignment, and capacity. Commissioner Bishop committed to bringing back a structured process for board input and a proposed plan in January. Chair Stockhausen encouraged members to watch for upcoming communication so the board can move forward prepared to refine goals and committee structures at the next meeting.

10.B Core Social Studies Knowledge Proposal

Commissioner Deena Bishop presented a proposal to strengthen core social studies knowledge in response to questions and criticism about Alaska’s recently adopted social studies standards. She explained that concerns, raised by board members, constituents, and national publications, focused on the lack of specific historical content in the standards, such as references to key events and figures. Bishop noted that the standards were intentionally written as inquiry-based frameworks, reflecting a national trend emphasizing critical thinking over explicit content, but acknowledged that research now shows critical thinking depends on having strong background knowledge.

She reviewed the purpose of state content standards, emphasizing that they are meant to outline skills and knowledge, provide statewide consistency, and meet federal requirements, while local districts are responsible for developing specific curriculum, materials, and assessments. Her review of district practices found wide variation across Alaska: some districts, particularly larger ones with dedicated curriculum staff, had developed strong, content-rich local standards and lesson materials, while many smaller and rural districts relied solely on the state standards due to limited capacity. She also noted that districts with many international teachers often struggle without clearer guidance on U.S. history content.

Commissioner Bishop highlighted research showing that limited background knowledge disproportionately harms disadvantaged students and widens achievement gaps, directly affecting reading comprehension, vocabulary growth, and long-term learning. She emphasized that content-rich instruction supports literacy goals, aligns with the READS Act, and complements more specific standards already present in English language arts.

To address these issues, Bishop proposed developing optional, non-mandatory “companion documents” for social studies that would identify essential content, provide scope and sequence guidance, and support districts lacking resources. These materials would be created collaboratively with educators and content experts and would preserve local control while ensuring all students have access to foundational historical and civic knowledge. She concluded that this approach aligns with state statutes, supports equity, and strengthens student learning, and invited board feedback on incorporating this work into the board’s broader strategic goals.

Board members expressed strong support for the department’s proposal to strengthen social studies by adding content support without discarding the existing inquiry-based standards. Chair Stockhausen emphasized that the current standards’ skills remain valuable, and that companion materials would give students meaningful content to think critically about, particularly benefiting smaller districts that need additional support.

Members Bergey and Fields commended the department for recognizing capacity challenges in small and rural districts and for proposing a supportive, statewide approach similar to past successful efforts, such as the trauma handbook. Bergey also highlighted a significant gap in high-quality, Alaska-specific social studies resources, especially around Alaska history, Alaska Native history, ANCSA, and the state constitution, noting that many existing materials are developed outside the state and lack local depth. Commissioner Bishop responded that work is already underway with partners to strengthen Alaska history resources.

Board members discussed whether similar capacity gaps exist in other subject areas. Commissioner Bishop explained that while district quality varies across all sizes, social studies is uniquely challenging due to its breadth and fewer resources, while reading, math, and science are generally more clearly defined and better supported, in part because they are tested and regularly reviewed. Chair Stockhausen noted that the absence of a social studies

assessment may also contribute to the lack of focus, observing that “you treasure what you measure.”

Members Dupras and Bergey raised the idea of improving statewide coordination by creating a clearinghouse where districts could share standards, curriculum, and resources, reducing duplication and encouraging collaboration. They also suggested leveraging existing organizations and expertise, such as the Alaska Native Heritage Center and regional cultural initiatives, rather than recreating work that already exists. Commissioner Bishop agreed, emphasizing that the expertise is present across the state and that a collaborative, organized approach could help bring together people, resources, and knowledge to better support districts and students statewide.

Agenda Item 11 – Consent Agenda - Approve October 8-9, 2025 Board Meeting Minutes

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 October 8-9, 2025 board meeting. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Board Comments

During board comments, Chair Stockhausen requested that the department gather additional information related to public testimony about Mt. Edgecumbe, including details about the ad hoc committee, and report back at the January meeting so the board can determine next steps.

Board members thanked presenters and staff for a productive and informative meeting. Several members highlighted strong presentations from Alaska Bible College and the University of Alaska Anchorage, noting encouraging increases in teacher preparation, Praxis pass rates, Alaska Native teacher candidates, early childhood education efforts, and progress toward accreditation. Members also expressed appreciation for the depth and usefulness of data presented and looked forward to upcoming reports and surveys to support SMART goal development.

Attendance, student well-being, and mental health supports were recurring themes, with members emphasizing the need to continue focusing on attendance strategies and addressing mental health concerns, particularly those raised regarding Mt. Edgecumbe. Members also acknowledged the importance of public testimony in shaping the board’s work.

Additional comments included updates on the Junior Student Advisor Representative selection process, with applications open statewide and closing December 26, and recognition of the state’s coordinated response to recent disasters, highlighting Alaskans supporting Alaskans.

Chair Stockhausen closed by proposing that Alaska create a state-level school recognition program modeled after the former National Blue Ribbon Schools Program to honor outstanding achievement, suggesting the board explore criteria and discuss the idea at a future meeting. The meeting adjourned with expressions of appreciation and holiday well-wishes.

The board adjourned at 4:59 p.m.