

State Board of Education & Early Development
Draft Meeting Minutes
March 11, 2025
3132 Channel Dr., Juneau, Alaska

Tuesday March 11, 2025

Chair Fields called the meeting to order at 8:06 a.m.

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

Chair Fields called a quorum. Member Tyndall gave the invocation, and the board pledged allegiance to the flag.

First Vice Chair Stockhausen motioned, and Member Dupras seconded the following motion to adopt the agenda of the March 10-11, 2025, meeting. I move we approve the agenda for March 10 and 11 with the amendment to move item 11A. and B., and item 13 after item 7, the legislative update. Without further discussion the motion passed in a roll call vote.

There was a potential conflict of interest disclosure by Member McCollum as President of the Mat-Su Borough School District School Board, recusing herself from voting on agenda items 9A., 9B, 9D, and 9G, which are charter schools within her district.

Work Session

Agenda Item 5 – Board Member Oath of Office

Student Advisor Joshua Pak swore in new board member Kathryn McCollum.

Public Comment

Ben Loeffler, a resident of Fairbanks, Alaska and member of the Pearl Creek STEAM Charter School Academic Policy Committee (speaking on his own behalf), provided public comment regarding the proposed closure of Pearl Creek Elementary School. He explained that although Pearl Creek was spared closure in the 2023–2024 school year, it was included on the 2026 closure list announced in January. In response, the school community developed and rallied behind a STEAM magnet school model to boost enrollment and innovate curriculum.

Following the School Board's decision on February 4, 2025, to close Pearl Creek and two other schools, strong community support led to the pursuit of a charter school option. Over 400 volunteer hours were contributed by parents and teachers to develop and submit a notice of intent and a 173-page charter application in February. The group has since engaged constructively with the district, seeking clarity and cooperation.

Loeffler requested guidance from DEED on three specific points:

1. Whether a charter school occupying the closed facility would affect the State's hold harmless funding provision.
2. Whether the district must act on the charter application within 60 days as required by Alaska Statute 14.03.250.

3. Whether failure to consider the application is equivalent to a denial, and if so, whether they could appeal to DEED.

He concluded by affirming the group's openness to collaboration and enthusiasm for creating a new educational opportunity through the charter school model.

Agenda Item 6 – School Construction and Major Maintenance List

Heather Heineken, Director of Finance and Support Services for the Department of Education, introduced Michael Butikofer, who presented an overview of the Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) list.

Michael Butikofer explained the CIP process, emphasizing that school districts must be certified in preventative maintenance to be eligible to submit applications. This certification involves maintaining an asset inventory and demonstrating that facilities are being properly maintained. Department specialists visit districts every five years to audit compliance.

To submit a CIP application, districts must also have a 6-year capital plan and can submit up to 10 applications per year. Applications must include detailed project documentation, such as scope, space calculations, condition assessments, and design documents. Applications are due annually by September 1.

From September to October, the department reviews applications. An initial list is submitted to the Governor's office on November 1 and published by November 5. Public hearings for districts to contest their rankings are held mid-November to early December, followed by a review and approval process by the Bond Reimbursement and Grant Review (BRGR) Committee before final submission to the State Board of Education.

This year, 31 out of 52 districts submitted applications. A total of 105 new applications and 30 reuse score applications were received. Of 105 total applications reviewed, 101 were deemed eligible and 4 ineligible due to incomplete submissions or not meeting criteria. The breakdown included 17 school construction and 84 major maintenance projects.

Chair Fields raised concerns about the challenges small districts face in meeting the onerous requirements and costs, for example, the Computerized Maintenance Management System (CMMS) requirement for Capital Improvement Project (CIP) applications. He questioned how many districts currently meet the requirement, the cost involved, and whether the process could be restructured to be less burdensome for districts with limited resources.

In response, Michael Butikofer emphasized the importance of CMMS. He explained that when used correctly, CMMS helps districts track all building systems, schedule and perform preventative maintenance, and respond to emerging maintenance issues like boiler failures or electrical problems. The system enables districts to generate work orders, track man-hours and equipment needs, and produce detailed reports for school boards and CIP applications. Ultimately, CMMS helps districts manage their facilities systematically and provides valuable data to support funding requests.

Commissioner Bishop and Chair Fields led a discussion expressing concern over how burdensome the Capital Improvement Project (CIP) application process is, especially for small school districts. They acknowledged the value of the process and data systems like the CMMS, but emphasized the need to address barriers that prevent districts with limited resources from participating successfully.

Key points raised:

- Chair Fields questioned how many districts meet CMMS requirements and the cost burden, particularly on small districts that must prioritize basic operations over complex applications. He also asked whether the process could be restructured to be less onerous and more equitable.
- Michael Butikofer reiterated the importance of CMMS for maintenance tracking and reporting but

acknowledged that application quality can be affected by the lack of professional services (like architects and engineers), which wealthier districts can afford. He emphasized that evidence-based submissions (like condition surveys and photos) can help any district score well.

- Heather Heineken shared that most districts likely have CMMS systems, citing Mount Edgecumbe's \$3,000 annual cost as an example. She stressed that the larger issue is the difficulty of assembling a high-quality application, often requiring contracted help that small districts may not afford.
- Deputy Commissioner Morrison, from personal experience in the small Petersburg district, confirmed the process is time-consuming, resource-intensive, and often beyond in-house expertise.
- Chair Fields and Commissioner Bishop agreed that the current application rubric favors districts with more resources, creating equity concerns. They called for potential reform of the process, perhaps through changes in statute, regulation, or internal application design, to level the playing field.
- Commissioner Bishop concluded that while the Department is bound by statute and regulation, the application itself is developed internally, and there's room to explore simplifications and improvements to better support under-resourced districts.

In summary, the board is exploring ways to make the CIP process more accessible and equitable, especially for smaller, less-resourced districts, while maintaining accountability and project quality.

Agenda Item 7 – Legislative and Budget Updates

Jake Almeida provided an update on the 34th Legislature's first session, which began January 21 and is currently on day 50 of 121. The session is constitutionally set to conclude by May 22.

- The Department of Education is tracking 55 bills, covering a wide range of education topics, including:
 - A permanent BSA increase
 - Classroom cell phone bans
 - Six new state curriculum mandates
 - Expansion of free summer meals
 - Local contribution regulations
 - Major maintenance list process
- Governor's two priority education bills:
 1. HB 59 / SB 66 (Tribal Compacting Bill) – Launches a 5-year pilot for tribally operated public schools through compacts with DEED.
 2. SB 82 / HB 76 (Omnibus Education Bill) – Promotes:
 - School choice through open enrollment and charter school expansion
 - Streamlined charter creation
 - Reading proficiency grants
 - Increased transportation and correspondence funding
 - Support for CTE and alternative programs
- The Department has already made 11 presentations, with the 12th scheduled, and continues to provide weekly briefings to legislative committees.
- Staff regularly support fiscal note analysis and attend hearings to answer policy and cost-related questions.
- The Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner have met extensively with legislators to discuss budget priorities, policy issues, and proposed legislation.

Overall, it has been a busy and productive session, with active departmental engagement and collaboration with lawmakers.

Monique Siverly, Acting Administrative Services Director, presented a budget update related to the FY 2025 supplemental funding request, specifically impacting the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE):

- \$650,000 in Designated General Funds is requested for the Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS) to accommodate an increase in eligible students.
 - Triggered by House Bill 148, which raised the cap on awards.
 - APS recipients could rise from 2,281 to 3,200 students.
 - The actual number of awardees is still uncertain and disbursements begin with new enrollments in November 2024.
 - The request does not exceed statutory funding limits for APS and AEG.
- \$325,000 is requested for the Alaska Education Grants (AEG).
 - This corresponds to the increased APS disbursements.
 - Per statute, the Higher Education Investment Fund allocates two-thirds to APS and one-third to AEG.
 - Funding availability is determined by the Department of Revenue.

Siverly noted that the situation is still evolving, and a clearer update will be provided at the June meeting.

Military Advisor Lieutenant Colonel Fowley raised a question about SB 82's open enrollment provision, asking if a family stationed at JBER (Anchorage) could enroll their child in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District and who would be responsible for transportation costs.

Commissioner Bishop responded:

- Under SB 82, students can attend any public school in the state where the State provides funding.
- Transportation would generally not be fully provided. Instead, there is a proposal for a mobilization grant to assist families with transportation costs (e.g., minimal gas or car stipends).
- Many districts already offer small transportation stipends for families where no formal bus service exists.
- A transportation plan would be developed based on participation numbers and logistics between districts.
- The Governor's bill requires a mobilization plan but details are not yet finalized.

Additionally, Jake Almeida noted that the major maintenance list for schools will be discussed at a Senate Finance Committee hearing on Friday. Although the latest House budget version did not include additional funding for major maintenance, there is significant legislative support for adding it later, as it's a top priority for many school districts and legislators this session.

Agenda Item 11 – Regulations for Approval

11A. Retired Teacher and National Board Certification

Deputy Director Kelly Manning presented proposed regulatory changes related to teacher certification:

- Agenda Item 11A:
 - Updates 4 AAC 12.380 to extend the allowable service time for retired substitute teachers from 120 to 165 consecutive days, aligning with recent statutory changes from HB 230.
 - Adds new regulation 4 AAC 12.412 concerning National Board Certification. This sets up reporting requirements so the Department can administer grant-based incentive payments to teachers who earn national certification, as allowed by recent legislation.
- Although the teacher incentive payments program has been authorized, funding has not yet been appropriated. The regulation is being prepared in advance in case funding is secured.

- Public comments raised two concerns:
 1. Requests to expand incentives to other education roles beyond teachers (which the Department cannot do without statutory change).
 2. Requests to include incentive payments in retirement benefit calculations (also outside the Department's authority).
- As a result, the Department recommends adopting the regulations as drafted.

11 B. Teacher Certification Content Area Exams

Kelly Manning, Deputy Director for the Division of Innovation and Education Excellence, presented proposed changes to the teacher certification content area exam regulations. The first part of the change addresses the fact that Educational Testing Services (ETS) regularly updates its Praxis exams every five to seven years. As a result, the Department needs to revise its regulations to remove outdated exams and incorporate the updated versions, ensuring alignment with current testing standards.

Additionally, Manning introduced a new certification option developed by Pearson in 2024 called the Flex Exam series. This series provides an alternative pathway for educators who come close to passing a content area exam. If an educator scores within one standard error of measure below the passing cut score, they will automatically be offered the opportunity to submit a portfolio. This portfolio is evaluated by master educators through a third-party service administered by Pearson, allowing candidates to demonstrate their understanding and skills in a different, but rigorous, way. This option maintains the required competencies while offering flexibility to those who may struggle with standardized tests.

The Department opened the proposed regulation changes for a 30-day public comment period but did not receive any feedback. Based on the need for conformity with testing updates and the added flexibility provided by the Flex Exam pathway, the Department recommended that the board approve the changes as presented.

Agenda Item 12 – Regulations for Public Comment

12A. Office of Education Advocacy

Commissioner Bishop explained updates related to the creation of the Office of Education Advocacy (OEA), which had first been introduced to the State Board in October. The office is intended to serve as a centralized, public-facing hub for families, students, educators, and elected officials at both the state and local levels. After working with the Department of Law on the draft regulations, it became clear that significant revisions were needed to properly align the regulations with existing complaint and appeal processes. Because of the scope of the changes, the Department returned to the Board to seek approval to put the updated regulations out for public comment.

Commissioner Bishop noted that while the Department had hired someone for the OEA position, the individual left for another state agency offering higher pay. Recruitment efforts are ongoing, and in the meantime, a temporary system is in place to handle calls and concerns, addressing prior criticisms about fragmented customer service. The OEA is envisioned as a way to offer clear, centralized support, and to help constituents better understand whether their concerns are matters of local, departmental, or state board authority.

Among the regulatory changes, the Department corrected an error related to regulations on school improvement processes, expanded the scope of complaints to include violations under the Alaska Reads Act, and updated timelines to align with other regulatory frameworks. Investigators would now have 10 days to assign a case (rather than 5), and complaints would be rejected if filed more than six months after the alleged violation. All complainants would receive notification if their complaint was rejected or referred elsewhere within 10 days.

Further, the investigation process was strengthened: findings must still be submitted within 60 days, but now, if a violation is found, the respondent must submit compliance documentation within 30 days. The Commissioner would have an additional 60 days to confirm resolution. Importantly, a formal appeals process was added: if parties disagree with the Commissioner’s decision, they may appeal to the State Board of Education, providing a final level of review and ensuring greater due process protections.

Board members asked clarifying questions. Member Bergey asked whether complainants would be notified when their cases were referred to other entities, and Commissioner Bishop confirmed they would be. Military Advisor Lieutenant Colonel Fowley compared the system to the military’s Inspector General process and asked who would investigate complaints. Bishop explained that the OEA staff would initially handle investigations, but outside experts could be brought in as needed, depending on the complexity of the case. She confirmed that the State Board would be the final authority on appealed complaints.

The goal is to move the updated regulations forward for public comment as one complete package, strengthening transparency, customer service, and responsiveness to the public and educational stakeholders.

Agenda Item 13 – Current Alaska Education Updates

Commissioner Bishop provided an update on the Department of Education’s engagement with federal education matters. She explained that many federal education offices and programs, including student loans, civil rights enforcement, and entitlement grants, are codified in law and cannot simply be eliminated without Congressional action. Amid public speculation about the elimination of the U.S. Department of Education, she reassured superintendents and staff that funding for critical programs remains intact unless Congress acts to change it. Administrative decisions at the federal level—such as staffing adjustments—can occur without Congressional involvement.

Alaska’s Department of Education, along with 14 other states, sent a letter to U.S. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon requesting more flexibility in how federal funds are used. They asked for authority to align federal dollars more directly with state and local strategic plans, emphasizing a desire to combine funding streams where possible to better support student needs. Commissioner Bishop noted they have not yet received a response.

On federal grants, she confirmed that Alaska’s \$10 million annual Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant remains secure. However, some changes are happening with the Regional Educational Laboratories (RELs). Region 11, which serves Alaska, must rebid for its contract after federal efforts to ensure non-discriminatory practices across all grantees. If Region 11 loses the contract, Alaska will need to reestablish priorities with the new provider.

Commissioner Bishop also discussed a new “Dear Colleague” letter from the Office for Civil Rights related to nondiscriminatory practices in programs funded by federal grants, issued in response to federal diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies. The Department provided additional guidance to districts, reminding them that Alaska has a long-standing nondiscrimination law and emphasizing that districts should review their programs to ensure they do not exclude individuals based on race or other protected characteristics. She reassured districts that even if complaints arise, the Office for Civil Rights follows a process focused on corrective action rather than immediate funding loss.

Regarding federal funding, Commissioner Bishop updated the Board on the looming federal budget deadline of March 14. Even if Congress fails to pass a new budget, entitlement grants (such as Titles I, II, and III) are pre-funded through September 30, 2025. She cautioned, however, that the House and Senate budget proposals differ significantly, particularly regarding Title II and III funding.

Finally, she addressed the refiled *Alexander* case, which originally challenged Alaska’s correspondence school programs. Commissioner Bishop emphasized that the Alaska Supreme Court already ruled the

overall constitutionality of correspondence schools is settled. The ongoing litigation now focuses only on specific expenditures and program practices in several districts. The Department is coordinating with affected districts to respond to the legal proceedings.

Deputy Commissioner Morrison added that she and Commissioner Bishop continue holding regular bimonthly meetings with superintendents to offer updates, guidance, and direct support, ensuring districts stay informed and connected during this evolving federal landscape.

12B. Alaska Native Language for K-3 Reading Standards

Deborah Riddle, Operations Manager for the Division of Innovation, Education, Excellence, introduced a proposal to open a 30-day public comment period on new regulations related to Alaska Native Language Arts for K-3 Reading Standards. These proposed regulations, designed to align state educational policy with culturally responsive teaching practices, aim to elevate Alaska Native languages to the same level as English reading standards.

Kari Shaginoff, Program Coordinator for the project from the Office of Tribal Affairs, followed with an introduction in the Ahtna language, emphasizing the cultural significance of Alaska Native languages and the deep connection to the land. She thanked various stakeholders, including the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian people, Sealaska Heritage Institute, and others for their contributions to the development of the K-3 Alaska Native Language Arts standards.

Christy Ford, the Education Director at Sealaska Heritage Institute, introduced Jamie Shanley, Assistant Education Director, to present an overview of the first-ever Alaska Native Language Arts K-3 Reading standards. Shanley explained that these standards aim to elevate native languages to the same level as English in literacy education, fostering both language and cultural revitalization. She described the extensive process of creating these standards, involving a wide range of Alaska Native educators and community members who brought together knowledge and experience to ensure the standards reflect indigenous values. The standards are designed for K-3 students learning to read in their native language, with the goal of strengthening oral language foundations and building literacy skills tied to cultural heritage.

Shanley shared the creation process, which included aligning, exploring, designing, and reviewing the standards. The team acknowledged the challenge of standardizing language literacy across various Alaska Native languages but emphasized the importance of blending Western educational methods with indigenous ways of learning. The standards focus on two key areas: comprehension and foundational skills. The foundational skills involve decoding, fluency, and phonics, while the comprehension standards integrate cultural elements such as vocabulary tied to place, promoting a deep understanding of the environment.

The standards also introduce a strength-based approach, focusing on building upon students' current knowledge rather than highlighting deficits. This approach recognizes that literacy extends beyond text and involves interpreting the world around us—such as reading the weather, artwork, and other environmental signs. Shanley also highlighted the importance of embedding Alaska Native culture and language across all content areas to provide students with a holistic, culturally responsive education. Educators need support in developing instructional materials that are culturally relevant and in creating spaces for collaboration and professional development as they work to teach in and revitalize these languages.

Member Stockhausen asked what support currently exists for educators teaching Alaska Native languages. The response explained that there are statewide efforts like the *Alaska Native Language Summit*, monthly *community of practice* meetings organized by DEED, and *Sealaska Heritage Institute's* (SHI) annual language summit, which includes international indigenous language experts. However, collaboration is still mostly in small pockets and could expand with greater support.

Commissioner Bishop asked whether successful indigenous language programs, especially those teaching native languages first in K–3, were involved in developing the new standards. The presenters confirmed that

schools such as those in the *Lower Kuskokwim School District (LKSD)* and the *North Slope* were directly consulted. They also collaborated with the *Tlingit Culture, Language, and Literacy Program* in Juneau. The effort was community-driven and considered the varied approaches different tribes and communities take toward language use in education.

Member Stockhausen further asked whether all 23 recognized Alaska Native languages have a written form. Joel Isaac answered that every language does have some level of written documentation, though usage varies. He explained that historical documentation was sometimes translated through several languages (like Russian to German to English), and that communities have worked since the 1970s to reclaim and update writing systems. Some alphabets continue to evolve today.

Agenda Item 9 – Charter School Renewals

Commissioner Bishop explained that all the charter schools up for renewal have been approved by their home districts and are already operating in Alaska. They are now seeking 10-year renewal terms, as allowed by statute. A presentation for a new charter school will follow the renewal section.

9A. American Charter Academy School

Member McCollum shared that American Charter is a long-standing, successful school using the Core Knowledge curriculum. It recently received voter approval for a bond to build a new facility, aiming to move in by fall 2026 after years of leasing space.

Patti Farren, Principal of American Charter Academy in Wasilla, expressed excitement about their upcoming new building. She highlighted the school's strong community atmosphere, staff of 12 teachers and 7 paraprofessionals, and current enrollment of 195 students. She also mentioned the school's "KidWind" renewable energy club, which competes at the state level, and shared that they're currently on spring break and preparing for the fourth quarter.

9C. Effie Kokrine Charter School

Josh Snow, Principal of Effie Kokrine Charter School in Fairbanks, Alaska, introduced the school and its mission. Now in its 20th year, the school was originally established to combat high dropout rates among Alaska Native students and is deeply rooted in Alaska Native cultural values. The school maintains a strong partnership with the Fairbanks Native Association and emphasizes a family-centered environment. Enrollment currently stands at about 140 students in grades 7–12, slightly down from its original 165–170, primarily due to a shift toward homeschooling. The school is also becoming a trusted landing spot for students transitioning from rural villages, and they recently celebrated their boys' basketball team qualifying for the state tournament.

Commissioner Bishop asked about graduation outcomes. Snow proudly reported that the school achieved its highest graduation rate ever in 2023–24 at 83%. He attributes this success to personalized support for each student and close collaboration with families, helping students overcome past academic setbacks. In response to questions about fluctuating assessment results, Snow explained that their small sample size makes standardized test scores highly sensitive—sometimes swayed by just a couple of students. While they closely analyze the data, he cautioned against over-interpreting such variability. Regarding interventions, he shared that the school uses the Lexia program for reading and relies heavily on one-on-one tutoring and very small class sizes for math support. A standout math aide, although not part of a formal program, has been especially effective.

When asked about the focus of interventions, Snow noted that efforts are most concentrated in grades 7 through 9, especially 9th grade, to ensure students earn enough credits early on to stay on track for graduation. However, the school continues interventions even into 12th grade, particularly for foster students and others with disrupted schooling. The school is known for working with students who haven't succeeded elsewhere.

On the topic of attendance, Member Bergey asked about their progress toward a 90% goal, especially in light of having no bus service. Snow said current attendance hovers around 86.5%, and he acknowledged a decline since the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly after losing bus transportation. While the lack of busing remains a significant challenge, compounded by a driver shortage, the school has adopted personalized strategies to address chronic absenteeism and celebrate strong attendance with awards and recognition. Snow emphasized that serving students who struggle with attendance is part of the school's core mission.

9B. Academy Public Charter School

Member McCollum shared that Academy Charter School, located in the Matanuska-Susitna (Mat-Su) School District near Palmer, currently serves grades K–8 but has been approved to expand to a K–12 school. The school also provides transportation through a hub system.

9D. Birchtree Charter School

Patti Farren spoke on behalf of Susan McCauley, noting that Birch Tree Charter School is a long-established, family-oriented Waldorf school. It was included in the recent bond package and is currently in the design phase for a new school building. While Farren did not go into specifics in McCauley's absence, she emphasized that the school is thriving and has a unique educational approach.

9E. Rilke Schule Charter School

No comments or questions.

9F. Hooper Bay Charter School

Kevin Rascoe, along with three members of the APC Board, represented Hooper Bay Charter School, a 4th through 8th grade school in Hooper Bay, Alaska, a Bering Sea community of about 1,400 people. The school currently serves 60 students and is requesting to expand to 65, which would encompass one-third of the local 4th–8th grade population. The school's curriculum emphasizes cultural heritage, local language (including a unique Hooper Bay dialect of the Cup'ik language), subsistence practices, and place-based learning, with additional focus on STEM and humanities tracks.

9G. Midnight Sun Family Learning Center

Amy Harren, Principal of Midnight Sun Charter School, shared that the K–8 school currently serves 196 students and plans to grow to over 200 next year. The school has 8 teachers, each supported by a classroom aide, and Harren serves as both principal and teacher. Midnight Sun uses the Mat-Su Borough School District's curriculum, with a focus on Core Knowledge History & Geography and Science. The school emphasizes strong family involvement, requiring 45 volunteer hours per family annually. Harren expressed pride in the school's 28-year history and appreciation for the board's consideration of their renewal application.

9H. Aurora Borealis Charter School

No comments or questions.

Agenda Item 10 – Tulen Charter School Application

The Tulen Charter School application was presented to the State Board of Education by representatives of the Kenaitze Indian Tribe, including Bernadine Acheson, Tribal Chair, and Kyle McFall, Education Director. The school is located within the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District and represents a major milestone for the tribe, which has envisioned a tribal school for over 30 years. Rooted in the Dena'ina language, culture, and values, Tulen Charter School is designed to be a culturally based, academically rigorous institution that fosters identity, confidence, and community leadership in its students.

The school's vision is to serve as a beacon of cultural pride and educational excellence, interweaving Dena'ina heritage into every aspect of daily learning. Its mission emphasizes developing responsible, critical-thinking students who are committed to living the Dena'ina culture while succeeding in modern society. The effort has strong community backing, including support from the Tribal Council, parents, and education leaders. The school builds on a strong foundation of existing tribal education programs, a cultural

after-school program, and career development services.

Tulen Charter School will blend Western pedagogy with Indigenous educational practices. It plans to implement Raven Writes, a culturally responsive literacy program, and supplement it with iReady Reading and Math for targeted academic intervention and personalized instruction. The initial student body will include approximately 30 kindergartners, with other classrooms structured as multi-age learning environments for grades one through three. The curriculum will emphasize place-based and experiential learning, especially in the school's STEAM Academy, which incorporates Indigenous knowledge into science and math education.

Cultural education will be a key element of the school. Students will receive instruction in Native Youth Olympics (NYO), Dena'ina drumming, and traditional dance. These courses will be taught by tribal staff, including a full-time NYO coach and cultural instructors from the Tribe's Yaghanen Program. Each classroom will also include behavioral support specialists, academic aides, and language instructors to ensure students receive holistic support.

To further align with tribal values, the school year will include a dedicated subsistence week in early September, during which students participate in cultural activities while staff engage in professional development focused on Dena'ina language and culture. The school's approach is designed to complement the district's standards while remaining financially sustainable, backed by memorandums of understanding between the Tribe and the school district. The application reflects a collaborative and well-planned effort to deliver a culturally rich, academically sound education to the Kenai Peninsula's Indigenous youth.

Business Meeting

Agenda Item 14 – Approve School Construction and Major Maintenance List

First Vice Chair Stockhausen motioned, and Member Dupras seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development approve the final annual priority lists of capital projects, effective immediately. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Agenda Item 15 – Charter School Approval

15A. American Charter Academy School

First Vice Chair Stockhausen motioned, and Member Bergey seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early approve the renewal charter school application for American Charter Academy School for a period of 10 years. Without further discussion, the motion passed, 1 recused, 7 yes.

15B. Academy K-12 Public Charter School

Member Tyndall motioned, and Member Bergey seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early approve the renewal charter school application for Academy K-12 Public Charter School for a period of 10 years. Without further discussion, the motion passed, 1 recused, 7 yes.

15C. Effie Kokrine Charter School

Member Tyndall motioned, and Member Bergey seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early approve the renewal charter school application for Effie Kokrine Charter School for a period of 10 years. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

15D. Birchtree Charter School

Member Tyndall motioned, and Member Bergey seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early approve the renewal charter school application for Birchtree Charter School for a period of 10 years. Without further discussion, the motion passed, 1 recused, 7 yes.

15E. Rilke Schule German Immersion Charter School

Member Bergey motioned, and Member Tyndall seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early approve the renewal charter school application for Rilke Schule German Immersion Charter School for a period of 10 years. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

15F. Hooper Bay Charter School

Member Bergey motioned, and Member Tyndall seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early approve the renewal charter school application for Hooper Bay Charter School for a period of 10 years. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

15G. Midnight Sun Family Learning Center

Member Tyndall motioned, and Member Bergey seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early approve the renewal charter school application for Midnight Sun Family Learning Center for a period of 10 years. Without further discussion, the motion passed, 1 recused, 7 yes.

15H. Aurora Borealis Charter School

Member Bergey motioned, and Member Tyndall seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early approve the renewal charter school application for Aurora Borealis Charter for a period of 10 years. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Agenda Item 16 – Tulen Charter School Application

Member Dupras motioned, and First Vice Chair Stockhausen seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development approve Tulen’s Charter School’s initial application for a period of five years.

Chair Fields asked for clarification on the rationale behind choosing a 5-year term instead of a 10-year term for the charter, noting for the record. It was confirmed that the shorter term is due to this being the school’s initial application. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Agenda Item 17 – Regulations for Approval

17A. Retired Teacher and National Board Certification

First Vice Chair Stockhausen motioned, and Member Bergey seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education adopt the proposed revisions to 4 AAC 12.380(e), amending retired certificate holder consecutive teaching days to 165 days, and 4 AAC 12.412, regarding National Board Certification providing reporting dates and requirements for National board, certification, incentive and reimbursement payments. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

17B. Teacher Certification Content Area Exams

First Vice Chair Stockhausen motioned, and Member Dupras seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development adopt the proposed revisions to 4 AAC 12.407 (1-3), Content Area Examinations. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Agenda Item 18 – Regulations for Public Comment

18A. Office of Education Advocacy

Member Bergey motioned, and Member Tyndall seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development open a 30-day public comment period for the proposed regulation amendments to 4 AAC 06.864, 4 AAC 06.888 and 4 AAC 40.020 (e) regarding informal review of complaints.

Commissioner Bishop clarified a previous comment regarding the appeal process outlined in 14.07.070 of the Reads Act. She explained that if education laws are not followed, funds can be withheld, and the issue would follow the state’s established appeal process. This includes an investigation, a decision by the Commissioner, and potential appeals outside the Department of Education to a state-appointed hearing

officer, with further appeal possible in Alaska's court system. This ensures due process and operates independently of the Department. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

18B. Alaska Native Language Standards

First Vice Chair Stockhausen motioned, and Member Bergey seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development open a 30-day public comment period for the proposed regulations regarding Alaska Native Language for K-3 Reading Standards. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Agenda Item 19 – Questions Regarding Standing Reports

No questions or comments.

- 19A. Innovation and Education Excellence
- 19B. Libraries, Archives & Museums
- 19C. Finance and Support Services
- 19D. Mt. Edgecumbe High School
- 19E. Attorney General

Agenda Item 20 – Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Dr. Deena Bishop provided a brief report and closing, thanking Sealaska Heritage Institute for their hospitality and contributions to education. She noted that several regulation projects are in progress and expected to come before the Board by summer, though delays have occurred due to legal review processes. She acknowledged spring break as a key milestone in the school year and encouraged continued focus on student safety, learning, and end-of-year transitions like graduations and retirements.

Commissioner Bishop also mentioned the anticipation of an education funding bill supported by both the Legislature and Governor, aiming for a combined policy and funding resolution. She concluded by expressing gratitude for the Board's work, her role as Commissioner, and the dedicated DEED team.

Agenda Item 21 – Consent Agenda

First Vice Chair Stockhausen motioned, and Member Bergey seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development approve the consent agenda consisting of approval of the minutes of the October 10, 2024, December 5, 2024, January 22, 2025, and the February 25, 2025 board meetings. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Board Comments

Member Bergey expressed gratitude to everyone involved in the charter school application process, recognizing the significant effort by district and school staff to prepare thorough materials. She also thanked those who attended the meeting, contributed reports, and helped ensure the Board had the necessary information to make informed decisions. She appreciated the opportunity for discussion during the work session and acknowledged the behind-the-scenes work that enables efficient and productive meetings.

Student Advisor-Elect Amber Sherman expressed gratitude for being elected to the position and shared excitement about the future of the new charter school. They emphasized their appreciation for efforts to preserve language and culture and thanked everyone involved, stating they were glad to be part of the meeting.

Member Tyndall expressed appreciation for the SHI tour, calling it an eye-opening and enjoyable experience, and thanked those who organized it. She also shared excitement about the success of the current charter schools and the promise of the new one, especially in promoting Alaska Native language. Before concluding, Tyndall gave a warm farewell to Student Advisor Pak, wishing him the best in his future and expressing admiration for his accomplishments at a young age.

Student Advisor Pak reflected on the honor of serving on the Board and thanked the Department for

selecting him for the U.S. Senate Youth Program, which he described as a life-changing experience that renewed his faith in public service. He shared highlights from his time on the Board, including traveling across Alaska, engaging in educational discussions, and witnessing the dedication of educators. Although this was his last meeting due to a senior trip, he looks forward to attending the AASG Spring Conference in Sitka and expressed confidence in his successor, Amber, to continue representing students well.

Member McCollum expressed gratitude to the staff for their warm welcome and praised the thoughtfulness of the Board. She thanked Student Advisor Pak for swearing her in on his final meeting day, calling it an honor. She also appreciated the well-prepared information from the previous day's committee sessions and said she looks forward to serving on the Board.

Member Lt. Col. Fowley welcomed Member McCollum and joked about the challenge of managing large board packets. He thanked Sealaska Heritage Institute for hosting and emphasized the value of seeing educational efforts across Alaska firsthand. He congratulated Tulen Charter School on their approval and reminded them that the real work begins now. He also recognized teachers, including his wife, for their dedication despite challenges. Lastly, he praised Student Advisor Pak, commending his contributions and expressing confidence in his future.

Member Dupras expressed gratitude and left the meeting feeling optimistic about education in Alaska. She highlighted the success of high-performing charter schools and the importance of offering diverse educational options. She also acknowledged and thanked educators for their hard work and dedication to student success across the state.

Member Stockhausen thanked the Department of Education for their hard work and support of schools, acknowledging that it can often go unrecognized. She expressed hope for a resolution on education funding and welcomed new board members Amber and Kathy. She also praised Joshua for his valuable contributions during his term, calling him a "breath of fresh air," and wished him well in the future.

Chair Fields expressed gratitude to the department for preparing helpful notes for his legislative report and welcomed new members, including Member McCollum and Student Advisor Amber Sherman. He thanked the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner for their efforts with legislators, acknowledged the dedication of fellow board members who serve without compensation, and appreciated their confidence in his leadership. He closed by wishing everyone a safe journey home and offering a blessing to all.

The board adjourned at 3:11 p.m.