

State Board of Education & Early Development
Approved Minutes
January 20, 2020
Audio Conference Meeting
Department of Education & Early Development
801 West 10th Street
Juneau, AK 99801

Monday, January 20, 2020

Chair Fields called the meeting to order at 9:00 am. After the pledge of allegiance, the board adopted the agenda for January 20, 2020. Lieutenant Colonel Hammill was excused from attendance. Member Griffin moved to adopt the agenda and was seconded by Second Vice Chair Van Diest. There were no objections to the adoption of the agenda. There were no potential conflicts of interest identified by board members at this meeting.

Public Comment

Public comment was opened at 9:03 am

Tim Parker from NEA Alaska thanked Commissioner Johnson for speaking at the NEA annual meeting and that his comments to NEA Alaska were well received. He discussed the Alaska Education Challenge as well as the Alaska Reads Act. He informed the board that NEA Alaska is not in favor of the retention portion of the bill as they do not believe that it is not a strong plan on how to improve reading; but they are in favor of the Pre-K reading support programs. The NEA Alaska is also interested in the Tribal Compacting bill and will be watching that as it moves through the legislature. He expressed his excitement about potential legislation to retain teachers and their risk of not having access to social security. He reminded the board that teachers are leaving Alaska at an alarming rate and that it is a discussion that should be had. He wished them a great meeting and is looking forward to the spring meeting.

Posie Boggs from the Alaska Reading Coalition discussed the Alaska Reads Act and the fact that from a high level she believes that it is a good bill. She believes that while this bill has good pieces, that there are areas of the bill that could be tightened with regards to the language. She discussed the choice that Alaska faces that Florida and other states did not take advantage of with regards to the fact that other states did not watch the amount of time that it would take to implement the changes. She discussed the Moore case and the fact that the Alaska Reads Act will differ from that case in the fact that superintendents and districts will have support from the Department of Education. Her organization is not a big fan of the retention piece of the bill and would like it delayed until the districts have time to adjust to the new policies. She noted that if superintendents are given time to change their reading policies then there would not be a need for the retention piece. She concluded her testimony by saying that in general, the Alaska Reads Act is a good bill.

Lisa Skiles-Parady from the Alaska Council of School Administrators thanked Senator Begich for sending the Alaska Reads Act bill to superintendents so they could view it. She expressed concerns at DEED's capacity for the implementation of the bill and echoed the concerns from the previous speakers regarding the retention piece of the bill as a strategy. Her members are grateful for the bill and are very supportive of some of the components of the bill. They are looking forward to engaging with DEED and

the legislature in this process. The Alaska Council of School Administrators are also interested in the Tribal Compacting bill and will be tracking its progress through the legislature.

Public comment closed at 9:21 am

Work Session

Agenda Item 1. Department FY2021 Operating Budget. Neil Steininger, Administrative Services Director discussed the DEED FY2020 operating budget with the board. He noted that the total change to the DEED overall budget was a four million dollar increase to the department for various programs. The Base Student Allocation formula is also fully funded in this budget proposal. Chair Fields commented that the board should follow the legislative session closely to learn what the legislature proposes for the State budget like they did last year. Chair Fields informed the board that he will continue conversations with legislators including the chairs of the education committees to develop a mutual understanding of the most appropriate and helpful role that the State Board of Education can have in the budget process each year.

Agenda Item 2. Legislative Update. Erin Hardin, Special Assistant to the Commissioner updated the board on legislation that has been pre-filed that will affect DEED. Tuesday, January 21st will be the first day of legislative session and both bodies will convene at 1:00pm. Member Van Diest asked how much input department has with the Tribal Compacting bill. Commissioner Johnson replied that the bill has been drafted by Senator Stevens and is separate from the department but the department looks forward to working with the senator's office around that piece of legislation. Based on member feedback, Erin will begin to send board members a list of bills and what committee they are being heard in for the board's awareness. Erin is also working with the legislature to schedule a joint House and Senate Education legislative committee while the board is in town for their March meeting.

Business Meeting

Agenda Item 3. Approve the Board's Annual Report to the Legislature. Erin Hardin, Special Assistant to the Commissioner provided a brief overview of their annual report and informed them that she would let them know when Chair Fields was scheduled to present this report to the Joint House and Senate Education Committees. Member Hamilton motioned and Member Scott seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development approve the report to the legislature. Member Scott thanked Erin for the inclusion of the committees to the report. She also mentioned that the directive of the board to DEED to work with the Department of Law regarding the Sitka Seaplane Dock on land that Mt. Edgecumbe High School currently owns. She clarified that this directive was crafted with the assistance of the Mt. Edgecumbe High School Advisory board and that they had spent multiple hours working on this issue. After the discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Agenda Item 4. Approve Project Coordinator. Commissioner Johnson asked the State Board of Education and Early Development to approve his appointment of Bernie Sorenson as Project Coordinator. Member Van Diest motioned and Member Kowalski seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development approve the Commissioner's appointment of Bernie Sorenson as Project Coordinator. Commissioner Johnson then took some time to speak to Ms. Sorenson's strengths and why he chose her as his Project Coordinator. The motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Commissioner Comments. Commissioner Johnson thanked the DEED staff and Senator Begich's office for the Alaska Reads act as it is the first step of implementing the Alaska Education Challenge. He expressed his confidence in the process and is looking forward to the bill's progression during legislative session. He hopes that the legislature will work together on this bill to get it passed as quickly as possible. He also noted that they will continue to work with individual legislators to ensure that the board can meet with them when they are in Juneau for the March meeting.

Board Comments

- Member Griffin- is excited about the Alaska Reads Act. He believes that it is a very well thought out piece of legislation and that it will be a very important part of affecting student outcomes in the State. He acknowledged that the retention piece would be the most highly debated piece but pointed out that there are many different steps in the process before retention is presented as an option to a student. He mentioned that students should be able to read at the level of their peers and that educators should have as many tools as possible to make that happen. He also cautioned about removing the retention piece entirely as other states have not seen the results they desired when they took it out.
- First Vice Chair Hamilton- thanked Director Steininger for his budget presentation and is looking forward to the budget process as well as no further reductions to DEED.
- Member Kowalski- thanked Chair Fields for his work with the legislature on the budget. She expressed her reluctance to the inclusion of the retention piece of the Alaska Reads Act and added that there might be a way that we might be able to hold districts accountable without using retention as a stick.
- Member Scott- expressed her thanks to the members of the public who provided their feedback on the Alaska Reads Act and mentioned that she was grateful for the ability to hear their first reactions to the bill. She is looking forward to session.
- Member Stockhausen- expressed her excitement about the Alaska Reads Act and is excited to see how it progresses during legislative session.
- Second Vice Chair Van Diest- thanked Special Assistant Hardin for her information regarding the bills and would like to be informed about the meetings of the House and Senate Education Committees as they schedule bills to discuss. She is excited about the bills that are associated with the Alaska Education Challenge and welcomed Bernie to the department. She thanked the board for their work as this meeting might be her last as her term is coming to an end.
- Chair Fields- thanked Second Vice Chair Van Diest for her work on the board and hopes to see her in March.

Meeting adjourned at 10:18am.