

State Board of Education & Early Development
Unapproved Minutes
October 5, 2023
Department of Education and Early Development
Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District Board Room
501 N Gulkana Street
Palmer, AK 99645

Thursday, October 5, 2023

Chair Fields called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. on October 5, 2023. Roll was called and the following members were present to provide quorum: Members Jeff Erickson, Bob Griffin, Pamela Dupras, Barbara Tyndall, Military Advisor Lt. Col. James Fowley, Student Advisor Felix Myers, Second Vice Chair Sally Stockhausen, and First Vice Chair Lorri Van Diest.

After a prayer and the pledge of allegiance, First Vice Chair Van Diest motioned and Member Griffin seconded a motion to adopt the agenda. There was no discussion and the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote. There were no potential conflicts of interest identified by board members.

Public Comment:

Public comment opened at 9:06 a.m.

Monica Whitman – against the passed interscholastic activities regulation. Let the board know that parental rights are already protected in situations with children making choices about being transgender.

Josh Smith – against the passed interscholastic activities regulation; Alaska should be for everyone, but this is a problem looking for a solution. Inclusion should be prioritized.

Amber O'Brien – against the passed interscholastic activities regulation. The regulation promotes bullying and rejects inclusion.

Iain O'Brien – against the passed interscholastic activities regulation.

Dr. Lindsey Banning – against the passed interscholastic activities regulation. The Board has picked and chosen statistics and science to support exclusion and inadvertently codifying transphobia.

Rebecca Bernard – against the passed interscholastic activities regulation; excluding trans girls is against the Board's mission.

Public comment closed at 9:23 a.m.

Work Session

Agenda Item 1 – Alaska School Leadership Academy (ASLA) Presentation

Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA) Executive Director, Dr. Lisa Parady, and ALSA Principal Lead Jennifer Rinaldi, provided the ASLA Presentation, and ACSA Grant Director Sam Jordan provided a presentation about the impact of the ASLA as an important teacher and principal retention tool. The two-year cohort has 118 members and 60 mentors.

Second Vice Chair Stockhausen asked if mentors get to go to schools for in-person visits. Principal Lead Rinaldi responded that in the rural districts, in-person is occasionally utilized in a triage situation, but generally, they host events to have in-person moments. The urban districts have buildings and meetings set up to interact in-person often.

Member Griffin asked if they had statistics on growth of student outcomes of students who interact with teachers or principals who have completed the ALSA. Dr. Parady responded that they know that the program is working, but ACSA would like to do those studies. Dr. Dale Cope added that they are tracking five cohorts, but the state testing has changed in that time. They need to wait for a standard and consistent testing period to find a correlation.

Chair Fields asked how the ALSA is funded and how the Board can help. Dr. Parady answered that ALSA has three percent set aside for professional development and is looking for funding through the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED).

Second Vice Chair Stockhausen asked how new principals learn about this program. Dr. Parady answered that ALSA primarily uses word of mouth and frequent communication with superintendents.

Member Erickson asked how the mentorship program deals with non-excellent educators. Dr. Parady reiterated that their goal is quality. Principal Lead Rinaldi added that participation requires a confidentiality agreement, which fosters trust. There was no further discussion.

Agenda Item 2 – Alaska Science Teachers Association (ASTA)

ASTA Board President Patty Brown and National Science Education Leadership Association President Trisha Herminghaus presented about ASTA. Their request to the Board is to encourage DEED to move forward in their plan to implement science standards, hold districts accountable for holding time and space for science, consider requesting an annual report, and supporting teachers.

Student Advisor Myers asked how science can incorporate cultural activities and other topics that may be more engaging for students. President Herminghaus responded that everything is science and they would like to share ideas.

Member Griffin asked what metrics do they use to track other than AK STAR? Board President Brown responded that they are more focused on what kind of professional development teachers need. She also mentioned that science is less prioritized than both math and writing, so it gets much less time than what is needed to complete science curricula and activities.

Member Erickson made comments about rural areas having cultural activities and values that revolve around science, which is foundational. There was no further discussion.

Agenda Item 3 – Teacher Retention and Recruitment Playbook Update

Dr. Barbara Adams showed the board how to navigate and utilize the Teacher Retention and Recruitment (TRR) Playbook online.

Second Vice Chair Stockhausen made a comment urging the board to commit to acting on the playbook instead of letting it sit on the shelf. Student Advisor Myers added that he believes the option of defined benefits is an essential step to teacher recruitment and retention. He also commented that making re-certification an easier process is important.

First Vice Chair Van Diest asked what section of the playbook is the best place to start with and focus on. Dr. Adams responded by suggesting Section C and downloading the state administration action steps. Dr. Adams mentioned her excitement about the Commissioner's travel plan to get out the word about the TRR Playbook. Both Commissioner Bishop and Chair Fields mentioned next steps for all stakeholders.

Student Advisor Myers mentioned that making a regulation change for out-of-state teacher certification would also be an important step. Commissioner Bishop reiterated that that specific change may require statute changes and it is a priority of the board. There was no further discussion.

Agenda Item 4 – Tribal Compacting Update

Joel Isaak, Director of Tribal Affairs, provided an update on State-Tribal Compact Education efforts. He also gave a tutorial on the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) website, which has many resources for tribal compacting. Chair Fields and First Vice Chair Van Diest thanked Director Isaak for his extensive work on tribal compacting. There was no further discussion.

Agenda Item 5 – Mat-Su Borough School District Presentation

Dr. Randy Trani, Superintendent of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District, provided a report about their school district, including enrollment numbers, facilities, pupil transportation, the school board, funding, graduation rates, career and technical education, and Advanced Placement (AP) courses.

Member Griffin asked about student growth and demographics. Dr. Trani responded that the school district grew, but not as much as by the projected number. Correspondence students increased dramatically. After hiring a demographer, they learned that the demographic that is growing fastest is elderly people, which is a future concern for the school district, both in terms of taxable residents and numbers of students.

Second Vice Chair Stockhausen asked about the types of AP classes provided. Dr. Trani responded that it highly differs by school. For example, Colony High School has robust and growing AP program, but Reddington has no AP courses. There was no further discussion.

Agenda Item 6 – Alaska Bible College Teacher Preparation Program

Kelly Manning, Deputy Director of the Division of Innovation and Excellent Education, introduced a discussion about the accreditation of Alaska Bible College (ABC). ABC has been provisionally approved by the State of Alaska and are continuing in the process of full accreditation, which will allow them to enroll and graduate students.

Dr. Benjamin Olson, the Academic Dean of Alaska Bible College, began a presentation about ABC's mission and goals. Dr. Matthew Coté, Professor of General Education, provided details about ABC's Teacher Preparation Program, including the teaching standards and accreditation.

Second Vice Chair Stockhausen asked if classes were given in-person or digital. Dr. Olson responded that most courses are provided in the evening through Zoom because educators/paraprofessionals are the primary demographic taking the courses.

Chair Fields asked what the timeline for accreditation is. Dr. Olson responded that once the site visit happens, accreditation will follow in only a few months.

First Vice Chair Van Diest asked how many students are currently enrolled and how many will ABC later have the capacity for. Dr. Olson expects growth to go up exponentially after accreditation. They currently enroll about five students per cohort, but they have the capacity for 30 students per cohort.

Second Vice Chair Stockhausen asked how current students are affected by possible accreditation. Dr. Olson responded that current students will be able to get a teaching degree after ABC is accredited. There was no further discussion.

Agenda Item 7 – Regulations for Public Comment

Agenda Item 7A – Limited Teacher Certificates and Seal of Biliteracy

Susan McKenzie, Director of the Division of Innovation and Education Excellence, introduced the desire to open public comment on the Limited Teacher Certificates and the Seal of Biliteracy regulations. The board is being asked to re-open public comment for technical changes. Susan Sonneborn, Assistant Attorney General with the Department of Law, described the process for technical changes and public comment. There was no further discussion.

Business Meeting

Agenda Item 8 – Alaska Bible College Teacher Preparation Program

Second Vice Chair Stockhausen motioned and Member Griffin seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development approve the Alaska Bible College's request for provisional state approval of its Elementary Education teacher preparation programs through June 30, 2026. During provisional approval status, the Alaska Bible College is required to provide annual updates on their progress toward CAEP accreditation at the state board's winter regular meeting. First Vice Chair Van Diest, Member Griffin, and Chair Fields all made supportive comments. The motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Agenda Item 9 – Regulations for Public Comment

Agenda Item 9A – Limited Teacher Certificates and Seal of Biliteracy

First Vice Chair Van Diest motioned and Member Griffin seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development open a period of public comment on the addition of 4 AAC 04.225 Alternative foreign language proficiency assessment standards and corresponding updates to 4 AAC 06.079(b)(2)(D), 4 AAC 06.079(b)(2)(E), 4 AAC 06.079(b)(2)(F), 4 AAC 06.079(c), and 4 AAC 06.079(h) (Seal of biliteracy); and the repeal and readoption of 4 AAC 12.388 Limited world language immersion teacher certificate and corresponding updates to 4 AAC 12.397(e) (Mandatory training requirements) and 4 AAC 12.405 (Renewal of certificates). There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Agenda Item 10 – Subcommittee Appointments

Chair Fields discussed the following amendments to board member appointments on subcommittees, boards, and commissions:

- Added Member Tyndall to the Public School Trust Fund Advisory Committee;
- Removed Member Griffin and added Member Tyndall to the Technical Advisory Committee;
- Added Member Dupras as an Alternate to the Education Commission of the States; and
- Added Second Vice Chair Stockhausen and Member Dupras to the Joint Subcommittee with the Board of Regents.

All other subcommittees, boards, and commissions assignments remained the same.

Agenda Item 11 – Approve Alyeska Reading Institute Director

First Vice Chair Van Diest motioned and Member Erickson seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development approve the Commissioner’s appointment of Carol Boatman as Director of the Alyeska Reading Institute effective immediately. Director Boatman gave a brief background. There was no further discussion. The motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Agenda Item 12 – Questions Regarding Standing Reports

First Vice Chair Van Diest commented that she appreciates the pictures on the Mt. Edgecumbe High School’s report. Second Vice Chair Stockhausen commented on the federal State Professional Development Grant (SPDG) that the Division of Innovation and Education Excellence received. There was no further questions or discussion.

Agenda Item 13 – Commissioner Report

Commissioner Dr. Deena Bishop provided an update on her first sixty days working as the Commissioner, primarily noting her new relationships, and learning the ins-and-outs of the department and staff. She also congratulated the DEED Burns Building Move Team who received the Governor’s Denali Peak Performance Award in Innovation in Cost-Savings. She encouraged open communication with all board members.

Second Vice Chair Stockhausen asked for a timeline update on the Alyeska Reading Institute (ARI). Director Boatman responded that communication with districts and gathering information from districts are the top priorities for ARI.

Commissioner Bishop asked for an update on the ARI facilities. Director Boatman said that they are working with a contractor, and it should be up and running in January 2024.

Second Vice Chair Stockhausen asked about the funding mechanism once COVID-19 funds are no longer available. Commissioner Bishop said that they have requested the necessary funds in the budget process.

Member Dupras mentioned the needs of homeschooled kids through programs like ARI. She also mentioned receiving criticism about required kindergarten testing. Commissioner Bishop mentioned that the mCLASS DIBELS 8 composite scores for first, second, and third graders in Alaska are in line with national standards. Kindergarten is slightly below. It is assumed that those kindergartners are receiving quality instruction after entering school. There was no further discussion.

Agenda Item 14 – Consent Agenda

Member Griffin motioned and First Vice Chair Van Diest 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 April 19, 2023 board meeting, June 7 and 8, 2023 board meeting and the July 26, 2023 board meeting. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Board Comments

Multiple members made supportive comments about the Alaska Pacific University (APU), where the board toured the prior day; thanked the Mat-Su Borough School District for hosting them; and thanked Executive Secretary Janell Andrews and Director Susan McKenzie for their service.

The board adjourned at 3:10 p.m.