

Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development
Approved Minutes
January 27, 2017
Juneau, AK

Chair Fields called the audio conference and Webinar meeting to order at 12:03 p.m. The board, staff, and public recited the Pledge of Allegiance. No members reported conflicts of interest. All members except LTC Jason Toole were present. The board approved the agenda unanimously.

Public Comment

Mike Bronson of Anchorage, an NAACP volunteer, thanked the department for the Alaska Measures of Progress assessment. He supported a legislative task force to raise reading proficiency. He wants the board to show leadership for a state plan to raise reading, writing, and math skills. He said the department's budget has nothing to address this.

Tim Parker, NEA-Alaska President, thanked Commissioner Johnson for addressing the NEA. He said test scores should not be the driver of education. He values a wide range of learning. He said NEA-Alaska has held meetings to gather information for the state's plan to implement the Every Student Succeeds Act. The NEA welcomes the opportunity to provide input on Alaska's Education Challenge.

Dr. Lisa Parady, Executive Director of the Alaska Council of School Administrators, said there should be tiered fees for space rentals at the Alaska State Museum. She looks forward to supporting the Alaska Education Challenge.

Dorothy Orr, Executive Director of the Alaska Society of Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE), wants the board's strategic goals to include the gold standard for wellness policies.

Rep. Lora Reinbold said the Every Student Succeeds Act is controversial; it enforces federal law, not local control. She wants the board to scrutinize the department's budget for unnecessary expenses. She said the state's 54 school districts should be combined. She wants every school district to have policies to allow parents to opt out of state assessments. She wants the board to honor the state's prohibition on the Common Core. She said the state should not spend money on a conference that includes LGBT topics.

Sheridan Heinrich opposed LGBT training. Adolescents don't have the ability to decide life changes.

Jody Rhodes said children are given false hope that they can solve their problems by changing gender.

Melody Harrison said parents have the right to teach their children about LGBT issues.

Lauren Kelsey thanked the board for making health a priority.

Sunni Putnam said it is her place to teach her child about LGBT issues.

Holly Creer said the state should be neutral about LGBT issues and let parents guide their children.

Second Vice-Chair Harmon asked the Commissioner to provide context for the public comments about LGBT issues. Commissioner Johnson said there was a presentation about LGBT issues at a conference supported by the Department of Education and Early Development and the Department of Health and Social Services. First Vice-Chair Hull said the board needs policies to vet outside presenters at department-sponsored conferences. Wilfried Zibell said he sees both sides of the question. Not informing parents about a student's LGBT issue protects the student from possible harm by family members and other students, he said.

Work Session

Agenda Item 1. Department budget. Heidi Teshner, Administrative Services Director, reviewed a 12-page budget document, and answered questions about an increment for medical education, a reimbursement to the Northwest Arctic Borough School District, the prospects for a capital budget, funding for the swimming pool at Mt. Edgecumbe High School, and shared services among departments.

Chair Fields asked the Commissioner if he has discussed the board's statutory role in the department's budget. The Commissioner said he is working on ways for the board to have input on the budget before it is forwarded to the Governor. First Vice-Chair Hull said the board had some input last summer and fall through the strategic plan, and the Governor has listened.

Agenda Item 2. Legislative report. Marcy Herman, Legislative Liaison, said the department has been meeting with legislators and intends to meet with all 60 lawmakers. She reviewed HB 64 and companion bill SB 27. Regarding SB 12, the department, the school boards association, and the school administrators association are involved in gathering information for the legislature, the Commissioner said.

Agenda Item 3. Strategic goals. Dr. Susan McCauley, Education Policy Coordinator, reviewed documents related to each of the five goals, intended to clarify what the goals mean and why they matter.

Rebecca Himschoot said the board, in the goal of increasing student achievement or learning, does not want to look at only test data. First Vice-Chair Hull said the other goals impact student learning. She said there should be wording about the skills required for the future, not just content knowledge. The board discussed how to broaden how they talk about student learning.

Regarding community and tribal ownership, Second Vice-Chair Harmon said the document should emphasize partnerships. Student member-elect Charles Michael said the board should expand the concept to include students having a voice. Only 30 districts have a student on their school board, he said.

Regarding modernizing education, Rebecca Himschoot said the document is prescriptive. The Commissioner said modernization is partly about extending the reach of great teachers to more students. Chair Fields said modernization is innovative practices. Regarding health and safety, First Vice-Chair Hull said the topic should include the importance of wellness.

Agenda Item 4. Spring meeting dates. First Vice-Chair Hull moved and Dr. Keith Hamilton seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development adopt the dates of March 27-29 for its regular spring meeting in 2017. The motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Agenda Item 5. Monthly work sessions. Barbara Thompson moved and Second Vice-Chair Harmon seconded the following motion: I move to add March 1, 2 p.m.-3 p.m.; May 3, 11 a.m.-noon; and May 24, 2 p.m.-3 p.m. as dates of meetings of the State Board of Education and Early Development. The motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote. The meetings will be publicly noticed work sessions.

Agenda Item 6. Consent agenda. Barbara Thompson moved and Rebecca Himschoot seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development approve the consent agenda consisting of approval of the department's FY2018 Governor's proposed operating and capital budgets; approval of the minutes of the December 8, 2016, meeting; and approval of the annual report to the legislature. The motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote. First Vice-Chair Hull noted that approving the budget should not be included in the consent agenda.

Board comments

Kenny Gallahorn and Second Vice-Chair Harmon said the board needs more in-person meetings.

Dr. Keith Hamilton noted that the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education recently passed a resolution that the board should discuss.

Charles Michael said revenues are a long-term problem and cuts are short-term.

Rebecca Himschoot noted that the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) is holding an event in March to which board members are invited.

Barbara Thompson said meeting by audio conference and Webinar is better than meeting by audio conference alone.

First Vice-Chair Hull noted a training with NASBE and thanked the board for listening to the concerns of Fairbanks parents. She said she prefers in-person board meetings.

Chair Fields said the board has achieved serious momentum with its strategic priorities.

The board adjourned at 3:30 p.m.