

Approved Minutes
Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development
September 11 & 12, 2008
Mt. Edgecumbe High School Library
1330 Seward Avenue
Sitka, AK

Thursday, September 11, 2008

Chair Cox called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. on Thursday, September 11, 2008, at the Mt. Edgecumbe High School Library in Sitka, AK. All members were present except Lt. Col Luu, who was excused. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. There was a moment of silence observed in honor of September 11 and Hurricane Ike. The Chair asked if anyone had conflicts of interest to disclose. Carol Schaeffer said that she was an employee of the Northwest Arctic Borough School District, which has an improvement plan. Sylvia Reynolds said she was on a contract with the Northwest Arctic Borough School District. The agenda was amended by unanimous roll call vote to include the approval of a new deputy commissioner for the Department of Education & Early Development and a presentation by Sylvia Reynolds regarding a PowerPoint she uses at NWABSD entitled Effective Schooling Elements.

Public Comment:

Rhonda Gardner, Assistant Superintendent Anchorage School District, said the district was in favor of removing the video/DVD portion of the teacher certification regulations, and she voiced support for the teacher certification unit and needed funding to make the process work more smoothly. She said she supported the unit being self-supporting but not on the backs of teachers.

Sharon Vaska at the Bethel LIO said she supported the early childhood P-2 regulations. She said she was unprepared when she began teaching and did not understand child development.

La Dawn Druce in Soldotna LIO said Kenai was in support of doing away with the video/DVD requirement for certification. She cited problems with certification and said EED needed to resolve its internal problems because there were expectations with certification office and they needed some back-up. Pat Shier interjected that the Division of Retirement & Benefits was working with the department to keep certifications from lapsing. Ms. Druce said the 19-day grace period was not working and the statute needed to be changed. The commissioner said that many applications have many components that are missing when they are received, but acknowledged that the department did need more help and needed to reorganize. Ms. Curran, the administrator for certification, said that in May they received 912 applications, in June 969 applications, in July 910 applications, and in August 808 applications, indicating that many teachers wait until the last minute to send in paperwork and when the applications are incomplete it stalls the process. She said the certification staff had worked every Saturday since June trying to

keep up and acknowledged that they were behind. Due to many complaints, they pulled all of Anchorage and Kenai applications and worked only those until they were caught up, but that meant that everyone else had to wait. She indicated that the whole department had been helping in some way.

Barb Nagengast, Principal of Homestead Elementary School, said she was against the early childhood regulations because she felt they were too restrictive and diminished the pool of teachers and tied hands in the hiring process. She suggested that the course work be offered by the Alaska Staff Development Network or by Internet through the university.

Tim Scott welcomed Commissioner LeDoux. He said it was unreasonable to allow districts who have not met AYP to move across school district lines in accepting students for correspondence programs.

Wayne Gerke, the Fairbanks Assistant Superintendent, thanked Cyndy Curran for her work in certification. He also said that Fairbanks, through its lobbyist, was going to pursue increasing the penalty for possession of a gun on school grounds. Mr. Schneider said he agreed that stiffer penalties were needed and asked what could be done. Mr. Gerke said searching lockers, public communication, changing school policy and being pro-active with gun safety would help. The commissioner said that states need to back up schools on this issue.

1. Recommendations from the Reading Work Group. Cyndy Curran was present to brief the board. She said the group met face-to-face and on an e-learning site over the summer. They recommend that professional development must model effective processes and strategies to improve literacy instruction, that roles and responsibilities of content area teachers must be clear and consistent, administrators should participate in professional development related to literacy, and that all teachers should have long-term, ongoing professional development in literacy instruction and that professional development for literacy should demonstrate best practices. Next steps include bringing literacy and content teachers together. After some questions from the board, the commissioner said the work was ongoing and he thanked Cyndy for her work in this area. Carol Schaeffer said she didn't see any rural representation and encouraged that participation.

2. Galena Boarding School. Eddy Jeans was present to brief the board. The Galena School District's interior learning academy was requesting a revised application for a maximum reimbursement level of 175 students from 120 students in accordance with a new statute, AS 14.16.200, which provides for state funding for districts operating statewide residential education programs and for programs begun prior to January 1, 2005. The increase is due to continued growth of the program. The increase would be effective for FY2010. Mr. Jeans explained that the increase has to be approved by the board before going to the legislature. Once approved by the board, the department will approach the legislature for corresponding funds.

Mr. Jeans said this was the first time a school had requested an increase. The commissioner said some districts were looking at boarding schools in an effort to keep students at home. All boarding schools are open to all students, with the exception of Bethel, whose students are local. Mr. Jeans said the facilities are coming from the discontinued Air Force base. The board expressed a desire to meet in Galena sometime. Mr. Shier said they had figured out how to develop a top-quality product and thinking outside the box in delivering core content. Ms. Cox asked if there was data on how the need for boarding school facilities was increasing. Mr. Jeans said that would be known with the October count. Dr. Holloway thought it would be helpful to watch the migration because it could be significant. She asked, what happens to a student who moves home and finds his/her school is closed due to low enrollment and there is no funding? Mr. Shier said the system should try to remove disincentives from getting services students need.

3. High School Graduation Waivers Annual Reports. There were six districts giving reports on waivers from the regulation that set out minimum high school graduation requirements: Bering Strait, Chugach, Denali, Kuspuk, Lake & Peninsula, and Lower Yukon. Jim Hickerson and Greg Johnson were online for Bering Strait. They noted that the system was working very well, there was overall growth, turnover was low and they were aligned with the GLEs. They said enrollment was on target for the year. Each student has an academic advisor they meet with once a quarter and one informal meeting per week and they had hired a full-time school improvement coordinator this year. The commissioner said they have a consortium with the Nome schools and he had attended one of their board meetings and it was outstanding.

Bob Crumley was online from Chugach School District. He said their system was working well and they were partnering with other districts with a deliberate focus on staff and they had had no turnover for the past two years. He said the performance pay was very helpful, students were focused and doing well academically, and had a standards-based design. The board agreed that they would like to hear about the summer Excel camp.

Kim Langdon was online from Denali School District. He said they had 100% staff retention for the past four years, enrollment was up, and many students returned to the school after leaving once. He said the student data system is accessible by parents as well as students and teachers and that standards were aligned with the GLEs. Mr. Langdon said community support was not always present. He described collaboration with other districts as very supportive.

Brad Allen was online from Kuspuk School District. He said his teacher turnover was quite low, students were coming to school on time and enrollment was up. He said they did do high school graduate follow-up with an informal tracking system. He described the district schools and their enrollment.

John Owens was online from Lake & Peninsula School District. He described teacher turnover as very challenging, having a 90% retention. They have recruited outside and in

the mid-west mostly. Another area that was difficult were students transferring in and out of the district and honoring student credits when coming in, and declining enrollment due to energy costs. He said they made math a target with a new curriculum since there was a gap in math. He also noted that they are heavy in professional development and family participation.

John Lamont was online from Lower Yukon. He said they has 170 staff in 11 schools, had adopted the GLEs, developed a distance delivery course, had weekly collaboration meetings at the school level, expanded their summer and after-school programs, and had graduation planning and post-graduation goal-setting, many cultural activities, and participated in the mentor program. He described challenges as ongoing training for teachers and high turnover. They added a support coordinator to go to the schools, and had student liaisons to help understand standards.

Wendy Batino with RISK, who was also online, thanked the board for their work with RISK and said they were getting national attention with the program, working with California, Colorado and Massachusetts.

The board had a general discussion about student improvement in the waiver districts using this model, noting that many had low performance. They generally wanted to hear what was in place to cause improvement and address programs declining assessment numbers. They directed the department to write letters to Bering Strait, Lake & Peninsula, Lower Yukon and Kuspuk regarding their improvement and to report back by the December meeting and to invite the superintendent of the North Slope Borough School District to attend the December meeting to follow up with the board regarding the district's waiver.

5. Alaska Career Ready. Marcia Olson was present to brief the board. She talked about the pilot in six districts, Anchorage, Delta-Greely, Kenai, Lower Kuskokwim, Mt. Edgecumbe High School and Sitka, and described the in-district training she was doing. She discussed ways schools were implementing Alaska Career Ready and some of the challenges encountered. Those include, but are not limited to the following: MacIntosh compatibility, bandwidth issues, Internet testing vs. paper testing, soft skills, staff time involved, being time-intensive for EED staff, ACT is still changing parameters, and not enough staff to do proper outreach to employers and job seekers. The commissioner said that districts were not ready yet for the mandate. Mr. Shier said there was demand for the program and that BP used it extensively. Ms. Cox said she hoped to continue the pilots, but felt it was too soon to mandate. The commissioner said there were new positions in the budget for FY 2010 for CTE. The board unanimously suggested that the mandate date in the regulation be pushed back one more year.

4. Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Youth. Donna Foxley was present to brief the board. She said there were 13 states signed on to the compact, each committing for one year. After the first year, a state can step away. The compact addresses enforcement, administration, finances, communications, data sharing and training in transitions for military students. Key education issues for military families are:

1) missed entrance and exit testing, 2) transfer of records, 3) course content and sequencing, 4) exclusion from extra-curricular activities, 5) kindergarten and first grade entrance age variances, and 6) power of custodial parents while parents deployed. If Alaska were to join, it would have to be by legislative action either introduced by the governor or a legislator.

8. P-20 Alignment Study through Avant Garde. Dr. Holloway gave a report on a proposal of the Avant Garde learning Foundation, which proposes to work with Alaska schools, higher education. EED, and employers to align the learning opportunities available to high school students with the expectations of higher education as well as the work place. The first phase took place in the fall of 2008 gathering data, and future phases will bring stakeholders together to consider the data and form a plan of action.

Dr. Holloway moved and Sylvia Reynolds seconded a motion for the board to go into executive session. The executive session was necessary to discuss personnel matters. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

September 12, 2008

The meeting was called to order by Chair Cox, roll was taken. Col. Luu was excused. The chair asked if anyone had any disclosures to make. Carol Schaeffer said that she should have mentioned yesterday that her daughter was a student at Mt. Edgecumbe High School. The day's agenda was amended to add approval of the appointment of the deputy commissioner for the department. Shirley Holloway moved to approve the amended agenda. Carol Schaffer seconded the motion. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Sylvia Reynolds was present to make a presentation that she does with the Northwest Arctic Borough Schools regarding effective schooling elements.

Deputy Commissioner. Commissioner LeDoux said that he had appointed Les Morse as the new deputy commissioner for the department. He said that Mr. Morse would be focusing on school improvement. Chair Cox said she was delighted with the choice. Shirley Holloway moved and Sylvia Reynolds seconded a motion to approve the appointment of Les Morse as deputy commissioner for the department. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Regulations to go out for Public Comment.

Public School Library Collection Development Grants. Kay Shelton, State Librarian, was online to brief the board. She said legislation was passed last year to establish the grants, but no dollars had been appropriated to support them. She said the legislature wanted EED to develop regulations to be in place before the dollars would be appropriated. The library would monitor the grants and awards with annual legislative appropriation. The Department of Commerce would administer the component. Sylvia Reynolds moved and

Geri Benshoof seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development open a period of public comment on proposed regulations 4 AAC 57.400 – 4 AAC 57.480, related to public school library collection development grants. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Regulations for Adoption

Early Childhood. Dr. Holloway said that she would like to see the department convene a group of experts to determine what we want a child to know and be able to do. Chair Cox said that she wanted a determination on what needs to be known so the coursework could deliver the skills that are required. Pat Shier said folks that he spoke with wanted another approach. Dr. Holloway said taking courses does not demonstrate mastery. The commissioner said the public believes there are specialized skills for working with early childhood and said the department would convene a work group to determine what skills an early childhood teacher needs to be successful.

Teacher Certification. Cyndy Curran was present to brief the board. She said the proposal would do away with the requirement for a performance review. Dr. Holloway noted that the video performance did identify teachers who needed help and said it was a strong evaluation tool and hoped that districts would continue to use it. Shirley Holloway moved and Pat Shier seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development adopt the proposed amendments to 4 AAC 12.305, Teacher Certificate (Initial, Professional, Master) and 4 AAC 04.212(f), Objective Uniform Standards. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

District Improvement. Eddy Jeans was present to brief the board. He described the proposal as a re-adoption to correct an authority that had been cited prematurely in the original proposal. Pat Shier moved and Phil Schneider seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development readopt as Part II the proposed regulations 4 AAC 06.850 and 4 AAC 06.872 related to District improvement plan and School-level desk audits to include the statutory authority AS 14.07.030. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Board Appointment. The board appointed one of its members to serve on the Mt. Edgecumbe High School Advisory Council. Dr. Holloway moved and Pat Shier to appoint Carol Schaeffer to the position of State Board representative to the Mt. Edgecumbe High School Advisory Council. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Mt. Edgecumbe High School Report. Bill Hutton, the new MEHS superintendent, was present to brief the board. He warmly welcomed the board to Sitka and Mt. Edgecumbe. He presented a video regarding life at MEHS. Mr. Hutton introduced Scott McAdams, vice chair of the advisory council. He said there were 434 enrolled students. There had been 481 applications, with 47 on the waiting list, 229 students returned this year and there were 392 beds available. Some of the reasons cited by students for choosing MEHS were to be part of the MEHS tradition, opportunity to get into a top college, better

education, opportunity to leave home social problems, academic challenge, no high school in local village, and preparing to live independently. He described the students as being woven into the fabric of the Sitka community. Mr. Hutton introduced Bernie Gurule, the academic principal. He said the greatest asset was the students, who represented over 100 villages. MEHS has made AYP in 2008 and 88% of the graduates went on to college with \$1.5 million in scholarship being offered. They enjoy a CTE program and a dual enrollment program with UA/Sitka. A student can earn up to 32 credits before graduation. Mr. Hutton described several unique learning opportunities for students at MEHS, like working with Scripps University on an oceanic program in the Arctic Ocean, and a genetics and molecular biology class, world languages, and a sister school in Japan, who were going to be visiting soon. Mr. Hutton introduced Vic Luan, the residential principal, who described staff and how they worked with the students. He said there were not many discipline issues. The ratio was 5:3 female to male students. Mr. Hutton described some of the struggles such as fuel and transportation, building and grounds maintenance, and homesickness of the students.

Board members thanked Mr. Hutton for inviting the board and showcasing the school and the students. The commissioner said pride in the school was very apparent.

Graduation rate update. Les Morse was present to brief the board on the various activities in the department as they relate to the graduation rate. He gave some historical information and told of plans for increasing the graduation rate. The board discussed gender breakdown, special education issues, Head Start issues, available data, and parental involvement as it related to the graduation rate. The commissioner said there were three ways to contribute to success 1) connect to cultural, community and family; 2) health of the student(s), and 3) good academic program with quality teachers. The biggest characteristic of a dropout is no vision. Chair Cox emphasized good teaching practices and parental vision.

Budget & Legislative Report. Eddy Jeans was present to brief the board. He said budget preparations were under way. The department was asking for additional positions in technology, math and reading, and intervention. The commissioner noted that the department would like a director of rural education, but was doubtful that it would make it through the budget.

Assessment Report. Les Morse, the newly appointed Deputy Commissioner, was present to brief the board. He said that the spring assessment dates were increased in support of public comment. The Unity portals were not ready yet for demonstration. A new RFP was to be released soon. Mr. Morse reviewed the rollout information for AYP and the Alaska School Incentive program. Ms. Reynolds said she felt the incentive program was divisive.

Attorney General's Report. Neil Slotnick was present to brief the board. He discussed the ongoing legal cases with the department. He said there were three disability cases, two were dismissed and are on appeal, and one was in mediation.

Commissioner's Report. Larry LeDoux was present to brief the board. He discussed seismic issues and the safety of school facilities and said someone would be at the next meeting to further discuss this issue. He said the general fund allocation in the department's budget was insufficient for the department to carry out its mission and he would be asking for more money in the budget negotiations. He said he was exploring setting up an office in Anchorage and looking at department reorganization and he was taking the concerns with certification very seriously and the department was working on fixing them. He said he would like the board to reconsider its membership in NASBE because of the new ideas, information and professional development they offer. The commissioner said he was looking for an active, positive and rigorous dialogue at the upcoming education summit and hoped to develop a long-range plan with a clear vision statement for Alaska education. He said groups would discuss dropout/graduation rates, early childhood, learning expectations, facility and maintenance, long-range plan, career and technology, rural programs, school safety, and teacher quality/retention.

The commissioner said he had a concern with teachers who are hired without background checks and teachers who move around the state and are hired without a release in good standing from their previous district. Ms. Schaeffer said she liked that kind of accountability. Mr. Shier said it takes courage to go after general fund money and he was encouraged by the commissioner's willingness to do so.

Consent Agenda. Sylvia Reynolds moved and Phil Schneider seconded the following motion. I move the State Board of Education & Early Development approve the consent agenda consisting of: 1) approval the Galena City School District's Residential Boarding School revised application for a maximum reimbursement level of 175 students; 2) approval of minutes of the May 28, 29, 30, 2008, meeting; 3) approval of minutes of the July 25, 2008, meeting. The motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Board Comments.

Geri Benshoof, speaking for Dr. Holloway who had to leave early, thanked the commissioner and staff for a meaningful retreat and said she was excited about the summit. She thanked the staff of Mt. Edgecumbe for their hospitality, thanked Sylvia Reynolds for her presentation, and noted that she would join the December meeting by audio.

Geri Benshoof thanked the Mt. Edgecumbe staff, students and Sitka School District. She said she appreciated the commissioner and what he wants to do for education, and for streamlining teacher certification. She supported joining NASBE and recommended a book called "Winter Walk," which is a guide for parenting, by Loretta Cox.

Phil Schneider said he wished the governor the best and that it was a pleasure working with the commissioner. He said his priorities were for students being competitive in the global marketplace and financial literacy. He said he appreciated the work on the graduation rate and technology discussion and thanked the Mt. Edgecumbe staff and the Sitka School District.

Sylvia Reynolds noted that Loretta Cox was an outstanding teacher in Nome, she welcomes the commissioner, and congratulated Cynthia Curran and Les Morse on their appointments and thanked Mt. Edgecumbe and staff and the Sitka School District. She said she was excited about the Unity project and the education summit and thanked Donna Foxley for her report.

Jazmin Ziden thanked the Sitka and Mt. Edgecumbe staffs and said she was glad to have had the opportunity to meet with the Mt. Edgecumbe student council while in Sitka. She thanked the commissioner for his vision and congratulated Les Morse and Cynthia Curran on their appointments and thanked the board for bringing her in. She said she was excited about the summit.

Bunny Schaeffer thanked Mt. Edgecumbe and Steve Bradshaw for their hospitality. She congratulated Les Morse and Cynthia Curran on their appointments and noted that she liked the retreat.

Pat Shier thanked everyone for their hospitality, congratulated Bunny Schaeffer on her appointment to the MEHS advisory board, said he was excited about the summit, and was proud to serve in Governor Palin's administration. He said the school year should be extended so teachers and administrators could dialogue about what was working, changes and strategies for improvement.

Esther Cox thanked the Sitka School District and Mt. Edgecumbe for their hospitality saying she enjoyed the tour of both. She said she'd like to investigate the notion of dual credit, to find out more about what district were doing. She noted that the construction academy had seven sites. She congratulated Les Morse and Cynthia Curran on their appointments and thanked the commissioner on his vision and said she thought the retreat was awesome. She expressed concern for those in the path of the new hurricane, Ike.

Larry LeDoux thanked the staff for their work and thanked Mt. Edgecumbe and the Sitka School District for having the board and all their extra efforts to welcome us.