March 25, 2010

The meeting was called to order by Chair Cox at 8:00 a.m. in the board meeting room at the Department of Education & Early Development in Juneau, AK. Commissioner LeDoux administered The Oath of Office to Jim Merriner as a new member and to Esther Cox as having been reappointed to the board. A quorum was present. Phil Schneider, Pat Shier, Major Sullivan and Tim Rockey were absent. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. The chair asked if anyone had any conflicts of interest. Jim Merriner said he worked for the Galena School District and Bunny Schaeffer said she worked for the Northwest Arctic Borough School District which was under a school improvement plan. The chair ruled that there was no conflict.

The Chair asked if there were any changes to the agenda. Commissioner LeDoux asked that item 6B, the facilities regulation, be moved to 11:30 a.m. to follow agenda item 3, and Chair Cox indicated that the start time for the next day should be moved to 8:30 a.m. due to the board’s meeting with the House Education Committee. The amended agenda was moved by Janel Keplinger and seconded by Geri Benshoof and approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Public Comment

Don Carey from the Mat-Su school district commented in opposition to the facilities regulation that it wasn’t fair to limit school districts with 1 or 2 sites with those districts with many sites to the same number of applications for capital funding.

Representative Millet spoke in favor of HB 368, an Act requiring successful completion of a civics examination consisting of questions from the civics portion of the United States naturalization examination.

Mary Francis, Executive Director, Alaska Council of School Administrators, spoke in favor of repealing the 70% minimum expenditure for instruction requirement, saying that it required a great deal of paperwork for the districts, and had no affect on student achievement.

Tracy Page in the Anchorage LIO Office thanked the board for its support of the social work endorsement. She said she was now working in the Begich Middle School program and enjoying her work.

Work Session

University Programs. Mary Dallas Allen, Assistant Professor of Social Work at UAA and Patty McMillian, a LKSD social worker, were present along with Cyndy Curran, Director of Teaching & Learning Support, to discuss approval of the Master in Social Work Program. It requires 60
credit hours and a two-year practicum. Ms. McMillian said LKSD was pioneering the use of social workers, creating the program with UAA. Upon completion, students will be eligible for a Type C certificate for K-12. The board heard the program overview and its prerequisites. The program is meeting a basic need in Alaska teacher preparation and meets national standards.

Dr. Eric Madsen, Dean of Education, and Joanne Healy, UAF faculty, were online from UAF to discuss the approval of a new degree program, a Post-baccalaureate certificate in K-12 Special Education and a Master of Education in Special Education. UAF was responding the state’s critical need in both of these areas by designing the programs. The board heard the program overview and its prerequisites. Dr. Madsen said they were working hard to make sure that all credits were completely transferable between the UA campuses. Ms. Healy said the program credits could be taken in any order except for the practicum at the end of the program.

Alaska Pacific University (APU) NCATE. Mr. Curran said that APU was addressing the NCATE concerns expressed last year and was provisionally accredited. APU appealed the Board of Examiners decision by submitting evidence to the unit accreditation board that they were working on the problems and their provisional was reinstated. Mr. Curran said she supports APU in their work in turning out teachers for Alaska. The decision to revoke was remanded to the Unit Accreditation Board in April. The issue was APU not having a computer assessment system, and the diversity of the faculty. Ms. Curran said APU will come to the June board meeting. The State Board approved APU’s programs through June 30, 2010 at their last meeting. That enables those graduating this spring, to do so from an accredited school. Ms. Curran said smaller states use the state board to approve programs; however, in larger states, there is usually an approval board for this purpose. Their intention is to become NCATE accredited, which is very expensive.

The board discussed approving APU for another year while they work on the NCATE issue. Ms. Schaeffer said if the board fails to take action now, the teacher education program fails. Ms. Keplinger said she’d like to support the APU students, because switching to UAA is not simple because the courses are different and they don’t all transfer. Ms. Cox said the program needs to be preserved, and she added its provisional approval to the next day’s agenda.

Fairbanks North Star Borough School District secondary school program. Wayne Gerke, Assistant Superintendent, was present to discuss the revamping of its secondary school program. Mr. Gerke said the district held five different forums in the community for gather input. The local board has approved the four goals of the program. Each goal has a list of methods or means to reach each goal. The identified four goals: 1) create a climate of respect; 2) prepare students for life after high school; 3) implement structures to support student achievement; and 4) establish a culture of high expectations. He briefly explained how they were approaching each goal. He said they support these goals by professional learning communities and using advisories for interventions and using enrichment activities & tutoring. Students have 39 courses available to get college credit before they graduate. Their graduation rate this past year was 70%. He also
described an intercession program for seniors who are short one or two credits or courses to graduate. The program is held during the summer with a graduation at the end. They have graduated 33 students this way so far.

Ms. Schaeffer asked how the program would change if the GPS passed. Mr. Gerke said they would have to re-do the plan to add the staffing and create more rigor. Ms. Schaeffer said she was glad the program pamphlet went to parent so they knew about it.

Facilities regulation to adopt. Eddy Jeans was present to brief the board. This item was moved up on the agenda. There were two typos in the regulation that were brought to the department’s attention. The board discussed the number of capital improvement grants a district could apply for and the number that appear on the actual CIP list, and whether there should be a staggered amount depending on school size. The department made several changes in the regulation as a result of public comment. Some of the concerns addressed insurance or self-insurance verification, and defining replacement costs to include all costs associated with replacement of a facility, and allowing EED rather than the Department of Natural Resources to determine if a state-owned facility has use by another state agency.

Birchtree Charter School. Cyndy Curran was present to brief the board about a new charter school, along with Lauri Berrigan and John Weltman. They were requesting a three-year approval. Birchtree is in Mat-Su, serves 160 students in K-8. The teacher-student ratio is 1:24. They base their instruction on the Waldorf curriculum/philosophy. Ms. Berrigan said they have some options for a building and are looking into a busing situation especially if the facility turns out to be in Palmer. She also said they plan to do an Alaskan Culture block working with the Knick Tribe.

Alaska native Cultural Charter School. Cyndy Curran was present to brief the board about this request for renewal for a period of three years. AK Native Cultural Charter School is a Title I school, with 38% of their students identified as special needs students. The school serves students in K-6, has 188 students with a 1:25 teacher-student ratio.

Rilke Schule-German Charter School. Cyndy Curran was present to brief the board about this request for renewal for a period of 10 years. The school services students in K-8, has 265 students with a 1:20 teacher-student ratio. They describe themselves as an arts & sciences enriched language curriculum. They have 6,000 hours of volunteer help in the school, they are meeting AYP, and they implement the Anchorage School District’s standards and curriculum.

School district audited financial waivers for the 70% minimum expenditure for instruction requirement for the fiscal 2009 year. This year there were three school districts who did not meet the minimum requirement after the audit. They were Kashunamiut, Yakutat and Yupiit school districts. All three has larger than expected operations & maintenance expenditures. Yupiit also cited lower enrollment than budgeted for. Yakutat cited additional insurance costs also.
Regulations to adopt. There were two regulations for the board to consider adopting. The first was the Nonstandardized Administrative Manual, 4AAC 06.775(i). The proposed amendment would align the manual with the HSGQE Proficiency Descriptors in mathematics. The date of the manual was also changed to March 2010. The second regulation being proposed to adopt was the Facilities regulation, 4 AAC 31. The proposal made several changes to the reg providing clarity, allowing EED instead of the Department of Natural Resources to determine whether a state-owned educational facility had any use by another state agency, and defining “replacement costs” to include all costs associated with replacement of a facility as are needed to insure that the facility is fully operational at no additional cost to the district.

Regulations to go out for public comment. There were two regulations for the board to consider opening a period of public comment. The first was the school improvement grants, 4 AAC 06.835 & 06.882. The proposal would change a school’s designation and ranking for purposes of awarding grants. This is a new federal requirement under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The second regulation, 4 AAC 04.140, was a proposal to establish Alaska Physical Education Standards.

**Business Meeting**

School Improvement Grants regulation. Janel Keplinger moved and Geri Benshoof seconded the following motion. I move the State Board of Education & Early Development open a period of public comment on amendments to 4 AAC 06.835, and 4 AAC 06.882 Rankings, regarding Designations School Improvement Grants. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Physical Education Standards regulation. Jim Merriner moved and Donald Handeland seconded the following motion. I move the State Board of Education & Early Development open a period of public comment on amendments to 4 AAC 04.140, regarding Alaska Physical Education Standards. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Nonstandardized Assessment Manual regulation. Carol Schaeffer moved and Jim Merriner seconded the following motion. I move the State Board of Education & Early Development adopt changes to the revised *Nonstandardized Assessment Administrative Manual*. The Manual is adopted by reference in 4 AAC 06.775(i), Statewide assessment program for students with disabilities. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Facilities regulation. Janel Keplinger moved and Geri Benshoof seconded the following motion. I move the State Board of Education & Early Development adopt amendments to 4 AAC 31, regarding Facilities regulations. After discussion regarding limiting the number of applications for capital projects for districts, the question was called. The motion passed by a 3-2 roll call vote.

University of Alaska Social Work Program. Carol Schaeffer moved and Jim Merriner seconded the following motion. I move the State Board of Education & Early Development approve the
special services preparation program, Specialization in School Social Work, at the University of Alaska Anchorage. The motion passed by a unanimous roll call vote.

University of Alaska Fairbanks Post-Baccalaureate certificate in K-12 Special Education and Master of Education in Special Education program. Geri Benshoof moved and Carol Schaeffer seconded the following motion. I move the State Board of Education & Early Development approve the post-baccalaureate certificate in Special Education and the Master Degree in Special Education program at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Friday, March 26, 2010

The meeting was called to order by Chair Cox at 9:00 a.m. after the board meet with the House Education Committee. All members were present except Phil Schneider and Tim Rockey. The chair asked if there were any disclosures. Ms. Schaeffer indicated that she was an employee of the Northwest Arctic Borough School District, which was under a school improvement plan. Janel Keplinger said that her school has two students in the APU teacher program. The chair ruled there was no conflict. The agenda for the day was amended to include approval of the appointments to the military compact board, approval of APU program extension, and a review of the June meeting location. Carol Schaeffer moved and Janel Keplinger to approve the agenda as amended. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Mt. Edgecumbe High School report. Bill Hutton, Superintendent, was present to brief the board. He asked student advisor-elect, Donald Handeland, to join him for the report. Commissioner LeDoux said that Mr. Hutton had done an outstanding job at MEHS and he was retiring/leaving the state at the end of the school year. The commissioner said it was an incredible loss to the state. Mr. Handeland reported that the girls won state in basketball and the boys had come in fifth, and second in regionals. He said that there were nine delegates attending the AASG meeting in Fairbanks concurrently with this meeting. Mr. Hutton said that the genetics class at MEHS had discovered a new mushroom species that had never been identified as having been in Alaska before. The discovery was made through DNA sequencing. He said that their Japanese student was living in the dorm and going to class every day. He said the experience was working well and next fall they were expecting two students from China. He said they were struggling to keep on time with the new roofing project. The WorkKeys results were not in yet. The results will be used as a counseling tool. Mr. Hutton said there were 360 students currently enrolled. Chair Cox said that Mr. Hutton had done a great job at Mt. Edgecumbe as evidenced by how well the students were doing and he would be missed.

Libraries, Archives & Museums Report. Linda Thibodeau, Director, was present to brief the board. She introduced Bob Banghart, the new Chief Curator for the Museum who was hired in November 2009. She noted that on June 6th, the division will be 110 years old and they are planning a birthday party. She said the broadband technology grant was submitted on March 15.
It will help improve more than 100 libraries in the state and enable an E-rate consortium, supply video and web conferencing equipment to libraries and support training opportunities around the state. They expect to hear about approval sometime in September 2010. Mr. Thibodeau said the SLAM project was in the process of discovery and envisioning, and workshops were planned to be held in April for public input. The final concept phase will be over in September. Glenn Cook, the new deputy director was present. He said they were starting over for the head archivist job. They have two education programs, one for the AK Historical Record Board funded by a grant. They are meeting in regional hubs and conducting programs in preservation and grant writing. The second are forums with the National Archives for training. Mr. Banghart, the museum curator, said they were working on forming new alliances with partners. The museum will have a historic exhibit on the Princess Cruise Ships this summer with activities geared to kids. He said there were many technology challenges moving to digital formats. He also described a building sustainable building project with Nome School District next year.

Assessment, Accountability and Information Management report. Erik McCormick was present to brief the board. Mr. McCormick said the $3.5M grant for the longitudinal Data system was nearing completion. He also described a grand 7-12 survey sent to students and parents about how the state assessment system has impacted instruction. Date Recognition Company (DRC) will tabulate the results and have them back to the department by May 7. The board will hear a report at the June meeting. Mr. McCormick said they were also conducting an on line pilot of standards based assessments to see if on line testing is viable, the technology reliable and if students and teachers are ready for this next phase. He said the HSGE focus group was discussing credibility of the diploma, student motivation and benefits to the state. Results will be known in June. He also said that they were also working on an alignment of the Common Core with the Alaska GLEs. He said that generally, Alaska was aligned 75% in reading, 65% in writing and 50% aligned in mathematics. Ms. Keplinger asked if Alaska was going to adopt the Common Core. The commissioner gave a short history saying states were asked to sign on sight-unseen. Alaska continues to monitor. He said it was a very expensive effort to retool our education system. Alaska will continue to develop our standards while cooperating with the federal government. There is no choice in adopting the Common Core; they have to be adopted 100% or nothing. They can be added to, but they have to be adopted to in the whole. Ms. Keplinger said Alaska took a brave stand and commended the commissioner for the stand. Chair Cox said she attended the NASBE western region Common Core meeting. She said she observed that the states that had signed on were clearly chasing the money.

School Improvement report. Les Morse, Deputy Commissioner, was present to brief the board. He described the self-study tool for evaluating instructional effectiveness. He also described the AK STEPP (AK Steps Toward Educational Progress and Partnerships), a tool for districts and school improvement planning as well as self study. The instructional audits with new districts were recently completed. They are working with all five intervention districts making sure the curriculum is aligned with the standards. Informative feedback comments will be done by May.
The Alaska Leadership Institute for the intervened districts and RAPPS grant districts was successful last year and there is interest in doing it again this year. It involves 14 or 15 districts.

In answer to questions about the self study, Mr. Morse said it was helping districts to figure out where they are and how to look differently. There is a great depth of support in the intervention district with teachers and principals, district coaches, and mentors. He noted that teacher turnover was about the same but principal turnover was lower.

Legislative/Budget report. Eddy Jeans was present to brief the board. He said that the budget had gone well this year. Three content specialists were added to the department and the Senate moved the System of State Support to the TLS division and out of executive administration (commissioner’s office). He also noted the funding for Best Beginnings had exceeded what the governor had originally asked for. Mr. Jeans said the GPS bill was in the finance committees and a top priority of the governor. The department is still testifying on its behalf. Mr. Jeans highlighted several bills affecting education: extension of forward funding, repeal of the HSGQE, charter schools extending school debt reimbursement program by three years, and school lunch programs. Concerning the CIP list, he said he didn’t know how large that package would be.

Teaching & Learning Support report. Cyndy Curran was present to brief the board. Ms. Curran’s report was divided into five parts, all coming out of the Alaska Education Plan: 1) career and tech education, 2) student health and safety, 3) graduation working group, 4) virtual schools, and 5) teacher quality. Ms. Curran began by thanking Helen Mehrkens, Sondra Meredith and Cecilia Miller for their work on CTE, Teacher Quality and the Virtual school. Concerning CTE, Ms. Curran said the group met in April and will be incorporating feedback into the CTE plan. They are now piloting in five districts, coordinating with the university and working on the standards. Concerning health and safety, the PE standards have come out of this working group and came before the board today in the form of a regulation to go out for public comment. The final plan will be ready in June. The graduation working group has been meeting. They are working with middle school partnerships and identifying things that push students out. Erik McCormick and Dottie Knuth have been working with this group also. Concerning virtual schools, Commissioner LeDoux said the state has had distance delivery and correspondence for a long time in AK, and a virtual school will supplement those existing efforts. The name of the virtual school will be the Alaska Virtual Learning Network (AVLN). A broad framework is being worked on whereby the leader would be an executive director, not a principal, it will be owned by the school, credit will be awarded by the school, control will be by the school district, and districts will join by paying a fee - “Any time, any way instruction”. The next step is issuing an RFP. Concerning Teacher Quality, the working group has been examining issues related to mentoring and induction, evaluation, teacher certification and renewal, professional development, and the certification process/salary and tenure. Ms. Curran briefed the board on the recommendations not requiring new or amended regulations or statutory revisions. Number one on the list was requiring a teacher, upon hiring to disclose whether they
have taught anywhere in Alaska in the past. Other recommendations were to require districts to post the evaluation tool on the district web site, and an advisory board, to meet twice a year, to make recommendations to the board and to provide support for those seeking national board certification. They also discussed a Type M certificate for Voc. Tech, Alaska Native cultural and ROTC who don’t have a Education Baccalaureate Degree. Teacher evaluation needs deeper discussion to bring it into the 21st century and an evaluation expert to advise the group.

Recommendations that would require a new or amended regulation were: 1) all six credit for renewal be relevant to present position, endorsement area, 2) require all superintendents to hold an administrator’s certificate, 3) require 3-5 years as minimum classroom experience for a Type B certificate, and 4) add a master or leader certificate. In addition, it was generally felt that the AK Studies and Multi Cultural requirement was too costly. They also recommended that the state board formally adopt the AK Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools, and there should be a tiered induction model for teachers who are new to Alaska. The board agreed that the working group should continue to meet. In June, the board will address some of the issues.

Rural report. Phyllis Carlson was present to brief the board. Ms. Carlson said she was working with the state system of support through Deputy Commissioner Morse, she was working on creating a rural advisory board and serving on the suicide prevention council. Ms. Carlson said building Capacity for rural education in the department was her goal. She listed several visits she had made to rural school districts around the state.

Attorney General’s report. Rebecca Hattan, Assistant Attorney General was present to brief the board. She said they had reached a settlement on the Anchorage School District’s intensive funding appeal, the Lakeview Neuro Rehab Center vs. Palin had been dismissed the funding appeal with the Ketchikan School District was now in the Commissioner’s hands, and there had been no change in the Moore case, and no word from Judge Gleason about her decision.

Commissioner’s report. Commissioner LeDoux indicated that the interviews for the new Mt. Edgecumbe High School Superintendent would be April 1st. He said Bruce Johnson would be replacing Mary Francis as Executive Director of the school administrator’s group. The commissioner said it was time to consider raising the math requirement from two to three years. He said he was hoping that the three content specialists the department had asked for in the budget would get funded and the department may have a health specialist funded also. Both House and Senate bills concerning the GPS were in finance committees and he described them as better now that when they began; however, the needs based component doubled the cost. He also has been working on truancy issues with the Bering St. School District and the AG’s office. He complimented the outstanding staff at the department and their work with the legislature.

Alaska Military Compact Council. Commissioner LeDoux was present to brief the board. The board was being asked to nominate persons to serve on the Alaska Military Compact Council. Commissioner LeDoux explained that HB 137 in 2009, established the compact commission,
which provides a voice for the military so students are not penalized because of parent’s transfers. It will enable timely release of student records to a new school district, course sequencing, exclusion for extra-curricular activities, redundant testing, data sharing, and ensure graduation requirements. The required members include two State Board of Education & Early Development members. It was suggested that Major Sullivan and Jim Merriner fill those slots. Other members include the state superintendent, a representative from a military installation, a military family liaison, a school district superintendent, a representative each from the legislative branches and 4 other stakeholders. Janel Keplinger moved and Geri Benshoof seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development approve the following names of persons to serve on the Alaska Military Compact Council: State superintendent of Education - Commissioner LeDoux has already been appointed; Superintendent of a school district with a high concentration of military children – Carol Comeau, Superintendent, Anchorage School District; Representative from a military installation – Brad Quarnberg, Eielson AFB; Representative each from the legislative and executive branches of government – Sen. Charlie Huggins, Senate District H and Commissioner LeDoux; Military family education liaison – Marcy Herman, Legislative Liaison; EED, Stakeholders – Representative Carl Gatto, House District 13 (Palmer); Jena Bienia, Elmendorf AFB; LCDR Bradford Apitz, USCG Kodiak; and Makayla Bell, Chugiak High School – Student Representative, State Board of Education & Early Development, Jim Marriner and Maj. Grant Sullivan. The motion was passed by unanimous roll call vote.

June meeting location. Commissioner LeDoux recommended that the June 2010, meeting location be changed from Kodiak to Anchorage. He said that school would be out already in Kodiak, and he also cited financial reasons to change the meeting location. He said another time to visit Kodiak would be good when school was in session. Maj. Sullivan invited the board to tour Elmendorf AFB during the June meeting on June 9, making the dates of the June meeting, June 9 -11. Geri Benshoof moved to change the meeting location of the June meeting to Anchorage and the dates to 9-11. Jim Merriner seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Board Comments.

Donald Handeland said that Tim Rockey was at the AASG conference.

Major Sullivan welcomed Jim Merriner and said he appreciated the hard work of the packet preparation and was excited about having the board members come to Elmendorf in June.

Carl Schaeffer welcomed Jim Merriner. She thanked the staff for their work and the work on the teacher quality issues.

Jim Merriner thanked everyone for a warm welcome to the board.

Janel Keplinger congratulated MEHS, and said good bye to Mr. Hutton. She thanked the department and welcomed Jim Merriner. She said she appreciated the board’s support in her first year as being a principal.

Geri Benshoof welcomed Jim Merriner and said she thought he was a good addition to the board. She said she was pleased with the caution concerning the Common Core and the Race To The Top. She said she is increasingly impressed with the work of the staff. She also said she liked the CTE program and the cooperation with the Department of Labor.

Esther Cox welcomed Jim Merriner. She reminded everyone of their APOC obligation. She noted that Amy Loyd was awarded a three-year scholarship to Harvard. She said she wanted the House and Senate Education committees to know when committee meetings were schedules. She said she thought the reauthorization of NCLB was going very slowly and she was monitoring the draft plan. Ms. Cox requested that the board invite Dr. Holloway to the June meeting to recognize her service to the board. She thanked the staff and the commissioner for giving excellent leadership. She said appreciated Erik McCormick’s report and reminded board members of the new June meeting dates. She also notes that she had concerns with students who were not in school saying they were home schooled. Commissioner LeDoux said he was concerned for those students too, and the fact that the department can’t do anything about them. He said homeschoolers view interference by the state as taking away their rights. Chair Cox wished Bill Hutton good luck in his retirement.

Executive Session. Geri Benshoof moved and Carol Schaeffer seconded the following motion. I move the State Board of Education & Early Development convene in executive session to discuss matters that are of attorney client privilege. The motion passed with unanimous roll vote.

The board came out of executive session, and by mutual consent adjourned the meeting.