

Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development
Approved Minutes
Tele/video conference originating in Juneau, AK
July 24, 2012

The meeting was called to order by Chair Merriner at 9 a.m. A quorum was present. Jim Merriner, Esther Cox, and Janel Keplinger were present on video conference. Pat Shier was present in the auxiliary board room in Juneau. Carol Schaeffer, Phil Schneider and Madison Manning were present by teleconference.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. The Chair asked if anyone had any disclosures. There were none. The Chair asked if there were any changes to the agenda. There were none. The agenda was moved by Esther Cox, seconded by Pat Shier, and approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Public Comments

Teresa Holt, Operations Director of the Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special Education, said it has been a priority to increase the special education workforce. The council supports the creation of a four-year special education degree, in preference to a fifth-year program added to a four-year degree. The council provided input to the University of Alaska Southeast on the content of a special education degree program. Ms. Holt applauded the proposed master's degree program in special education, which is a distance degree program mainly serving rural educators.

Work Session

6. Annual Measureable Objectives. Commissioner Hanley read the issue statement from the board packet. The Commissioner said the U.S. Department of Education will allow Alaska to freeze its AMOs for a year as the state works toward submitting on Sept. 6, 2012, a request for a comprehensive waiver. Erik McCormick, Director of Assessment, Accountability & Information Management, said the U.S. Department of Education has approved Alaska's request to freeze its AMOs, and EED has sent the state's school districts their schools' Adequate Yearly Progress data based on the proposed freeze. The public comments were minimal and mainly supportive.

Pat Shier asked if the board is concerned about approving high standards but not increasing the AMO, which reflects student performance. He also asked if funding for districts depends on freezing the AMOs. The Commissioner said the new standards and the waiver request are not related. No Child Left Behind requires that 100% of assessed students be proficient, but the law doesn't set the standard for proficiency. Freezing the AMOs would prevent Alaska from erroneously deeming an increased number of schools as failures. For example, 84% of a school's

students could be proficient, yet the school would have failed to meet the increased AMO. The state's waiver is not designed to avoid accountability but to put in place new accountability measures that make sense.

Esther Cox said the earlier AMOs remained the same for three years in a row and then jumped drastically to 100% in the final four years. It would make sense to freeze the AMO while districts align their curriculum to the new standards. Ms. Cox asked if the AMO would jump to the 2012-13 level next year. Commissioner Hanley said the state's new system would not use the current AMO chart but would be based on a different and more appropriate model. Ms. Cox asked when the U.S. Department of Education would respond to Alaska's request for a waiver. Deputy Commissioner Les Morse said the U.S. Department of Education generally has responded to states within three or four months but sometimes negotiations take longer. Commissioner Hanley said that if Alaska did not receive a comprehensive waiver, it would move forward with the AMOs, but added that he expects Alaska to receive a waiver. Jim Merriner noted that the new standards will first be assessed in spring 2016. Commissioner Hanley said the state will continue to use the current standards-based assessments until then.

Janel Keplinger asked what committee has been looking at the state's proposed accountability model under a waiver. Commissioner Hanley said the EED assessment staff is working on the model, which will recognize student growth. Erik McCormick said EED is looking for a model that balances student growth and student status in proficiency.

7A. UAS bachelor's degree in special education. Commissioner Hanley read the issue statement in the board packet. Dr. Deborah Lo, Dean of the School of Education and Graduate Studies at UAS, was present by teleconference. Esther Cox commended UAS. She asked why the program required Tlingit or Haida language courses; what is entailed in the "contrast visits"; and how long is the period of student teaching. Dr. Lo said the program would accept any language; the contrast visits are designed to familiarize students with grades other than what they will be teaching; and there are 15-week periods of student teaching and practicum, respectively. Janel Keplinger praised the program but noted that it did not require much instruction in math. Dr. Lo said that most learning disabilities are related to reading, but UAS intends to add a strong curriculum course. Ms. Cox asked when students take their education courses. Dr. Lo said that some courses are taken in freshman and sophomore year but the bulk is in junior and senior year. Pat Shier asked how long teachers work in special education. Dr. Lo said it varies, and some special education teachers transfer to regular classrooms; but with students with disabilities being included in regular classrooms, they will still be teaching those students. Mr. Shier asked if districts should provide teachers with sabbaticals. He appreciated the program's courses about inclusion of all students and collaboration and partnerships with families.

7B. UAS master's degree in teaching in special education. Sondra Meredith, Administrator of Teacher Certification, said the packet provides background information on the proposal. In answer to board members' questions, Dr. Deborah Lo said the program could be completed in one year and a summer, but many students already work full time and take longer. Dr. Lo said the program is for people who aren't already certified to teach. The university has a separate program for certified teachers. Dr. Lo said the students observe and assist the classroom teacher during the practicum but don't plan the lessons. During student teaching, the students gradually take over classroom duties. UAS faculty members periodically observe the student teachers. Part of their evaluation is to evaluate the student teachers' dispositions. Some students are counseled not to become teachers. Students can complete the entire program by distance, but UAS faculty members observe all student teachers in person.

7C. UAS suspension of programs in early education. Commissioner Hanley read the issues statement in the board packet. Sondra Meredith said UAS is arranging for the programs' students to complete their studies at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. In answer to board members' questions, Dr. Deborah Lo said it was a difficult decision but she is responsible for being a good steward of public funds. Dr. Lo said there are about 12 students in the master's program; the last will finish in fall 2013. There are 30 active undergraduates, and they can transfer to the same program online at UAF. Pat Shier asked if public schools and the university could work together to prepare students to enter the field. Esther Cox said the King Career Center in Anchorage does that.

8. Yupiit agreement. Commissioner Hanley provided the background, saying that the Yupiit School District would have had to repay the state about \$766,000 for a violation of state statute, but the district appealed. The state and the district have negotiated a settlement that would provide for three years of independent accounting and a personnel study, with the district to pay up to \$300,000 for these services. The Yupiit School Board is scheduled to consider the settlement on July 30, 2012. Neil Slotnick, Assistant Attorney General, said Yupiit would withdraw its appeal if both parties accept the settlement. If the Yupiit School Board rejected the settlement, the district's appeal would go to a hearing officer, who would recommend a decision to the state board. Commissioner Hanley said the state and the district have agreed on an accountant, who also will perform the personnel study.

Business Meeting

The following motion was made by Pat Shier and seconded by Esther Cox: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development adopt the proposed amendments to 4 AAC 06.815(b), Annual measurable objectives. The motion was passed by unanimous roll call vote.

The following motion was made by Esther Cox and seconded by Phil Schneider: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development approve the Bachelor of Arts in Special Education program at the University of Alaska Southeast. The motion was passed by unanimous roll call vote.

The following motion was made by Janel Keplinger and seconded by Esther Cox: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development approve the Master of Arts in Teaching in Special Education program at the University of Alaska Southeast. The motion was passed by unanimous roll call vote.

The following motion was made by Pat Shier and seconded by Janel Keplinger: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development approve the suspension of the Early Learning Childhood Education programs at the University of Alaska Southeast. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

The following motion was made by Esther Cox and seconded by Pat Shier: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development approve the settlement of the Yupiit School District's appeal from the state board's denial of a waiver under AS 14.17.520 for FY 2012, and authorize the commissioner to implement the terms of the settlement agreement. The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Board Comments

Esther Cox asked when the University of Alaska Anchorage could report to the board about its student teaching program. Ms. Cox also asked about the Southeast Island School District's request for a four-day school week. Commissioner Hanley said he would follow up with UA, and noted that he sent the board his latest response to the Southeast Island School District, rejecting its waiver request because it did not focus on the students' educational program. Ms. Cox agreed with the Commissioner's response. Ms. Cox said she liked UAS's special education programs.

Phil Schneider said he appreciates EED's efforts to work with the U.S. Department of Education. He added that his new son was born July 17.

Janel Keplinger said she has sent a link to a list of Kodiak B&Bs, and she offered to arrange tours of Kodiak sights when the board meets there in September.

Pat Shier said he appreciates the Commissioner's response to the Southeast Island School District.

Jim Merriner said he appreciates the help he received with the meeting, and asked about the open position of military advisor to the board. Commissioner Hanley said the new military advisor is returning from Afghanistan. Esther Cox said she believed the advisor would be here in October. Chair Merriner asked that his board packets be mailed to him.

Pat Shier moved for adjournment and Esther Cox seconded. Motion passed by unanimous consent.