

State Board of Education & Early Development
Unapproved Minutes
April 13, 2022
Virtual Platform Meeting
Department of Education & Early Development
801 West 10th Street
Juneau, AK 99801

Wednesday, April 13, 2022

Chair Fields called the meeting to order at 3:05 pm. After the pledge of allegiance, the board adopted the agenda for April 13, 2022. Member Erickson moved to adopt the agenda and was seconded by Member Stockhausen. There were no objections to the adoption of the agenda. There were no potential conflicts of interest identified by board members at this meeting. Member Van Diest and Lt. Col. Fowley were both excused from attendance.

Agenda Item 1. Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Johnson announced that since the March board meeting, Lacey Sanders has been appointed to the Deputy Commissioner role, and that Heidi Teshner would remain as a second Deputy Commissioner. Commissioner has been working with the Governor's Office, and because the State Board has such a robust agenda with Alaska's Education Challenge, the department really needs a Deputy Commissioner to take care of the day-to-day management of the department, and one that is focused on the policy and regulatory work of the board. Ms. Sanders will take on the day-to-day management of the department and Ms. Teshner will handle the policy and regulation development portion. There will be cross-over but having two Deputy Commissioners will help keep the momentum moving forward on Alaska's Education Challenge.

Budget Update

Lacey Sanders, Deputy Commissioner, provided the board with an updated on the department's FY2023 budget that is before the legislature. There are two processes happening at the same time, the House's version, and the Senate's version. For the House version, they added forwarding funding into the Public Education Fund for the Foundation and Pupil Transportation programs; added \$57 million one-time funding outside of the Foundation Program (this is contingent upon whether or not other base student allocation bills pass); added \$2.5 million as one-time additional pre-kindergarten grant funding; capitalized the Alaska Higher Education Investment Fund (HEIF) with \$395 million with a current year effective date (FY2022) and funded the programs with HEIF versus unrestricted general funds (WWAMI, Alaska Performance Scholarship, Alaska Education Grants, Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE), and Live Homework Help); expanded the WWAMI program from 20 to 30 seats through a multi-year appropriation; and included fully funding School Debt Reimbursement and the Regional Educational Attendance Area and Small Municipal School District School Fund (REAA Fund) in FY2023 and appropriated full funding for the FY2022 shortfall in both.

The Senate recently completed the subcommittee closeout process; this was done on March 31, 2022. There were three changes: added funding for two temporary grant administrators; funded the WWAMI expansion of 10 additional seats and included intent language to direct the department and ACPE to

work with the University to recruit students from rural Alaska; and lastly fully capitalized School Debt Reimbursement for FY2023 and additional funding for FY2022.

Ms. Sanders then outlined the remaining steps to occur to arrive at an operating budget and addressed that the capital budget typically comes later in the process and that there hadn't been any hearings on the capital budget yet. Ms. Sanders shared that at the June meeting, she would provide a final update on the department's FY2023 budget. There were no questions from board members.

Legislative Update

Kollette Schroeder, Legislative Liaison, provided the board with an update on the seventeen (17) education related pieces of legislation before the legislature that has been getting movement. She provided the update based on topic, including Reading; Rural Alaska bills; Recruitment and Retention; Alternate Program of Study; Military; School Funding; and other education related bills. Member Griffin asked about House Bill (HB) 164 and if it has seen any movement in House Education. Ms. Schroeder responded that it is still in the House Education Committee and there has been no action on the bill since February 2022. Commissioner Johnson shared that Senate Bill 111, companion to HB 164, has passed the Senate and been referred to the House Education and House Finance Committees. Second Vice Chair Kowalski shared that she was happy to hear about the compacting and reading bills having action taken. Chair Fields thanked Ms. Schroeder for her thorough update.

AK Star Assessment Update

Commissioner Johnson provided some general comments on how the new assessment has been going. Due to the pandemic, it has been two years since there has been a statewide assessment. There have been some bumps, but overall things are going well. The goal is to have an assessment that means something in the classroom. The department wanted to do an assessment this spring and then have some focus groups and surveys to figure out what went well and what needs to be tweaked in order to make it better, all toward the goal of making this an assessment that teachers wrap their arms around and is meaningful for what is happening in the classroom.

Kelly Manning, Deputy Director for the Division of Innovation and Education Excellence, continued with sharing that this is the first year of the new assessment for both English Language Arts (ELA) and Math, as well as the Alaska Science Assessment. Staff are working closely with districts, as well as with NWEA and DRC to ensure things are going smoothly. Overall, we are meeting expectations and on track to get the data on time. The Alaska Science Assessment was field-tested last year, so most of those glitches have already been worked through. The AK Star is the summative assessment for ELA and Math. The testing window opened on March 28, 2022 and closes on April 29, 2022. There was a slight pause with Anchorage School District to fix some glitches, but they worked with DEED and NWEA and are back up and testing. There is regular contact with district testing coordinators across the state to ensure the rest of the testing window goes smoothly.

Elizabeth Greninger, Assessment Administrator, provided the board with an update on the testing metrics to date. On the AK Star assessment, there is a total of 138,019 tests that need to be administered to approximately 70,000 students in grades 3-9 in ELA and Math. 79,787 tests have been completed to date and we are halfway through the testing window. Anchorage School District and other larger districts are testing this week; Wednesday tends to be a heavy testing day. There are six districts who have completed 90 percent or more of their testing; 41 school districts are more than 30 percent complete; and there are very few districts who have completed less than 30 percent of the tests. Staff are monitoring the metrics daily to ensure all districts are on track to finish.

Regarding the DRC Science Assessments, this test is administered to 5th, 8th, and 10th grades only. 16,831 tests have been completed to date, which is approximately 60% of the scheduled tests. There are eight districts that have completed 90 percent or more of their testing, and 60 percent of districts have completed at least 30 percent of their testing. Under both assessments, districts are on track to complete testing within the testing window. Chair Fields provided general comments and thanked the staff for all the hard work and Commissioner Johnson provided some additional general comments. There were no further questions.

Additional Updates

Commissioner Johnson provided the board with an update on upcoming events. He will be traveling to Fairbanks to attend the Purple Star ceremony on April 15, which will recognize schools that have achieved the Purple Star recognition, meaning they are friendly to military families.

The Science of Reading Symposium is coming up, April 29 through May 1 and there are well over 700 people registered so far. Commissioner Johnson thanked Director McKenzie, Tammy Van Wyhe, and the Region 16 Comprehensive Center staff, as well as department staff, on pulling this event together. In addition, the Alaska Association of School Boards (AASB) Law and Policy Day, which will talk about funding and other topics, will occur right before the Symposium on April 28 and 29. There are over 100 people registered so far for this preconference event.

Commissioner Johnson shared that the department would be moving to the State Office Building and will be sharing space with the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development on the 9th floor. This will save the department money and the move will be happening in phases starting in May and continuing into the summer.

The June State Board of Education meeting will be June 8 and 9 in Anchorage.

Commissioner Johnson and Member Stockhausen are working through the selection process for a new Mt. Edgecumbe High School Superintendent/Director. There will be an announcement soon and the approval of this position will occur at the June meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 3:50 pm.