

State Board of Education & Early Development
Approved Meeting Minutes
January 22, 2026
Virtual Meeting

Thursday January 22, 2026

Chair Stockhausen called the meeting to order at 8:01 am.

Roll was called, and the following members were present to provide a quorum: Member Barbara Tyndall, Member Kimberly Bergey, Member Pamela Dupras, First Vice Chair James Fields, Member Kathryn McCollum, Military Advisor Lt. Colonel James Fowley, Student Advisor Amber Sherman, and Chair Sally Stockhausen.

Chair Stockhausen called a quorum. The board pledged allegiance to the flag.

Chair Stockhausen called for a motion to adopt the meeting agenda. First Vice Chair Fields moved to adopt the agenda as presented for January 22, 2026. Member Dupras seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion to adopt the agenda passed unanimously by roll call vote.

There were no potential conflicts of interest disclosed.

Public Comment

1. Heather Charton, a lifelong Alaskan and member of the first cohort of UAA's Master of School Psychology Specialist program, described how she entered education during the pandemic after serving as a substitute teacher and witnessing growing academic, behavioral, and mental health needs among students. She chose UAA's new program because it allowed her to remain in Alaska with her family and community while pursuing this career.

She highlighted Alaska's severe shortage of school psychologists, with a current ratio of about 1 to 1,500 students compared to the recommended 1 to 500, and noted that Alaska is one of only two states without a graduate program in this field. Because accreditation is not expected until 2029, graduates may face delays in licensure and employment unless the Alaska State Board of Education approves the program as a direct pathway.

Heather urged the board to reconsider approval, emphasizing the high quality of instruction and the importance of training school psychologists in Alaska who are committed to serving local communities.

2. Rebecca Emerson, a Palmer resident and parent of a second-grade student with Down syndrome in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District, urged approval of the UAA School Psychology Specialist Program. She explained that school psychologists play a critical role for families like hers by translating clinical evaluations into practical, school-based plans that allow students to succeed and remain regulated in the classroom.

She emphasized Alaska's severe shortage of school psychologists, noting the state is one of only two without an in-state training program and has a student-to-psychologist ratio three times higher than recommended. This shortage leads to delayed evaluations, which in turn delays access to services such as Medicaid and special education supports. She also highlighted challenges faced by military families who must redo evaluations when transferring states, often encountering long delays due to limited staff. Rebecca asked the board to prioritize student needs over ideological concerns and approve the program to build a homegrown workforce to support Alaska's students.

3. Andrew Friske, a lifelong Alaskan and longtime Mt. Edgecumbe High School administrator and board member, testified about serious concerns over understaffing and student safety that led to his retirement. He

reported that Mt. Edgecumbe has lost nearly 25% of its enrollment—about 100 students—midway through the school year, an unprecedented level of attrition even compared to the COVID years.

He urged the State Board to exercise its authority by forming an independent ad hoc committee to investigate why students are leaving. Friske attributed the problem to understaffing, inadequate training, funding shortfalls, and recent leadership and oversight decisions. He asked the board and DEED to work together to stabilize the school, restore confidence for current and prospective students, and advocate for appropriate funding during the current legislative session.

4. Ella McCrae, a current student in the UAA School Psychology program, spoke in support of the program's approval and described Alaska's ongoing shortage of school psychologists and its direct impact on students. She emphasized the essential role school psychologists play in connecting academics, mental health, and social-emotional development, and noted that the program is designed to meet real student needs, not promote any particular agenda.

She shared positive experiences from within the new program, highlighting the dedicated faculty, thoughtful curriculum, and strong sense of community among students. Ella expressed pride and gratitude for being part of the program and urged the board to approve it to ensure Alaska's students have access to skilled and ethical school psychologists.

5. Tanya Kitka, a Mt. Edgecumbe High School alumna (Class of 2002) and alumni representative on the advisory board, urged the Alaska State Board of Education to intervene in what she described as a manufactured and avoidable crisis at Mount Edgecumbe High School. She reported record student attrition, attributing much of it to instability and overly restrictive conditions in dorm life, inconsistent rule enforcement, and a lack of properly trained residential staff.

She expressed concern that current administration is not adequately addressing these issues and called for closer state oversight, including a special meeting if necessary. Kitka also requested that the superintendent position be reopened and filled through a thorough, transparent hiring process with stakeholder input, noting that the current superintendent was appointed under time pressure and serves two districts. She concluded that the school's problems stem not only from funding, but from leadership, operational decisions, and insufficient accountability, and asked the board to act quickly to protect students and the school's legacy.

Work Session

Agenda Item 1 – Governor's FY2027 Operating Budget Review

Dawn Hannish, Administrative Services Director for the Department of Education and Early Development, presented the Governor's FY2027 operating budget and explained that most changes are technical or timing-related, focused on aligning funding across fiscal years rather than creating new programs. The budget prioritizes fiscal alignment and sustainability while maintaining core education services.

She reported that the K–12 Foundation Program and pupil transportation are fully funded according to statute, including a \$700 increase to the Base Student Allocation and continued formula-based distribution to districts. Additional adjustments support state tribal education compacting, child nutrition, broadband assistance grants, and administrative alignment without reducing services. The budget also includes new support for the Bristol Bay Regional Career and Technical Education Consortium's residential program and maintains Mental Health Trust Initiative funding and federal grant continuity.

For higher education, funding increases reflect higher student participation in scholarships and grants administered by Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education. License plate revenue authority for the Alaska State Council on the Arts is reauthorized and aligned with projected collections. Hannish concluded that supporting materials in the board packet provide further detail and offered to answer questions.

Agenda Item 2 – AK Educational Challenge Resolution

Member Kathryn McCollum introduced a resolution for the Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development reaffirming support for Alaska’s Education Challenge, the statewide initiative launched in 2017 to improve student outcomes. She explained that the resolution renews the board’s commitment to the framework and its goals, and noted that public comment will be sought before final adoption.

Commissioner Bishop added that the Education Challenge review process helped refocus and energize the department’s work. She emphasized that upcoming board and committee sessions will concentrate on setting deliberate, attainable goals and continuing the progress of Alaska’s Education Challenge following its first major review.

Agenda Item 3 – Regulation for Consideration

3. A. 4 AAC 34.055: Update Alternate ACCESS Proficiency levels

Deborah Riddle, Division Operations Manager for Innovation and Education Excellence, presented a proposed update to regulations establishing proficiency scores and exit criteria for the Alternate ACCESS assessment. This assessment is used for English learner students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

She explained that Alaska previously had no exit criteria for these students, and a U.S. Department of Education peer review required the state to develop one. After working with stakeholders and a technical advisory committee and reviewing data from Alaska and other states, the department determined that Level 4 (on a scale of 1 to 5) should be set as the proficiency and exit benchmark. The board is being asked to adopt regulations establishing Level 4 as the official cut score for exiting students from Alternate ACCESS.

Agenda Item 4 – Kenai Peninsula Borough School District, Nikolaevsk Charter School

The board considered an application from the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District for approval of the Nikolaevsk Charter School. District staff explained that the charter had worked through prior concerns, received local board approval, and submitted a thorough application for state review.

Charter representatives described a K–12 program combining a traditional in-person school with a homeschool option to better support families in their community. The proposed model includes Montessori instruction for grades K–8 and a strong Career and Technical Education (CTE) focus for grades 9–12. Board members praised the quality and completeness of the application, highlighted the value of the CTE emphasis, and commended the effort to integrate homeschool families.

In response to questions, the charter explained its plan to manage both programs by maintaining smaller advisor caseloads for homeschool students and small class sizes for in-person instruction, with strong parent involvement. Department leadership thanked the district and charter group for working through challenges and bringing the proposal forward, emphasizing the importance of expanding educational choice for families.

Agenda Item 5 – Committee Meetings

Commissioner Bishop outlined the purpose of the board’s committee work: to move Alaska’s Education Challenge into its next phase by developing clear, measurable SMART goals aligned with the five strategic priorities established in 2017. She explained that a recent review showed many earlier goals were broad aspirations that the department and districts did not have direct control over, making them difficult to measure or achieve.

She emphasized the importance of distinguishing between inputs (actions and resources), adult outcomes, and student outcomes, and stressed that the board’s primary focus should be on student outcomes—what students know and are able to do. Goals must be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound, and grounded in existing data sets rather than creating new reporting burdens for districts.

As an example, she described a proposed SMART goal under the career and technical education priority: increasing the percentage of students who complete two consecutive approved CTE courses by 25 percent over three years, based on evidence that these students graduate at higher rates. This illustrated how goals should be data-driven and focused on results rather than activities.

Commissioner Bishop concluded that each committee should develop two SMART goals tied to the strategic priorities, identify the data that will be used to measure success, and keep accountability centered on student outcomes. She noted the process is challenging and iterative, but essential for ensuring that the work of the Department of Education and Early Development and the board leads to measurable improvements for Alaska's students.

5A. Closing the Achievement Gap

Member Dupras reported that her committee discussed priority areas for future SMART goals but did not finalize wording and will continue that work for the March meeting. The group focused especially on mathematics, identifying it as a key area for improvement, and also discussed student attendance. They agreed their goals will likely center on English language arts and math performance as measured by the Alaska STAR assessment.

5B. Educator Workforce

Member Fowley reported that the Educator Workforce committee discussed potential goals related to apprenticeship programs and examining whether completion rates influence retention of teachers and principals. The group also talked about Career and Technical Student Organizations, particularly Educators Rising, as a possible pathway for recruiting and keeping educators within local communities.

5C. Safety and Wellbeing

Member Barbara Tyndall reported that the Safety and Wellbeing committee focused on mental health and school culture, emphasizing the importance of making schools places where students feel safe, welcome, and want to attend. Student Advisor Amber Sherman highlighted mental health supports and the connection between positive school climate and reducing absenteeism.

The committee also discussed continuing work on chronic absenteeism, strengthening PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports), and reviewing crisis response systems. Members expressed interest in evaluating recent crisis response efforts and refining existing tools and resources to improve preparedness and support for students.

5D. Reading by Third Grade

Member McCollum reported that the Reading by Third Grade committee had a productive discussion and reviewed data from MCLASS and the Alaska STAR assessment. She said the group is now fairly focused on developing two specific SMART goals centered on third-grade reading and is well on its way to finalizing strong, data-driven goals for the committee.

5E. Career Technical Education and Culturally Relevant Education

Member Fowley reported that the Career Technical Education and Culturally Relevant Education committee found one of its objectives had already been completed, allowing the group to focus on developing a second SMART goal. The committee reviewed data already collected by the Department of Education and Early Development and identified two main areas to explore: examining possible correlations between CTE participation and the Alaska Performance Scholarship, and looking at Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO) participation to help ensure students graduate with a clear postsecondary plan.

He thanked Brad Billings and the team for their work on the first goal and expressed appreciation for their efforts in developing the second goal.

Member Dupras and Member Fields discussed the importance of helping students explore career and life goals

earlier, ideally in middle school, so they have a clearer sense of their interests and future paths. Fields emphasized that many students leave high school unsure of their next steps, and early exposure to options—such as through CTE—can increase engagement, motivation, and graduation rates. While respecting local control, he suggested some state-level initiatives are needed to ensure all students benefit.

James Fowley added that the CTE committee’s second objective focuses on introducing CTE earlier in the curriculum and ensuring students graduate with a clear plan. The committee will review DEED’s existing data to inform whether these objectives are achievable and effective.

Agenda Item 6 – UAA Master of Science in School Psychology Program

The University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) presented its Master of Science in School Psychology Specialist program to the Board for conditional approval.

Key points:

- **Program Purpose & Mission:** The program is a place-based model designed to prepare school psychologists who understand Alaska’s unique cultural, geographic, and educational context. Graduates are trained to apply evidence-based practices and work collaboratively with students, families, schools, and communities to support academic success.
- **Program Structure:** It addresses the state’s critical shortage of school psychologists. The curriculum includes measurable student learning outcomes in assessment, intervention, and consultation, grounded in ethical standards (NASP and Alaska Code of Ethics) and aligned with the NASP practice model.
- **Ethics & Evidence-Based Practices:** Emphasis is placed on applying ethical standards and evidence-based methods such as MTSS and the Alaska Reads Act. Graduates are prepared to meet diverse student needs across urban, rural, and homeschool settings.
- **Accreditation:** UAA has submitted its candidacy to the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) and received approval, moving the program toward full accreditation. Graduates will be eligible for Alaska Type C certification.
- **Community Involvement:** The program was developed with input from Alaska educators, parents, and community stakeholders and continues to be guided by an advisory board to ensure alignment with statewide priorities and workforce needs.
- **Impact:** Conditional approval will strengthen Alaska’s school psychology workforce, improve access to student support services, and help graduates remain in their home communities.
- **Cohort Info:** The inaugural cohort includes students from nine school districts, including two homeschool programs, committed to serving their communities.

In summary, the program aims to fill a critical workforce gap, provide culturally responsive and ethical training, and ensure students statewide have access to high-quality school psychological services.

The discussion focused on interventions and evidence-based services in schools, as well as parent involvement. Interventions are designed to help students close learning gaps in areas like reading, math, or writing. They are provided in addition to core instruction and typically serve as supplemental instruction. Evidence-based interventions are those supported by research demonstrating that students are likely to achieve desired outcomes when the intervention is implemented correctly. These interventions can involve extra instructional time or targeted activities, similar to adjusting a treatment plan in medicine.

Interventions can be provided by a range of educators within a multi-tiered system of supports. At Tier 1, classroom teachers provide small-group instruction to students with similar learning needs. At Tiers 2 and 3, reading coaches, interventionists, special education teachers, or school psychologists may provide additional support for students with more significant needs. School psychologists often serve in a consultative role, helping teams select and implement effective interventions and sometimes directly running intervention groups.

Parent involvement is central to the process. Parents are engaged from the first moment a concern arises, collaborating with educators to determine the most appropriate supports for the student. Parents have a

meaningful role in decisions about interventions, ensuring that supports are aligned with the child's needs and family context.

Overall, interventions are structured, research-based strategies delivered by various school staff, with parents as essential partners in planning and decision-making.

Agenda Item 7 – Annual Report to the Legislature

Commissioner Bishop presented an overview of the State Board of Education's annual report to the legislature, highlighting the work accomplished over the past year and how it aligns with the board's strategic priorities. The report incorporates feedback from board members and committee work and is structured to provide evidence-based progress across key areas. It begins with board membership, constitutional and statutory requirements, and an overview of the board's mission, vision, and purpose. The report also summarizes regulations adopted, resolutions passed, charter school renewals and approvals, recognition of career and technical education (CTE) programs, and the completion of the Education Challenge review of state board committees.

For each strategic priority, the report details progress and highlights. In literacy, the Reads Act implementation, statewide literacy screening, professional learning, and Alaska Native Language Arts K-3 Literacy Standards have advanced student learning, with kindergarten outcomes improving from 25% to 60% meeting grade-level expectations. In career and technical education, progress includes expansion of programs, competitive grants to districts, statewide partnerships, support for Career and Technical Student Organizations, and inclusion of CTE coursework in the Alaska Performance Scholarship. Efforts to ensure equitable rigor and close achievement gaps focus on both catch-up growth for struggling students and continued learning for high-performing students. Instructional support has expanded across content areas, and science-of-reading implementation continues. Student attendance, engagement, and state-tribal partnerships are highlighted as areas of focus, along with district support for teachers in smaller schools.

In workforce development, teacher preparation, apprenticeships, certification modernization, regulatory alignment, and teacher retention initiatives have advanced. Data on turnover, vacancies, emergency-certified teachers, and visa-holding teachers provide context on staffing trends and challenges. Safety and well-being initiatives include Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), trauma-engaged practices, attendance initiatives, and measures to protect learning environments, such as the cell phone resolution in schools.

The report concludes by noting ongoing department functions, including postsecondary education, arts, professional teaching practices, and Mt. Edgecumbe programs. Commissioner Bishop emphasized transparency, data-driven evaluation, and the iterative process in developing the report. Board members are invited to review, provide feedback, and approve updates for presentation to the legislature in March.

Business Meeting

Agenda Item 8 – Approve Special Assistant to the Commissioner/Legislative Liaison

Member Dupras motioned, and Member McCollum seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development approve the Commissioner's appointment of Florence Eleilia Preston as Special Assistant to the Commissioner, effective immediately. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Agenda Item 9 – Approve Innovation and Education Excellence Director

Member Bergey motioned, and Member Tyndall seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development approve the Commissioner's appointment of Monica Goyette as Director of Innovation and Education Excellence, effective immediately.

Agenda Item 10 – AK Challenge Strategic Plan Resolution

First Vice Chair Fields motioned, and Member Dupras seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development approve Resolution 01-2026 reaffirming Alaska’s Education Challenge and supporting the development of a department strategic plan grounded in the five strategic priorities. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Agenda Item 11 – Regulation 4 AAC 34.055: Update Alternate ACCESS Proficiency Levels

Member Bergey motioned, and Member Tyndall seconded the following motion: I move to approve regulations 4 AAC 34.055. Update Alternate ACCESS proficiency levels. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Agenda Item 12 – Kenai Peninsula Borough School District Nikolaevsk Charter School application

Member Dupras motioned, and Member Bergey seconded the following motion: I move the State board of Education & Early Development approve Nikolaevsk Charter School’s initial application for a period of five (5) years. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Agenda Item 13 – Approve UAA Master of Science in School Psychology Program

Member Dupras motioned, and First Vice Chair Fields seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development approve the University of Alaska Anchorage’s request for provisional state approval of its Master of Science in School Psychology – Specialist program through June 30, 2029. During provisional approval status, the University of Alaska Anchorage is required to provide annual updates on their progress toward NASP accreditation at the state board’s winter regular meeting.

Member Tyndall expressed reservations about the proposal, noting that while some of her concerns were eased by earlier discussion, she still worries about allowing unfamiliar individuals into schools and placing responsibility on teachers. She cautioned against focusing solely on mental health when addressing health and safety, arguing that not all issues stem from mental health problems. She concluded by sharing her concern and hoping the issues can be resolved in schools.

Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Agenda Item 14 – Approve Annual Report to the Legislature

First Vice Chair Fields motioned, and Member McCollum seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development approve the report to the legislature with any changes that come forward. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Agenda Item 15 – Consent Agenda: Approve minutes of the December 3, 2025 meeting

First Vice Chair Fields motioned, and Member Dupras seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development approve the consent agenda consisting of approval of the minutes of the December 3, 2025 board meeting. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Agenda Item 16 – Commissioner’s Report

The Commissioner proposed creating a new state-level school recognition program to replace the discontinued federal National Blue Ribbon Schools Program, which ended in 2025. The proposed “Blue and Gold Ribbon School” program would recognize Alaska schools for both high academic achievement and academic growth, using statewide accountability data (including AK STAR results).

To make up for the missed federal cycle, the department recommended opening two application cycles initially to cover prior school years, then moving to an annual process. Formal recognition would occur during the State Board of Education’s report to the Legislature, potentially with legislative participation.

Chair Stockhausen expressed strong support, noting the pride and community impact such recognition brings to schools. Commissioner Bishop said Alaska Department of Education and Early Development would draft a

resolution and model the program after the former federal framework, with board input on criteria.

Board members suggested:

- Involving businesses and chambers of commerce to help support or fund the program.
- Considering additional measures such as attendance and overall school improvement, not just test scores.
- Emphasizing growth as well as achievement.

The department will develop a proposal and bring it back to the board for refinement.

The Commissioner updated the board on ongoing concerns at Mt. Edgecumbe and recommended forming an ad hoc committee to help address them. She explained that recent changes at the school were driven by financial realities and the end of temporary COVID-era funding, which had supported expanded staffing and programs. Misunderstandings arose from a proposed budget that appeared to cut 14 teachers, though that scenario would not occur.

She described multiple on-site visits by department staff to listen to parents, students, and employees. Issues raised included dorm policies, food service changes, student activities, and declining enrollment and academic outcomes. Some concerns, such as stricter dorm rules, were framed as necessary for student health and safety, while others (like access to activities and shopping trips) were adjusted after student input.

The Commissioner emphasized that Mt. Edgecumbe remains a valued state asset with a long tradition of excellence and is not at risk of closure. She acknowledged past communication errors and clarified that food service changes followed public procurement processes.

To move forward, she proposed an ad hoc committee under State Board policy that would be:

- Time-limited and solution-focused
- Inclusive of parents, students, staff, and other stakeholders
- Focused on academic improvement and student living conditions
- Charged with developing recommendations for the board

She stressed the importance of transparency, collaboration, and restoring strong student outcomes while continuing to listen to community concerns and improve the overall student experience.

Board members discussed how to proceed with forming an ad hoc committee for Mt. Edgecumbe. Member Fields suggested the department develop a full plan for the committee and bring it to the board in March for approval, unless a delay would hinder progress, in which case a special meeting could be called.

Chair Stockhausen asked whether a formal board vote was legally required. Members agreed the department should consult legal counsel to determine if a vote is necessary. Kathryn McCollum noted she was prepared to make a motion if required.

Chair Stockhausen also emphasized that student safety should be included as a distinct focus area for the committee, in addition to student experience. Commissioner Bishop agreed and stated that the department would:

- Develop a plan for the ad hoc committee
- Check with legal counsel on whether a formal vote is required
- Begin gathering input from teachers, administrators, parents, and the advisory board
- Bring a resolution or proposal back to the board

The board directed the department to move forward with creating the plan, with the option of calling a special meeting if a vote is needed to proceed.

Commissioner Bishop recognized and congratulated Libraries, Archives, and Museums (LAM) staff for a major

achievement: the Alaska State Museum received its 10-year reaccreditation from the American Alliance of Museums.

She noted that only seven museums in Alaska hold this accreditation, including the Sheldon Jackson Museum, and that the process is rigorous and highly selective nationwide. She praised the team for successfully completing the demanding review and highlighted the significance of the achievement for the state.

Agenda Item 17 – Executive Session

Member Dupras motioned, and Member Bergey seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development convene an executive session to question, consider, and discuss the characteristics and qualifications of candidates for the Student Advisory Member-elect position, a topic that may tend to prejudice the reputation and character of any person under Alaska Statute 44.62.310C. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

After returning from Executive Session, Chair Stockhausen announced that Josh Bolling was selected as the State Board of Education's student advisor-elect for the next school year.

She thanked all students who applied, noting there were six applicants, and encouraged those not selected to reapply next year. She praised the students for their interest and participation and expressed enthusiasm about their involvement.

Board Comments

Member Bergey thanked the public for their testimony, emphasizing that community participation is a vital part of the board's work. She expressed appreciation to Alaska Department of Education and Early Development staff for their reports and congratulated Dr. Goyette and Eleilia Preston on joining the department.

She also highlighted the value of the board's discussion about future goals and adjustments to the Education Challenge, and echoed Chair Stockhausen's praise for the student advisor applicants, encouraging them to reapply next year.

Member Tyndall shared positive feedback from recent school visits, noting that an 8th-grade teacher at Ryan Middle School was teaching the U.S. Constitution in depth over an extended period, which reassured her about social studies instruction. She also expressed appreciation for the new SMART goal structure, saying it will help her work more effectively on health and safety issues.

While acknowledging the importance of mental health and her own family's experiences, she cautioned that school psychologists should not be viewed as the sole solution and emphasized the value of outside counseling as well. She thanked Alaska Department of Education and Early Development staff for their work and praised the student advisor candidates as exceptional.

Member McCollum thanked staff for the extensive information shared and praised the quality of the committee meetings. She welcomed new team members Eleilia and Monica, and highlighted the student advisor applicants as the highlight of the day, commending their ability to clearly express their ideas and opinions. She concluded by welcoming Josh Bolling to the board and expressing enthusiasm about his participation.

Member Dupras thanked everyone involved in organizing the meeting and acknowledged the significant work behind it. She expressed enthusiasm about the renewed focus on the Alaska Education Challenge, noting that the new SMART goals will help sharpen priorities.

She emphasized the importance of recognizing the hard work of educators in local communities and being mindful of how board decisions affect classrooms. She concluded by saying she felt hopeful after hearing from the students who expressed interest in serving on the board.

Member Fields expressed appreciation for the discussion around the School Psychology program, acknowledging concerns raised by board members while emphasizing that education should prioritize student safety and core academic learning over political agendas.

He praised the committee meetings for productive discussion, particularly highlighting the importance of helping students plan their next steps in education, noting that many students feel lost midway through school.

Fields also thanked Alaska Department of Education and Early Development staff and Commissioner Bishop for their hard work, commitment, and responsiveness to board initiatives, including the Blue Ribbon Schools effort, and recognized administrative support behind the scenes. He concluded by expressing gratitude for the team's efforts and well-wishes until the next meeting.

Student Advisor Sherman thanked everyone who worked on the School Psychology program, recognizing the importance of ensuring it was well-developed before implementation, and highlighting the shortage of school psychologists as a major issue in Alaska schools.

She congratulated Josh Bolling as the new student advisor-elect and expressed excitement to work with him. She also thanked all applicants for the student advisor role, praising their responses and encouraging them to continue engaging in student voice and to reapply next year.

Chair Stockhausen thanked Alaska Department of Education and Early Development staff for their work organizing the meeting and supporting districts and families. She recognized Representative Himschoot for the idea of the Blue Ribbon Schools program and expressed excitement about giving it an Alaska-specific approach.

She congratulated University of Alaska Anchorage on the progress of its program, noting that current students will be able to continue toward certification as psychologists, and expressed enthusiasm about potentially hiring graduates in the future. She concluded by thanking everyone who provided public comment.

The board adjourned at 4:27 p.m.