

State Board of Education & Early Development
Approved Meeting Minutes
March 10-11, 2026
Juneau, AK

Tuesday March 10, 2026

Chair Stockhausen called the meeting to order at 9:00 am.

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

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

Professional Development

Agenda Item 1 – Alaska Reads Act Evaluation Report and Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant

Presentation by Kathy Moffitt, Innovation and Education Excellence Education Administrator

Kathy Moffitt presented the Year 2 evaluation of the Alaska Reads Act, aligned to Alaska’s Education Challenge priorities, with a strong focus on improving early literacy (K–3).

Key Findings:

- **Educator Capacity & Implementation**
 - Significant growth in trained educators: over **3,400 reading endorsements**, nearly doubling since early 2025.
 - Most districts and educators report strong alignment with **evidence-based reading practices**:
 - 75% confident in curriculum quality
 - 95% report consistent implementation
 - 83% confident using assessment data
 - 92% committed to evidence-based instruction
 - 75% of educators report **improved student literacy outcomes**.
- **Student Literacy Outcomes**
 - 44% of K–3 students met literacy benchmarks in Fall 2024 (up from 40.6%).
 - Students moving from below proficiency to proficiency increased by **4.6%** year over year.
 - Younger students show greater improvement:
 - Kindergarten: 54% reached proficiency by spring
 - Declines by grade level to 15% in 3rd grade, consistent with national trends.
- **State Assessment (AK STAR)**
 - Modest gains:
 - 3rd grade: 29% proficient (+0.6%)
 - 4th grade: 33% proficient (+4.9%)
 - 25% of 3rd graders advanced with waivers; 88% of those remained below proficiency in 4th grade.
 - Chronic absenteeism (41%) is a major issue; 78% of chronically absent 3rd graders scored below proficient.
- **Program Implementation Highlights**
 - **Department Reading Program (DRP):**
 - Expanded from 18 to 51 schools.

- Provides coaching, professional learning, and data support.
- Participating schools showed slightly higher gains than the statewide average.
- **Virtual Learning Consortium:**
 - 6,200+ enrollments and 4,600+ completions in literacy-focused courses.
- **Early Learning Program:**
 - Strong results: literacy proficiency increased from 43% in fall to 89% in spring among participants.

Overall Takeaways:

- The Alaska Reads Act is showing early positive trends, especially in educator preparedness and early-grade literacy gains.
- Challenges remain, particularly in 3rd-grade proficiency, chronic absenteeism, and students advancing without proficiency.
- Continued focus on early intervention, attendance, and targeted supports is critical for sustained improvement.

Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) Grant: Cohort 2024. Presentation by Kathy Moffitt, Education Administrator, Division of Innovation and Education Excellence

Overview:

The Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) Grant (Cohort 2024) is a competitive federal grant awarded to Alaska—\$50 million over 5 years, the maximum possible. Its purpose is to build a statewide, comprehensive literacy system from birth through grade 12, with a strong emphasis on evidence-based practices and long-term sustainability, particularly for disadvantaged student groups.

Key Components:

- **Statewide & District Planning**
 - Requires a state literacy plan and district-level plans from subgrantees.
 - Alaska funded 26 subgrantees (districts), supporting nearly all eligible applicants rather than limiting awards.
- **Goals**
 - Improve reading and ELA achievement for all students.
 - Increase student engagement and access to education.
 - Expand literacy efforts statewide, beyond just participating districts.
- **Strategies**
 - Literacy coaching and professional development.
 - Implementation through a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS).
 - Alignment with teacher preparation programs and the science of reading.
 - Use of data-driven instruction and continuous improvement.
- **Funding Structure**
 - 95% of funds go to districts; 5% retained by the state for oversight and statewide initiatives.
 - District funds are targeted:
 - 40% secondary
 - 40% elementary
 - 15% early learning (birth–5)
 - 5% flexible (including evaluation support)
- **Support & Accountability**
 - Ongoing technical assistance, monthly communities of practice, and in-person convenings.
 - External evaluators help districts track progress and use data effectively.

Early Implementation Highlights:

- Districts report:
 - Improved attendance and student engagement.
 - Stronger, targeted professional development for teachers.

- Increased student achievement, including gains from high-dosage interventions.
- Better alignment and coherence across literacy programs.
- **High-Dosage Tutoring (e.g., Amplify)**
 - Implemented in multiple districts with small-group, data-driven sessions during the school day.
 - Early results show:
 - High student satisfaction (over 90% positive feedback)
 - Measurable reading improvement
 - Increased student motivation and engagement

State-Level Initiatives:

- Planned innovations include efforts like a virtual writing symposium, expanded resources, and statewide literacy supports.
- Emphasis on scaling successful practices and ensuring access across Alaska.

Overall Takeaways:

- Alaska is leveraging the CLSD grant to expand and strengthen the Alaska Reads Act efforts statewide.
- Early feedback shows positive momentum in engagement, instruction, and targeted interventions.
- Long-term success will depend on sustained implementation, continued educator training, and systemic alignment across all grade levels.

The board discussion focused on how CLSD grant funds are allocated, the early impact of literacy efforts, and broader considerations around implementation and outcomes. Kathy Moffitt explained that the \$50 million grant is largely distributed to districts, with 95% flowing directly to subgrantees and 5% retained by the state. The state's portion supports oversight and statewide efforts, including an external evaluator, a staff position, consultant support, required national engagement, and initiatives such as a planned virtual writing symposium. These expenditures are guided by federal parameters while allowing some flexibility for innovation.

Chair Stockhausen expressed strong encouragement about the growing number of teachers receiving literacy training and the positive feedback from educators, while also noting that meaningful improvements in student outcomes will take time given the longstanding nature of literacy challenges. Member Dupras raised concerns about the loss of instructional coaching capacity in districts due to budget reductions and asked how CLSD might help address that gap, as well as how literacy outcomes vary across different student populations and regions. Moffitt responded that outcomes differ significantly across districts and demographic groups, and emphasized that the department approaches this work through local partnerships rather than compliance, using detailed, district-level data to guide support and decision-making. She also highlighted the importance of shifting culture and beliefs about reading proficiency as foundational to long-term success.

In response to questions about how Alaska compares to other states, Moffitt noted that while many states are seeing positive results from similar literacy initiatives, the most substantial gains tend to occur over a longer period, often around a decade. Alaska's approach, particularly through the Alaska Reads Act, is viewed positively, but like other states, it will require sustained effort, system alignment, and time to achieve significant, lasting improvements.

Agenda Item 2 – Alaska Career Guidance Demonstration Project

Presented by Monica Goyette, Director of Innovation & Education Excellence, Brad Billings, Education Administrator, and Zach Stenson, Career Guide Project Coordinator.

The presentation outlined the development and early progress of the Alaska Career Guidance Demonstration Project, a collaborative effort between the Department of Education and Early Development, the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, and multiple partners. The project was launched in response to a statewide need to better align education with workforce opportunities and to provide more structured career guidance for students, particularly in rural communities.

The initiative is built on a model that places dedicated career guides in schools or communities to work directly with high school seniors. These guides provide one-on-one support through a structured advising process that includes career exploration, post-secondary planning, FAFSA completion, and application assistance for jobs, training programs, college, or the military. The goal is to ensure every student graduates with a clear and actionable plan for their next step.

The model is intentionally flexible and collaborative, allowing a wide range of partners, such as school staff, tribal organizations, consortia, and state agencies to serve as career guides. This approach helps address gaps in traditional school counseling capacity and supports scalability across Alaska's diverse and often rural districts. Strong partnerships, shared accountability, and ongoing professional development are key features of the implementation.

Early results from the pilot show high satisfaction among students, staff, and administrators, along with a notable increase in FAFSA completion rates, from 29% statewide to 41% among participating students. The project is also generating new data on student interests and post-secondary intentions, revealing that many students remain undecided about their future, highlighting the need for continued support and career exposure.

Key challenges identified include improving support for workforce-bound students, increasing career awareness opportunities (especially in rural areas), strengthening communication with stakeholders, and enhancing family engagement. In response, the project is introducing strategies such as virtual "Lunch and Learn" sessions, expanded use of workforce tools like AK Jobs, and increased collaboration with partners.

The project is gaining strong interest statewide, with many additional districts seeking to join, potentially expanding participation to nearly half of Alaska's rural districts. Overall, the initiative shows promising early impact and is viewed as a scalable, adaptable model to better connect Alaska students with education and career pathways while addressing long-standing gaps in career guidance.

The discussion centered on questions about expanding the Career Guidance Project and strengthening supports for students beyond the current focus on seniors. In response to a question about including juniors, presenters emphasized that the model is intentionally designed as a baseline ("the floor") to ensure every senior graduates with a clear plan. While earlier intervention is valuable, expanding too broadly to juniors or even middle school could make the model too complex and difficult to scale. Districts are encouraged to build additional supports locally, but the project remains focused on seniors to ensure consistent, statewide impact.

Board members also raised the need for continued support after high school, including for students in college or those who are "still deciding." Presenters acknowledged this gap and noted that partnerships, particularly with the Department of Labor and organizations like the Bristol Bay Native Corporation may help extend guidance beyond graduation. Discussions are also underway with the University of Alaska about how the model could connect to postsecondary support systems.

Additional questions highlighted opportunities to expand inclusion and partnerships. There was interest in incorporating justice-involved youth, which presenters welcomed as a potential area for growth, noting that participation is currently voluntary and open to interested districts and organizations. Suggestions were also made to record and share "Lunch and Learn" career sessions more broadly.

Finally, a potential partnership with the Alaska National Guard was discussed, with strong interest from both sides. Presenters noted growing demand among students and career guides for more information about military pathways and emphasized that the model could help better connect students with military opportunities in a more targeted and efficient way.

Overall, the conversation reflected strong support for the project, alongside recognition of opportunities to expand its reach, strengthen partnerships, and better support students both before and after high school.

Agenda Item 3 – State Board of Education Committee Meetings

The board convened into committee meetings.

3A. Reading by 3rd Grade

3B. Career Technical Education and Culturally Relevant Education

3C. Closing the Achievement Gap

3D. Educator Workforce

3E. Safety and Wellbeing

Agenda Item 4 – Committee Reports and Discussion

4A. Reading by 3rd Grade

Member McCollum reported that the group had a detailed discussion analyzing early literacy data and identified two key indicators to measure progress in reading proficiency by third grade. The first focuses on K–3 students' performance on the DIBELS mCLASS literacy screener, with a goal of increasing the percentage of students meeting benchmark levels by 10% between 2026 and 2029. The second indicator uses the state assessment, AK STAR, with a goal of increasing the percentage of third-grade students who are proficient or above in English language arts by 5% over the same timeframe. Both goals will use 2026 data as the baseline, with progress measured over a three-year period through 2029.

4B. Career Technical Education and Culturally Relevant Education

Member Lieutenant Colonel Fowley reported that the CTE committee developed two measurable goals focused on expanding career and technical education participation and tracking culturally relevant education.

The first goal aims to increase the percentage of Alaska high school students who complete at least two credits in Perkins-approved CTE courses (CTE concentrators) by 25% over three years, growing from 14.7% of the 2023–24 senior cohort to 18.4% by 2028–29. This metric is already collected, so no new data systems are needed.

The second goal focuses on increasing the percentage of graduates eligible for the Alaska Performance Scholarship through Option B, which includes CTE and culturally relevant coursework, by 25% over three years. This will require a small update to data collection by adding more detailed reporting categories (e.g., CTE, world language, Alaska Native language, fine arts, cultural heritage). This change is intended to better capture progress in culturally relevant education, an area that has been difficult to measure, while minimizing additional burden on districts.

Overall, the committee emphasized practical, measurable goals using mostly existing data, with minor adjustments to improve tracking and support both CTE and culturally relevant education outcomes.

4C. Closing the Achievement Gap

Member Dupras reported that the Closing the Achievement Gap Committee developed two draft three-year SMART goals focused on improving student proficiency in English language arts and math across all grade levels.

The literacy goal uses Spring 2025 Alaska STAR results as a baseline (32.69% proficient or advanced) and aims to increase proficiency by 2% annually over three years, reaching a total increase of 6% to 38.69% by Spring 2029.

The math goal mirrors this structure, targeting a 2% annual increase in proficiency across all grades for three consecutive years, also resulting in a cumulative 6% gain by 2029. The committee noted that, unlike literacy efforts supported by the Alaska Reads Act, math currently lacks a similar statewide initiative, making this goal more challenging but still important for improving overall student outcomes.

4D. Educator Workforce

The Educator Workforce group presented two draft goals aimed at strengthening the pipeline into the teaching profession. The first goal focuses on increasing the number of Alaska high school seniors who complete coursework within an education career pathway, either through two consecutive CTE courses or a dual credit sequence by 25% over three years, growing from 94 students in 2024–25 to 118 by 2028–29. This is intended to both encourage interest in teaching careers and expand multiple entry pathways for students.

The second goal targets current educator development by increasing participation in alternative certification pathways, including U.S. Department of Labor-approved educator apprenticeships and Green-to-Teach programs. The goal is a 25% increase over three years, from 82 participants to 103 by February 2029. Both goals are still in draft form and may be refined, but together they aim to expand and diversify pathways into the education workforce.

4E. Safety and Wellbeing

Member Tyndall reported that the Safety and Wellbeing group discussed several key focus areas related to student health and school climate. The group is working to better track and address both bullying and cyberbullying as separate issues, continuing to gather and analyze data in these areas. They are also examining the impact of initiatives like PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) by comparing outcomes between participating and non-participating schools.

Additional efforts include policies such as limiting cell phone use, as well as professional development and statewide summits that bring partners together to support student wellbeing. A major ongoing priority is reducing chronic absenteeism, supported by initiatives like “Strive for Five” and by highlighting districts that demonstrate strong progress and effective practices. Overall, the focus is on using data, collaboration, and targeted strategies to improve school safety and student wellbeing.

Agenda Item 5 – Mt. Edgecumbe High School Report

Commissioner Deena Bishop and Superintendent David Langford provided an extensive update on Mt. Edgecumbe High School, outlining its history, recent challenges, and ongoing improvements.

The school, originally a WWII naval base, became a state-run boarding school in 1985 and has long served Alaska students. Recently, it faced significant operational and financial challenges, including a \$1.6 million budget shortfall following the expiration of COVID-era funds, rising costs (especially food service), leadership concerns, and staff turnover.

To “right-size” operations, the department reduced staffing modestly (fewer cuts than initially projected), restructured contracts (bringing in Nana Services), and reallocated resources for efficiency. Major efforts focused on stabilizing dorm operations, hiring key staff, and restoring essential services.

Significant facility and operational issues were addressed:

- The cafeteria was in severe disrepair but has since been restored, with improved food quality and increased student participation.
- USDA violations dropped dramatically (from 59 to 4).
- Dorm conditions improved with new furniture and better services.
- Health and safety changes included limiting access to energy drinks.

Academically and programmatically, the school expanded offerings such as dual enrollment, CTE programs (e.g., welding, EMT), language courses, and student leadership opportunities. Student life remains active, though somewhat reduced due to staffing limits.

Enrollment has remained stable, though student attrition is higher than usual due to factors like family issues, dorm life challenges, and external events (e.g., typhoon impacts). Mental health needs are significant but actively addressed through counseling and partnerships with local healthcare providers.

The report also highlighted deferred maintenance challenges, with millions in prior funding not fully executed. Current leadership is prioritizing critical repairs (e.g., dorm roofs, ventilation, windows) and improving long-term project management.

Overall, leadership emphasized that while the school faced longstanding systemic issues, substantial progress has been made in stabilizing operations, improving student services, and positioning the school for a stronger, more sustainable future.

Member Sherman raised concerns about student mental health at Mt. Edgecumbe High School, particularly regarding students experiencing suicidal ideation and those sent to higher levels of care. Leadership emphasized student privacy but noted that many students arrive with existing challenges, and the school provides a supportive environment where students feel safe seeking help.

Follow-up efforts include tracking students who leave, with some expressing interest in returning. While many departing students cite homesickness, the school has attempted additional outreach, such as parent-approved follow-up interviews to better understand why some students leave without giving reasons.

Superintendent Langford described extensive community and parent engagement efforts, including meetings with legislators, regular communication with parents, advisory board involvement, and monthly parent call-ins. Students have also been actively involved in sharing feedback and improving the school's image.

Concerns raised by the advisory board such as involvement in hiring were acknowledged, but Commissioner Bishop clarified that many issues stemmed from adult concerns rather than student experiences. Leadership emphasized that progress is being made in stabilizing the school and prioritizing student outcomes.

Ongoing improvements include:

- Strengthening communication with parents through weekly updates and direct outreach
- Exploring the return of a student newspaper to enhance transparency
- Addressing campus safety through hiring security staff and coordinating with local partners
- Reinstating valuable student support roles (e.g., AmeriCorps positions)
- Increasing student voice through leadership groups and potential initiatives like a student court

Overall, leadership highlighted continued progress, strong student engagement, and a commitment to improving both school operations and student wellbeing while addressing remaining concerns.

Agenda Item 6 - Fairbanks North Star Borough School District Charter School Approval

Dr. Goyette provided an overview of the timeline and process for the Pearl Creek STEAM Charter School application. The Fairbanks North Star Borough School District initially denied the application on November 4, 2025. The applicant appealed, and on January 29, 2026, the Commissioner's designee approved the application.

Under Alaska law, the approved application was then forwarded to the State Board of Education within 30 days (February 13, 2026) for final review. The Board is now considering the application for a proposed five-year term ending June 30, 2031. Representatives from both the district and the applicant group were available for questions, and an executive session with legal counsel followed.

Agenda Item 7 – Executive Session

The board convened into executive session to obtain confidential legal advice on the Pearl Creek Charter School appeal under AS44.62.310C3.

The board convened into executive session to discuss the Mt. Edgecumbe High School Advisory Board recommendations and to obtain legal advice on those recommendations. Full discussion on this matter may include comments that tend to prejudice the reputation and character of Mt. Edgecumbe High School Superintendent under AS44.62.310C2.

Chair Stockhausen called recess until next morning at 11 o'clock.

Wednesday March 11, 2026

Chair Stockhausen called the meeting to order at 11:03 am.

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

Chair Stockhausen called a quorum. The board pledged allegiance to the flag, followed by an invocation by Member Tyndall.

Before adopting the agenda, Chair Stockhausen announced During an executive session yesterday, the board has determined that we need additional time to properly consider the matter of Pearl Creek Charter School before voting. On the advice of legal counsel, we would like to amend today's schedule to remove the vote on this matter currently scheduled for this afternoon. The board will hold further discussions and vote in a confidential adjudicatory meeting at a later date. A final written decision on the matter will be issued no later than April 29, 2026.

Member McCollum motioned, and Member Bergey seconded the following motion: I move to amend today's agenda to remove item 18. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

There were no potential conflicts of interest disclosed.

Work Session

Agenda Item 10 – Board Member Oath of Office

The new Student Advisor-elect Joshua Bolling was sworn in by Chair Stockhausen.

Public Comment

1. Caroline Storm, Executive Director of the Coalition for Education Equity, urged the Board to fill a current vacancy to ensure full representation. She expressed opposition to the State Board overriding decisions made by locally elected school boards, emphasizing that local boards have the responsibility and authority to manage their districts, including difficult financial decisions.

She highlighted concerns about the financial impact of approving a charter school, noting that it could divert limited resources to serve a very small percentage of students while affecting programs for the broader student population. She encouraged the Board to consider its mission and the broader impact on all students before making a decision.

2. Jennifer Redmond, Treasurer of the Pearl Creek STEAM Academic Policy Committee, spoke in support of the proposed charter school. She described it as a grassroots, community-driven effort that would provide an innovative public education option and help attract students and associated funding back to the district.

She noted that a significant portion of interested students are currently outside the district, suggesting the charter

could help address enrollment declines. Redmond also argued that the district's projected budget surplus could accommodate the charter without negatively impacting existing programs. She emphasized that the application followed the legal process and was approved on appeal and framed the proposal as a positive opportunity for families and students.

3. April Monroe urged the Board to make a timely decision on the Pearl Creek STEAM Charter School, expressing concern that delays are negatively impacting families and students. She criticized the district for what she described as prolonged and intentional delays, and disputed claims that the charter would harm district finances, pointing instead to existing budget surplus funds.

Monroe argued that the issue is about empowering families, stating that true local control includes parents, teachers, and students creating educational options that meet their needs. She emphasized strong community demand for the charter, noting long waitlists and high numbers of students outside the district. She also highlighted cultural and community relevance, including Native community involvement, and framed the charter as a needed, equitable public-school option.

4. Shane Powers, spoke in strong support of the Pearl Creek STEAM Charter School, framing the issue as one of legal rights and urging the Board to base its decision strictly on law rather than personal views. He emphasized that public education rights belong to the people and argued that local control should include parents and communities.

Powers criticized the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District, alleging financial mismanagement, lack of transparency, and improper processes, including denied information requests and hidden funds. He contended that opposition to the charter is not about finances but about control and asserted that the charter represents a necessary option for families seeking better educational opportunities.

5. Christina Turman, spoke in support of the Pearl Creek STEAM Charter School, focusing on the broader implications of the Board's decision. She warned that denying the application based on unresolved issues—without meaningful collaboration from the district—could set a harmful precedent, allowing districts to block charter schools simply by refusing to engage in the process.

Turman stated that the applicant group made extensive efforts to meet and exceed standards, despite a lack of cooperation from the local school board, which she claimed had predetermined opposition. She emphasized that the charter process depends on good-faith participation from both parties and argued that the proposal represents a well-developed, community-driven effort aimed at benefiting students and the district.

6. Blake Essig, a Fairbanks parent and former journalist, criticized the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District for what he described as a lack of transparency and bad-faith actions throughout the charter school process. He detailed repeated, unsuccessful public records requests for financial data, arguing the district provided shifting justifications for withholding information.

Essig claimed that the district's financial reasoning for school closures was undermined by later revelations of significant surplus funds, and that the rationale for denying the charter application changed over time. He argued that true local control lies with families and the community, not a school board that fails to engage transparently, and emphasized the importance of the appeal process in ensuring accountability.

7. Nicole Matthews, a Fairbanks parent, spoke in support of opening the Pearl Creek STEAM Charter School and expressed dissatisfaction with the local school board. She argued that closing schools and limiting opportunities harms student success, comparing it to restricting growth in a garden where overcrowding prevents thriving.

Matthews challenged claims that new schools reduce resources, stating that expanding options benefits students overall. She also criticized the district's financial transparency, asserting that available funds contradict earlier

claims used to justify closures. Although her own children would not attend the charter, she supported it as beneficial for the broader community, emphasizing its inclusivity and cultural relevance.

8. Patricia Miller, a longtime Fairbanks resident and engineer, expressed strong support for the Pearl Creek STEAM Charter School. She emphasized the importance of STEAM education and stated her confidence that the school would benefit students, the community, and the state.

9. Bill St. Pierre, expressed support for the Pearl Creek STEAM Charter School, stating that its approval would be a positive decision for Fairbanks students. He highlighted strong parent involvement and student interest, and encouraged the Board to approve the charter to support local families and children.

10. Peter Miller, a longtime Fairbanks educator, spoke in support of the Pearl Creek STEAM Charter School, emphasizing the value of preserving established school communities and their unique cultures. He noted that closing schools results in the loss of institutional knowledge, partnerships, and community networks that cannot be easily replaced.

Miller highlighted Pearl Creek’s history of innovative, place-based and hands-on learning, arguing that transitioning to a charter would build on these strengths and expand opportunities to more students across the district. He also described the proposal as a forward-looking effort to strengthen and improve public education, noting that Alaska’s charter schools maintain community control and operate within the public system.

11. Sarah Lewis, a Fairbanks resident and former Pearl Creek parent, thanked the Board for delaying the vote and praised the school board for its public service and dedication. She pushed back against allegations of dishonesty or bad faith regarding the district, stating she believes those claims are unfounded.

Lewis argued that the charter approval should be viewed in the context of recent district “right-sizing” efforts, including the closure of multiple schools due to budget and enrollment challenges. She expressed concern that approving another school could further strain district resources and potentially lead to additional school closures. She urged the State Board to consider the broader financial and policy implications before making a decision.

12. Terrence Shanigan, an Anchorage resident, Mt. Edgecumbe alumnus, former teacher, and parent of a current student, spoke in support of the school and its ongoing improvements. He emphasized his family’s long history with Mt. Edgecumbe and his continued involvement through the Mt. Edgecumbe Foundation.

Shanigan addressed recent public criticism of the school, arguing that some concerns overlook longer-term historical and systemic issues. He focused particularly on student retention, noting that Mt. Edgecumbe has historically struggled with attrition due to factors such as family crises, dormitory support systems, cultural needs, and staff turnover. He suggested that improvements in these areas over time have already reduced student loss and expressed optimism that current leadership will continue to strengthen retention and student support systems.

13. Dr. Lisa Parady, Executive Director of the Alaska Council of School Administrators, testified that she was concerned about inaccuracies in recent statements from Commissioner Bishop regarding ACSA’s contract with the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development and the Alaska Educator Retention and Recruitment Center (AERRC).

She clarified that although the AERRC contract was terminated, the program still continues its educator recruitment and retention work because districts rely on it, and the funding had remained in the state budget at the time of termination. She also stated that AERRC continues to support Alaska districts by helping recruit international teachers (including H-1B and J-1 visa educators), operating a statewide job posting platform used by all districts, reviewing applicant pools, and hosting virtual job fairs.

She disputed claims that larger districts do not use AERRC services, emphasizing that many districts still rely on

them even if they also maintain internal systems. Overall, she argued that AERRC remains a key statewide support system for staffing Alaska schools despite the loss of formal departmental support or recognition.

14. Jacqueline Muehlbauer, a Fairbanks parent and community member, testified in strong support of the Pearl Creek STEAM Charter School. She described the school as a public charter option focused on hands-on STEAM learning that would expand educational opportunities and help meet diverse student needs within the public system.

She shared her personal experience as a parent, explaining that her children previously attended Pearl Creek but are now in a more crowded school due to closures, and she feels they are not thriving in the larger class sizes. She said she is hopeful Pearl Creek will reopen so her children can return to a neighborhood school setting.

She argued that charter schools strengthen public education rather than harm it by reducing overcrowding and offering different learning environments. While acknowledging community disagreement about funding and school closures, she maintained that approving Pearl Creek would benefit Fairbanks students overall and urged the board to support its approval.

15. Jim Gillis, a former educator, principal, and coaching specialist with about 30 years in Alaska's education system, spoke in support of the Pearl Creek STEAM Charter School. He shared that his children and grandchildren attended Pearl Creek and had positive experiences there, and he expressed pride in the district's overall schools.

He criticized the charter approval process, saying it has been frustrating and embarrassing to witness. He noted that a group of parents and community members put significant effort into developing the charter, which he initially believed was strong and should have been easily approved.

Gillis urged the State Board to trust the legal review that overturned the local board's decision and to approve the charter. He emphasized that the focus should remain on students' best interests and expressed support for moving the proposal forward.

16. Brittney Deppe, a Fairbanks resident and former Pearl Creek parent, testified in strong support of the Pearl Creek STEAM Charter School.

She described the school as a teacher- and family-designed effort built through extensive community involvement and volunteer work, emphasizing that educators closest to students helped shape its academic model. She highlighted the STEAM approach as focused on hands-on, collaborative, and creative learning intended to prepare students with skills needed for the future.

Deppe expressed concern about the Fairbanks North Star Borough School Board's denial, arguing that it focused too heavily on financial considerations rather than educational value. She framed the state review process as an important "check and balance" to ensure fair evaluation of the proposal.

She concluded by urging the State Board to approve the charter, emphasizing student benefit and community demand for the program.

17. Holly Wofford, a native language teacher in the Yukon-Koyukuk School District and former Pearl Creek parent, testified in support of the Pearl Creek STEAM Charter School.

She emphasized the value of place-based and STEAM education, connecting it to her own upbringing in a village environment where learning was community-centered and culturally grounded. She said the proposed school reflects that same vision of hands-on, culturally connected learning that benefits students academically and personally.

Wofford shared positive personal experiences with Pearl Creek as both a parent and through her children's attendance, noting that the school previously had a strong sense of community that she feels is missing in her child's current school placement since Pearl Creek's closure.

She concluded by urging approval of the charter so families can access a school environment they believe better supports student learning and community connection.

18. Rosalind Kahn, a retired engineer and longtime Fairbanks resident, testified in support of the Pearl Creek STEAM Charter School, emphasizing the importance of strengthening early STEM education, particularly in mathematics.

She argued that declining STEM readiness in the United States should be addressed at the elementary level, noting concerns such as college students needing remedial math at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. She shared a personal story illustrating how early attitudes toward math can form, including a child she once met who already disliked math at a young age.

Kahn also raised concerns about elementary math instruction, suggesting that not enough teachers with strong math backgrounds are teaching at that level. She further discussed cultural attitudes toward math, stating that phrases like "I'm not good at math" are socially normalized, including among women, and argued this mindset needs to change early in education.

She concluded that strengthening math and STEAM education in elementary school is essential to improving student confidence, achievement, and long-term outcomes.

19. Brooke Woods, originally from Rampart, Alaska, testified in support of the Pearl Creek STEAM Charter School. She shared that her village school closed due to low enrollment, which led her family to move to Fairbanks for better educational opportunities for her children, and she expressed enthusiasm for Pearl Creek as a new option.

She highlighted her involvement in a committee focused on incorporating Indigenous language and cultural learning into the school, emphasizing the importance of preserving Native languages and integrating traditional knowledge, seasonal practices, and land-based learning into the curriculum.

Woods noted that Fairbanks serves as a hub for Indigenous communities and described Pearl Creek as an opportunity to strengthen culturally responsive education while connecting STEAM learning with traditional practices.

She also referenced the state appeal review, stating it found issues with the district's denial and confirmed the application met required standards, including planning and academic components. She emphasized that charter schools are part of Alaska's public education system and encourage innovation, collaboration, and community involvement.

She concluded by urging approval of the charter, arguing it would expand educational opportunity while strengthening public education and supporting Indigenous and community-driven learning.

Agenda Item 11 – Legislative and Budget Update

Eleilia Preston, Legislative Liaison and Special Assistant to the Commissioner of Education and Early Development, provided a legislative update outlining the current status of Alaska's 34th Legislature and education-related policy work.

She explained that the Legislature is in the second session of its two-year cycle, with a constitutional deadline of

May 20, 2026 (121 days) and a customary target adjournment date of April 19, 2026. She noted the Department is tracking more than 95 education-related bills, with ongoing changes in scheduling and committee hearings.

A major policy focus this session is tribal education compacting, with House Bill 59 and Senate Bill 66 proposing a framework for state-tribal education compacts and demonstration schools, a priority of the Governor.

Preston also summarized recent departmental activity, including budget presentations to House and Senate Finance Committees, and testimony in multiple education-related committees on topics such as teacher recruitment, early learning, Mt. Edgecumbe High School updates, and career and technical education. She noted continued participation in joint task forces and committee hearings across both legislative chambers.

Finally, she reported that the House Education Finance Subcommittee has completed its work, while the Senate counterpart has begun reviewing the Governor's budget.

Member McCullum asked whether the board would receive updates as education-related bills move through committees, floor votes, and final passage.

Eleilia Preston responded that members can subscribe to a text-based legislative tracking service that provides real-time updates on bill progress and allows users to unsubscribe at any time.

Commissioner Bishop added that the department also provides follow-up updates in June on major legislation, including which bills have passed, though final outcomes (such as whether the governor signs them into law) may still be pending at that time.

Budget Update

Dawn Hannasch, Administrative Services Director for the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, presented an overview of the Fiscal Year 2026 supplemental budget and the Fiscal Year 2027 Governor's amended budget, noting that most changes are technical adjustments tied to federal funding, statutory formulas, or updated participation levels.

Key FY2026 supplemental items include:

- Extension of remaining American Rescue Plan funds for non-public school emergency assistance (no state funds involved).
- An increase of about \$12,900 in federal authority for the Alaska State Council on the Arts to support the national "America 250" celebration.
- Extension of proceeds from the Stratton building sale to support library operations through FY2027.
- An increase of about \$2.2 million for the Alaska Performance Scholarship due to higher-than-expected student participation.
- An additional \$1.1 million for the Alaska Education Grant, maintaining the required funding ratio with the scholarship program.

For the FY2027 amended budget, she highlighted:

- A small reduction (~\$40,200) in state funding for the Special Education Service Agency due to statutory recalculations.
- A technical adjustment to the school debt reimbursement program, shifting \$100,000 between funding sources without changing overall program totals.

She concluded that these updates primarily reflect routine technical changes and noted that the department is actively working with House Finance as the budget process moves forward.

Agenda Item 12 – School Construction and Major Maintenance List

The Department of Education and Early Development provided an extensive update on Alaska's school construction and major maintenance programs, focusing on how facilities funding is structured, scored, and

distributed statewide.

Staff explained that safe, functional school facilities are essential to student learning and are supported through several statutorily established funding programs, including the School Construction Grant Fund, Major Maintenance Grant Fund, REAA and small municipal district fund, and school debt reimbursement. Since 2013, the state has invested about \$1.78 billion in these projects, with FY27 requests totaling roughly \$443 million for construction and \$401 million for major maintenance.

The presentation outlined how districts apply annually through the Capital Improvement Project (CIP) process, with up to 10 applications each year. Projects are scored out of 520 points using a mix of formula-based and expert review criteria, considering factors such as safety, capacity, code compliance, instructional needs, and cost effectiveness. A 9-member review committee oversees the scoring system and recommends projects for funding. Staff emphasized that project outcomes can vary widely depending on the quality of district-submitted documentation. Detailed condition assessments and surveys, sometimes costing \$200,000–\$300,000, can significantly improve a project's ranking, but not all districts can afford them, creating disparities in competitiveness. In some cases, higher-ranked projects are those already completed locally and submitted for reimbursement rather than those awaiting initial construction funding.

Examples were provided showing how long some projects take to move through the system and how facility condition documentation can significantly affect prioritization and eventual funding decisions.

For FY27, 36 districts submitted 124 applications, with about \$423 million in construction requests and \$400 million in major maintenance needs. The department also noted updates to the school debt reimbursement program, which supports districts that finance construction through local bonds. The moratorium on this program ended in 2025, and current reimbursement rates are 40–50% depending on project type.

The presentation concluded with visual examples of school facility conditions submitted by districts to illustrate why documentation quality is critical in evaluating project urgency and need.

Board members and department staff discussed challenges districts face in funding required facility condition surveys for school construction and maintenance projects.

Member Bergey raised concerns that districts, especially those with limited resources, may be using instructional funds to pay for costly condition surveys, potentially diverting money from classrooms. Staff confirmed this can happen, as funds often originate from operational budgets, though costs may be reimbursed if a project is ultimately approved.

Department leaders acknowledged this as an ongoing equity issue. Larger districts with more financial capacity are better positioned to afford surveys and consultants, while smaller districts face barriers. The department is exploring potential solutions, such as grant opportunities, but noted the difficulty of balancing fairness without disadvantaging districts that have already invested resources.

Staff clarified that condition surveys are not required for initial applications but significantly strengthen them by earning additional scoring points. Districts can submit their own documentation, though professionally completed surveys are more competitive. Once a project is approved, a formal survey is required and reimbursable. Surveys remain valid for up to three years, and applications can be reused or updated annually to stay on the project list.

The discussion highlighted broader systemic challenges, including rising costs of surveys, increasing facility needs, and limited state funding. Officials emphasized the “catch-22”: while surveys improve project accuracy and prevent costly surprises, upfront costs can be prohibitive. Inconsistent funding cycles further complicate district decision-making.

Additional discussion addressed facility damage from a recent typhoon, noting that while no schools were completely lost, some sustained damage, such as a gym requiring demolition, and recovery efforts are ongoing with support from state agencies and FEMA.

Agenda Item 13 – Alaska State Blue and Gold Ribbon School Recognition Resolution

The State Board introduced a resolution to create the Alaska Blue and Gold Ribbon School Recognition Program following the end of the federal Blue Ribbon Schools Program.

The proposed program would recognize public schools in Alaska for high academic achievement or significant student growth, using statewide data and clear eligibility criteria. The Department of Education and Early Development would be responsible for developing and managing the application, review, and selection process.

Chair Stockhausen expressed strong support, noting the program’s potential to celebrate school success, boost community pride, especially in small communities and encourage continued improvement across Alaska’s education system.

Agenda Item 14 - Juneau Community Charter School Renewal.

The Board was informed that the Juneau Community Charter School Renewal will be brought forward for a vote later in the meeting. The renewal has been recommended by the Juneau School District, and board members have already received the supporting documentation in advance.

The item was included in the work session to allow board members to ask any remaining questions, with staff reviewer Don Enoch and school representatives available to provide clarification if needed.

Business Meeting

Agenda Item 15 – Approve Appointment of a Museum Collections Advisory Committee (MCAC) Member

The board was asked to approve the appointment of a new member to the Museum Collections Advisory Committee (MCAC), presented by the Director of Alaska State Libraries, Archives, and Museums.

The MCAC is a five-member committee, established in 1974, that serves three-year terms and represents a broad range of expertise in museums, arts, and cultural fields. Its primary role is to review and approve significant museum acquisitions (over \$5,000) and oversee any removal of items, ensuring transparency in managing collections for the Alaska State Museum and Sheldon Jackson Museum.

Following a public call for applicants, five candidates applied. After review, staff recommended Christine Carpenter, a Juneau-based professional with experience in exhibits and prior work with the Alaska State Museum. The board is asked to approve, reject, or request more information regarding her appointment.

Member McCollum motioned, and Member Bergey seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development appoint Christine Carpenter to serve a three-year term on the Museum Collections Advisory Committee. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Agenda Item 16 – Approve Juneau Community Charter School Renewal

Member Bergey motioned, and Member McCollum seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early approve the renewal Charters for Juneau Community Charter School for a period of ten years. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Agenda Item 17 – Approve Mt. Edgecumbe Ad Hoc Committee

The Board considered a proposal to establish an ad hoc committee to review Mt. Edgecumbe High School. Due to ongoing concerns about enrollment, student support, school climate, and overall operations, the committee would provide a structured way to gather input, review data, and hear from stakeholders. The committee would be

advisory only, with no decision-making authority, and would be facilitated by the Office of Education Advocacy.

If approved, the department would return within 30 days with a proposed structure and membership, potentially including representatives from the school board, advisory board, parents, students, staff, alumni, tribal organizations, and education experts. The committee would aim to begin work in spring/summer and report findings or updates to the Board by October.

The Board was given three options: approve the committee, deny the request, or request additional information before making a decision.

Member McCollum motioned, and Member Bergey seconded the following motion: I move that the State Board of Education establish an ad hoc committee to review academic performance, student supports, and school climate at Mount Edgecombe High School, and to provide recommendations to the board. Committee members will be appointed in accordance with State Board By-law 3.3.5, and membership may include board members, education experts, parent representatives, and individuals with experience in boarding school operations. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Agenda Item 19 – Approve School Construction and Major Maintenance List

Member Dupras motioned, and Member Bergey seconded the following motion: I move that the State Board of Education and Early Development approve the department's FY2027 Final School Construction Grant Fund and Major Maintenance Grant Fund priority list. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Agenda Item 20 – Approve Alaska State Blue and Gold Ribbon School Recognition Resolution

Member Dupras motioned, and Member Bergey seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development approve Resolution 02-2026 establishing the State of Alaska Blue and Gold Ribbon School Recognition Program and directing the Department to develop and administer the associated application, review, and selection process. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Agenda Item 21 – Questions regarding Standing Report

- 21A. Innovation and Education Excellence
- 21B. Libraries, Archives, and Museums
- 21C. Finance and Support Services
- 21D. Attorney General
- 21E. Office of Education Advocacy

There were no questions regarding Standing Report

Agenda Item 22 – Consent Agenda to Approve Minutes of the January 22, 2026 Board Meeting

Member Bergey motioned, and Member Dupras seconded the following motion: I move that the Board of Education and Early Development approve the consent agenda consisting of approval of the minutes of the January 22, 2026 board meeting. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Agenda Item 23 – Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Bishop provided a brief update rather than a formal report, noting that key information had already been covered during prior work sessions.

She shared that the Alaska Reads Act evaluation is now available online, with an updated infographic to be posted soon. She emphasized its importance in tracking progress and improving literacy outcomes for students.

The department has also partnered with the Institute of Social and Economic Research to conduct a statewide educator exit and stay survey, aimed at understanding why teachers remain in or leave Alaska schools. The survey

has received over 1,000 responses (about 16% participation so far), with a goal of reaching 20%. Results will help inform future teacher retention and recruitment strategies.

She encouraged continued participation in the survey and highlighted the broader Teacher Retention and Recruitment Playbook as a comprehensive guide involving multiple levels of responsibility.

She concluded by acknowledging the spring season in schools as a busy and celebratory time and offered early congratulations to the graduating class of 2026.

Board Comments

Member Bergey welcomed a new student advisor, recognized a departing member, and expressed appreciation for public participation, museum staff, and department staff for their work and reports. She also suggested exploring more detailed analysis of Alaska Performance Scholarship data, particularly comparing career and technical education (CTE) and college pathways, to inform future education priorities.

Member McCollum expressed appreciation for the staff's effort in organizing the meeting and highlighted the value of in-depth discussions during work sessions and committee meetings. She also noted excitement about the Alaska Reads Act data and its demonstrated progress, thanking everyone for a productive meeting.

Member Tyndall welcomed the new student advisor, thanked the outgoing member, and praised Chair Stockhausen's presentation to the legislature. She also commended DEED staff for their work, highlighted the positive meeting atmosphere and progress made, and expressed appreciation for a productive meeting.

Member Dupras expressed appreciation for the meeting and echoed prior commendations. As a Mt. Edgecumbe High School graduate, she noted concern about reported facility conditions but also recognized recent improvements and the school's importance to alumni and the community. She praised Chair Stockhausen's presentation and legislative engagement, valued the insightful questions from legislators, and emphasized the importance of ongoing reflection and listening to public input from across Alaska.

Military Advisor Fowley thanked the public for their ongoing engagement through meetings and written comments, noting he reads and values all input. He shared information about upcoming Air Force air shows in Alaska and mentioned his recent promotion to Colonel in the U.S. Air Force, inviting board members to attend his promotion ceremony at Elmendorf Air Force Base if they are in the Anchorage area.

Student Advisor Sherman thanked those who provided public comment, emphasizing its importance in helping the board understand diverse communities. She expressed enthusiasm for expanded tutoring and career guidance support, noting its value for high school seniors preparing for post-graduation decisions. She also shared that this was likely her last in-person board meeting, thanked board members for their support, and congratulated incoming student advisor Josh before concluding her remarks.

Student Advisor Josh Bolling expressed appreciation for outgoing advisor Amber's mentorship and said he is excited to join the board. He highlighted priorities such as expanding career and technical education (CTE), increasing funding, and strengthening student civic engagement. He also congratulated Amber and the Class of 2026 and shared enthusiasm about continuing student involvement on the board.

Chair Stockhausen thanked DEED staff for their work on the meeting and their ongoing efforts during the legislative session. She expressed appreciation for their long-term dedication over the past five years, highlighting innovation within the department and praising their commitment to prioritizing students despite pressures and challenges.

The board adjourned at 2:33 p.m.