

**State Board of Education & Early Development**  
**Draft Meeting Minutes**  
**June 3-4, 2025**  
**Virtual Meeting**

**Tuesday June 3, 2025**

Chair Fields called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

**Work Session**

**Agenda Item 1 – Presentation and Request for Conditional State Approval UAA Masters in Psychology Program by Dr. Hattie Harvey and Dr. Denise Runge, University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA).**

Dr. Hattie Harvey, a licensed psychologist and professor at UAA's Department of Psychology, presented the development and implementation of a new *in-state* School Psychology graduate program aimed at addressing Alaska's critical shortage of school psychologists.

**Program Purpose and Goals**

- **Primary Goal:** Prepare students to become licensed school psychologists who can serve within Alaska schools by providing assessments, interventions, consultations, and mental health services.
- **Accessibility:** Designed to accommodate current educators across the state through mostly distance-delivered coursework and localized field experiences.
- **Workforce Need:** Alaska is one of only two states (alongside Wyoming) without an in-state school psychology program. Anchorage School District, like others, consistently struggles to fill school psychologist positions.
- **Current Ratio:** One school psychologist per 1,600+ students in Alaska (recommended is 1:500).

**Program Development & Stakeholder Engagement**

- **Advisory Board:** Established in Fall 2023 with input from superintendents, special education directors, school psychologists, and parents.
- **Surveys & Focus Groups:** Collected data from administrators, school psychologists, undergrad students, and families. Key needs identified included behavioral health, culturally responsive practices, and MTSS understanding.
- **Family Insights:** Strong emphasis on student success being tied to feeling connected to school personnel.

**Program Structure**

- **Credit Hours:** 63 total (60 minimum for licensure).
- **Pathways:** Full-time and part-time options, including a part-time internship model to retain working educators.
- **Delivery:** Distance learning with limited on-campus components (grant funding available for rural student travel).
- **Fieldwork:** Includes embedded field experiences, 300-hour practicum, and a 1,200-hour internship (NASP requirement).
- **Graduation Requirements:** Praxis exam, DEED-required training, portfolio, and all field experiences.

**Accreditation & Standards**

- **Guided by NASP Practice Model:** Ensures national alignment in curriculum, supervision, and assessment.
- **Benchmark Assessments:** Ongoing performance-based evaluations, case studies, and demonstrated impact on K-12 learning outcomes.

- **Accreditation Timeline:**
  - **Candidacy Submission:** August 2025
  - **Full Accreditation Submission:** September 2028
  - **Site Visit:** January 2029
  - **Decision Expected:** June 2029
  - **Approval Duration:** 7 years

### **Faculty & Cohort Information**

- **Faculty:** 4 full-time doctorate-level, licensed school psychologists with K-12 experience.
- **Cohort Size:** Target of up to 15 students per year (1:12 faculty ratio per NASP), with the first cohort of 16 students accepted for Fall 2025, representing 9 Alaskan districts.

The program reflects statewide collaboration and aims to establish a sustainable, community-based pipeline for school psychologists in Alaska, with an emphasis on improving student outcomes through well-supported school-based mental health professionals.

Member Sally Stockhausen expressed strong support for UAA's new School Psychology program, emphasizing the statewide need and her hope for alternatives to contractor-based services. She raised a question about the implications for students graduating before the program receives full NASP accreditation. Dr. Harvey clarified that graduates would still be eligible for Type C licensure in Alaska and that accreditation, once obtained, would be retroactively applied for 18 months, covering the first cohort. Additionally, students could apply for the Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP) credential, allowing them to seek employment across states. Stockhausen also voiced concerns about finding qualified internship supervisors in rural districts that rely heavily on contractors, asking the program to consider flexible supervision models. Dr. Harvey acknowledged the challenge and noted that the program will work closely with districts to meet supervision requirements.

Member Lt. Col. Fowley inquired about the program's federal funding sources and potential backup plans. Dr. Harvey explained that funding had already been awarded through the U.S. Department of Education and federal appropriations secured by Senator Murkowski, as well as from the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority. Fowley also asked whether the initial cohort came from districts with employed school psychologists or contracted services. Dr. Harvey responded that the cohort represents a mix, including major districts with staff and rural ones that rely on contractors.

Member Kathy McCollum shifted the discussion to concerns about politically charged language within the program materials, particularly around "social justice." She asked for a definition and questioned how deeply such themes were embedded in the curriculum. Dr. Harvey replied that the definition aligns with the National Association of School Psychologists' focus on equitable access to services for all children. She stressed that the program follows Board of Regents guidance on public-facing content while still meeting accreditation competencies. Provost Runge added that in higher education, faculty select course materials, and the example readings may change. She explained that terms like "social justice" in this context often relate to addressing inequities in special education services and are not intended to be politically divisive.

Members McCollum, Bergey, and Tyndall reiterated their concerns, referencing specific readings that include themes like white privilege and equity. Bergey warned that language perceived as ideological can create distrust among parents and drive them away from public education. Tyndall suggested clarifying the program's language and policies to reassure the public. Runge and Harvey responded that oversight exists at multiple levels, including university curriculum committees, the Provost's office, and ultimately the Board of Regents. Accreditation through NASP ensures content quality and student learning outcomes, and future adjustments will be considered in response to the feedback.

Lastly, McCollum noted that NASP's own mission includes a commitment to social justice, making it difficult to

fully avoid these themes in an accredited program. Dr. Harvey acknowledged this but explained that there is flexibility in how competencies are met and that the program can meet required standards while being mindful of language concerns. She concluded by emphasizing that NASP is the only available accrediting body for such programs, and any program—whether under CAEP or another umbrella—would still follow NASP guidelines.

### **Agenda Item 2 – Mt. Edgecumbe Advisory Board Member Selection**

Suzzuk Huntington, Director and Superintendent of Mt. Edgecumbe High School, presented the selection process for two open seats on the Mt. Edgecumbe Advisory Board: one for a parent representative and one for a Sitka community member. These positions, part of Term C, will serve from July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2028. Five individuals expressed interest in the parent seat, but one withdrew due to no longer qualifying. Similarly, two applied for the Sitka community seat, with one also rescinding.

The school aims for balanced representation from various regions and community sizes across the state. After a review of candidates, the administration recommended Molly Kimzey for the parent representative role due to her demonstrated leadership, consistent engagement with the board, and continued interest—having also applied the previous year. For the Sitka community member seat, Blossom Teal Olsen was recommended based on her deep involvement with local organizations and her longstanding connection to Mt. Edgecumbe as a former student, parent, employee, and community advocate. Full candidate information was included in the meeting packet.

Lt. Col. Fowley raised a suggestion during the meeting to improve communication between the State Board of Education and the Mt. Edgecumbe Advisory Board. He noted that while he had voted on appointments to the Advisory Board, he realized he lacked a deeper understanding of who the members were and proposed the idea of an annual meeting to put names to faces and hear their concerns.

Member Stockhausen agreed, suggesting a possible informal meet-and-greet during a work session, structured with an agenda to keep it focused. Commissioner Bishop confirmed that such a meeting would be legally permissible as long as it was properly noticed and topics were outlined. Chair Fields supported the idea, observing no objections from the Board and proposed organizing a meeting in the coming year to facilitate mutual understanding of roles and concerns between the two boards.

### **Agenda Item 3 – AK Reads Act Evaluation, Year One**

Commissioner Deena Bishop presented the first third-party evaluation of the Alaska Reads Act, a requirement under state law. The evaluation, conducted by Pacific Research and Evaluation (PRE), covers the second year of implementation (2023–2024) and reflects data from 38 of 52 eligible school districts.

#### **Key Program Components & Findings:**

1. **District Reading Improvement Plans (DRIP):**
  - 84% of districts revised K–3 reading intervention plans.
  - 90% of districts reported using Science of Reading-based curricula.
  - Student improvement: 52% of kindergartners, 36% of 1st graders, 24% of 2nd graders, and 17% of 3rd graders moved out of the “below benchmark” category.
  - 25% of non-proficient 3rd graders needed a waiver to progress to 4th grade; most received 20 hours of summer support.
2. **Department Reading Program (DRP):**
  - Voluntary support program launched in 18 schools across 7 districts.
  - Focused on developing intensive school-wide reading improvement plans.
  - Full results are forthcoming as the program matures.
3. **Virtual Learning Consortium:**
  - Over 2,800 participants; 2,000+ completed courses.
  - Most-used course: mCLASS DIBELS screener calibration.
  - Offers training for teachers, principals, and even parents; asynchronous and synchronous formats

available.

#### 4. Early Education Programs:

- 10 districts awarded grants, serving 505 Pre-K students.
- 95% of participating students met or exceeded literacy benchmarks.
- 34 teachers earned early education endorsements; further program expansion is planned.

#### Overall Takeaways:

- Significant early progress is evident in foundational literacy growth.
- Districts are aligning with research-based reading strategies and want continued support with data analysis and multi-age classroom implementation.
- More than 1,600 educators have earned the Reads Act endorsement; over 2,000 completed Science of Reading training.
- The Act is on track with strategic goals set by the Board in 2016, showing promising early results.

Member Dupras questioned why the Department Reading Program (DRP) is voluntary and what consequences exist for underperforming districts that opt out. Commissioner Bishop explained that while the DRP is optional, the Alaska Reads Act includes provisions for the state to take direct action or withhold funds from districts not meeting student needs. However, the focus is currently on building district capacity through collaboration. Director Moffitt added that participation in the DRP is increasing—growing from 18 schools last year to 41 schools this year—as districts recognize its value through experience and results.

Member Dupras asked about the impact of defunding the Alyeska Reading Institute on the Alaska Reads Act's progress. Commissioner Bishop responded that while there is no specific performance data, there is clear evidence of a gap left by the loss of services. The institute had provided over \$1 million in support to districts, particularly for 20 hours of summer reading for 3rd graders, and its role was to build local capacity rather than deliver services directly. The absence of that support was notably felt by families and districts.

Vice Chair Stockhausen requested that future board meetings include 2024–2025 student proficiency data related to the DRIP, as well as a follow-up comparing TS GOLD early learning data to mCLASS findings. Commissioner Bishop confirmed that this data will be prepared for the July meeting.

#### Agenda Item 4 – Board Discussion on updating the SBOE Strategic Plan

Commissioner Bishop opened the discussion by outlining the intent to revisit and potentially revise the State Board of Education's (SBOE) strategic plan. She highlighted prior accomplishments tied to the current goals—such as progress in tribal compacting and the Alaska Reads Act—and emphasized the need for a transparent, collaborative update process. With the original strategic plan, rooted in Alaska's Education Challenge (2016–2017), approaching its 10-year mark, this was identified as a timely moment for reassessment.

Chair Fields and other board members agreed that the appropriate starting point is a data-driven review of how well the board has met its previously stated goals, especially those with benchmarks set for 2025. Members Dupras, Bergey, Stockhausen, McCollum, and Lt. Col. Fowley all emphasized the importance of reviewing student outcome data as well as adult action metrics before making revisions. Commissioner Bishop committed to compiling a detailed report linking each strategic priority with available performance data, which will be shared by the July board meeting.

In addition to reviewing existing priorities, Chair Fields raised the idea of forming a new committee focused on capital improvements and state/district assets. He noted that although this is often overlooked in educational discussions, it remains a significant issue. The committee would aim to support legislative efforts by exploring viable solutions around school infrastructure and facilities funding. Fields referenced former Member Griffin, who had repeatedly highlighted the importance of this topic, suggesting it now deserves formal attention within the board's structure.

In conclusion, while the original meeting goal was to spark dialogue using guiding questions, the board quickly coalesced around a common direction: to begin with a comprehensive evaluation of progress made. This review will then inform decisions about updating strategic goals and potentially expanding the board’s scope—such as by establishing new subcommittees, including one focused on capital planning and infrastructure.

### **Agenda Item 5 – State Board of Education Committee Meetings**

The board convened into committee meetings.

- 5A. Reading
- 5B. CTE & Cultural Education
- 5C. Safety & Well-Being
- 5D. Tribal Compacting
- 5E. Effective Educators

### **Agenda Item 6 – State Board of Education Committee Reports and Discussion**

#### **Reading**

Member Stockhausen reported that the committee reviewed some preliminary data, with Director Moffitt expected to provide a final report at the next meeting. The discussion focused on the importance of establishing goals for the committee moving forward.

#### **CTE & Cultural Education**

Member Lt. Col. Fowley shared that the committee discussed three main topics:

1. CTE Awards: Reviewed this year’s nominees, with winners to be announced during the upcoming public session.
2. Career Guides Program: Received an update, noting the current focus is on the military pathway, selected as part of a rotation.
3. Budget Update: Provided a brief overview of the current budget status, pending the Governor's review.

#### **Safety & Well-Being**

Member Tyndall reported that the committee focused on several active initiatives:

- PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports): Implemented in 26 schools across 10 districts and showing positive results. However, there is a concern that some educators are overly emphasizing trauma-related aspects rather than focusing on teaching. The committee emphasized redirecting efforts back to instruction.
- Threat Assessment Teams: The Valdez model is being shared and adapted by other schools. Most larger schools have effective threat assessment teams in place.
- Chronic Absenteeism: Highlighted the “Strive for 5” and “Attend All Week” initiatives, including visual tools like posters to encourage school engagement. Additional resources are being added to support schools in addressing absenteeism.
- Upcoming Events: The Safety and Well-Being Summit will take place on September 10–11, covering health, suicide prevention, family engagement, and community schools. Following the summit, several focused events are planned, including a Youth Suicide Conference, Safe Children’s Conference, Family Partnership Host Day, and Absenteeism Post Day.

Tyndall closed by commending Sharon and Pat for their outstanding work in advancing these efforts.

#### **Tribal Compacting**

Member Dupras summarized the committee’s discussion, highlighting three key areas:

1. Tribal Compacting Update:
  - Joel provided an update noting that the tribal compacting bill was heard in the May session,

- signaling potential progress for the 2025 legislative cycle.
  - There may be alternative funding pathways for tribes to start schools, though questions remain about how these would align with state processes.
  - Feedback from school districts during a recent session was positive, with many expressing support and readiness pending bill passage.
2. Native Language Literacy Screeners:
    - Work is underway on literacy screeners in three Native languages, with RFPs open for two more.
    - This effort aligns well with tribal compacting and supports language preservation and education.
  3. Other Updates:
    - Cheryl DeWitt was introduced as a new participant in the committee.
    - Kari reported that the May 1st symposium was a success, with positive feedback from educators and students.
    - The Alaska Language Preservation Committee currently has three open positions.

Overall, the tone of the report was optimistic, with progress on legislation and ongoing efforts in language and cultural education.

### **Effective Educators**

Member Stockhausen provided a brief update noting several key developments:

1. Teacher Registered Apprenticeship Program (WRAP):
  - The program has grown from 3 to 8 participating districts.
  - Districts are starting with small cohorts to carefully develop internal frameworks for success.
2. Principal Registered Apprenticeship Program (PRAAP):
  - Nearing submission of its framework to the U.S. Department of Labor.
  - A key focus will be training principals in teacher retention strategies, addressing concerns identified in the Teacher Recruitment and Retention (TRR) report.
3. Teacher Certification Office Updates:
  - Colleen Walker shared that their certification website has now been live for one year.
  - Processing times have improved dramatically from 16 weeks last summer to approximately 4–5 weeks currently.
  - Ongoing efforts include continuous website improvements, stronger district communication, and enhanced training.

Overall, the committee remains focused on strengthening Alaska’s educator workforce through innovative apprenticeship models and administrative efficiency.

## **Agenda Item 7 – Regulations for Board Consideration**

### **7A. Office of Education Advocacy**

Monica Goyette, Project Coordinator for the Department of Education and Early Development, presented the final proposed regulations for the establishment of the Office of Education Advocacy, requesting the Board’s approval for adoption. The new office is designed to serve as a centralized customer service resource for all education stakeholders, including students, parents, educators, community members, and elected officials, to help navigate the complexities of Alaska’s education system. In alignment with the Alaska Reads Act, the department is also revising its existing complaint procedure to provide greater clarity, including timelines for review, requirements for district responses, and the Commissioner’s authority to take action. These proposed regulations had previously been opened for public comment, which closed in mid-May, and no public feedback was received. A copy of the final regulations was included in the Board’s meeting packet.

### **7B. Native Language Standards**

Deb Riddle, Division Operations Manager for the Division of Innovation and Education Excellence, informed the Board that they would be asked to approve the final adoption of the proposed native language standards during

the business meeting portion of the agenda. These standards were previously presented by the Sealaska Heritage Corporation. The public comment period for the proposed regulations was held concurrently with the Office of Education Advocacy regulations and closed in mid-May, during which no public comments were received.

### **7C. Local Contributions**

Assistant Attorney General Susan Greenlee Sonneborn presented an emergency regulation addressing the recent failure of Alaska’s federal *disparity test* for FY2024. This failure could result in an \$80 million financial impact to the state. Although DEED believes this determination may have been made in error, the emergency regulation is a precautionary measure intended to prevent a similar failure in FY2027, which will be based on FY2025 data. The regulation must be in place by the end of FY2025 (June 30, 2025) to take effect in time. DEED has hired a Washington, D.C. firm to review the disparity test outcome and assess available options.

Several board members expressed concern about the short timeline for action and the complexity of the issue. Vice Chair Stockhausen emphasized the difficulty of making informed decisions under time constraints, particularly while districts are already facing budget reductions. She asked for more time to review the proposed regulation and raised the possibility of holding an emergency meeting for further discussion. Commissioner Bishop acknowledged the pressure but highlighted the substantial financial risk to the state if no action is taken. She explained that the regulation serves as a safeguard, not a reaction to a confirmed, irreversible outcome.

Board members also sought clarification on the scope of “in-kind” services under the regulation. Member Bergey asked how in-kind contributions would be defined and measured, particularly in terms of local volunteerism and donations from families or military organizations. Director Heineken and School Finance Manager Lori Weed clarified that the regulation focuses on services provided by municipalities—such as maintenance, utilities, and professional support—and excludes general community donations, volunteers, or parent-provided goods. Weed emphasized that only those services meeting the federal definition of “current expenditures for free public education” would be considered under the disparity test. Services not directly tied to public instruction, such as elder meal programs or community gym use, would be excluded.

Vice Chair Stockhausen expressed further concern that the removal of specific examples from the regulation could affect how municipalities calculate their maximum allowable contributions, possibly limiting their ability to offer additional community support. In response, Commissioner Bishop and Weed provided examples from Ketchikan, Skagway, and Juneau where DEED has worked with municipalities to ensure expenditures were appropriately categorized and would not negatively affect district funding under the disparity test.

Member Lt. Col. Fowley asked what changed between FY2023 and FY2024 that caused the failure. While the details remain confidential due to ongoing legal processes, Weed explained that the proposed regulation is structured to mitigate risk going forward regardless of the circumstances of the current test result. The regulation would align the state’s practices more closely with federal guidelines, increasing consistency and reducing the chance of future failure.

Chair Fields inquired whether the revised regulation aligns with the federal definition of in-kind services. Weed confirmed that the language was revised by the Department of Law specifically to align with federal rules. Greenlee Sonneborn agreed to distribute the federal definition of “current expenditures for free public education” to board members, which includes categories like instruction, administration, and student health, but excludes capital outlay and community programs.

In conclusion, the emergency regulation is intended to protect the state from a potential \$80 million financial loss by aligning the definition of in-kind services with federal expectations. While the board voiced valid concerns regarding timing and clarity, DEED emphasized the urgency of the situation and the need for swift action. Further discussion, including the possibility of an emergency executive session, may be scheduled to address lingering questions and ensure board members are fully informed before voting.

### **Agenda Item 8 – Mt. Edgecumbe High School Budget Review**

Superintendent Suzzuk Huntington, Director of Mt. Edgecumbe High School, opened her presentation by grounding the discussion in the school's mission and vision—to provide an excellent education for every student, every day. She emphasized the school's unique role as a State-run institution serving students from over 100 feeder communities and tribes and highlighted its alignment with Alaska's educational priorities: safety and well-being, closing the achievement gap, recruiting and retaining educators, and expanding career and culturally relevant education. These priorities guide not only instructional practices but also budget allocation decisions. Huntington noted Mt. Edgecumbe's strong partnerships, especially its active alumni network, and praised student organizations like Educators Rising for their leadership.

She outlined the FY26 budget planning process, noting that Mt. Edgecumbe is, for the first time, using the same budget reporting template as other school districts to increase comparability. The current balanced budget is based on an ADM (Average Daily Membership) projection of 400 students and assumes a \$680 increase in the BSA (Base Student Allocation). It includes an increase in student activity fees from \$250 to \$375, staff reductions, and transitions in residential services under a new contractor. The school has maximized grants for staffing, with additional support from the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) for oversight and chargebacks.

Revenue projections for FY26 estimate \$12 million, with \$11.2 million from state sources and \$840,000 from federal grants. Of the state funding, \$5.5 million supports residential programs, \$2.5 million comes from the foundation formula, and other portions support the aquatic center, child nutrition, and impact aid programs. Federal grants include Title I, Title II, migrant education, special education (IDEA), CTE (Carl Perkins), Indian Education, and targeted safety and well-being initiatives. The school has seen significant cost increases in food, utilities, and dormitory contracts over the past six years, largely due to pandemic-related disruptions.

Huntington also detailed expense categories, which include salaries and benefits, professional services, utilities, travel, and contracts—particularly those supporting residential and custodial services. Despite budget constraints, she emphasized that these challenges present opportunities to innovate and realign resources. The school is committed to conservative budgeting, maximizing grant opportunities, and maintaining student-centered decision-making. She concluded by reaffirming Mt. Edgecumbe's dedication to its mission and a future of excellence and resilience for its students.

Lieutenant Colonel Fowley asked whether the emergency regulation under discussion, would have a tangible financial impact on Mt. Edgecumbe High School—specifically referencing Slide 9 and questioning whether \$1.5 million (or 14% of projected revenue) would be at risk if the regulation were not adopted. Deputy Commissioner Karen Morrison responded, clarifying that the impact aid in question goes directly to the State and that Mt. Edgecumbe does not receive any local contribution. Therefore, the regulation would not impact Mt. Edgecumbe's funding.

Member Bergey expressed appreciation to Superintendent Huntington for her budget presentation, acknowledging the significant effort involved in transitioning to a new budget format. Commending her and her expert team for successfully aligning Mt. Edgecumbe High School's budget with the format used by other school districts, despite the school's unique nature as a boarding institution. Bergey emphasized the value Mt. Edgecumbe provides by offering students additional educational choices in Alaska and reiterated gratitude for the collaborative work of the entire team behind the scenes.

5:28pm Chair Fields called meeting to Recess

## Wednesday June 4, 2025

Chair Fields called meeting to order at 8:16am.

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

Chair Fields called a quorum. Member Dupras had scheduling conflicts and joined meeting later. Member Stockhausen gave the invocation, and the board pledged allegiance to the flag.

First Vice Chair Stockhausen motioned, and Member Bergey seconded the following motion: I move that we amend the agenda to include an executive session after item 14B. and before 14C. to obtain legal advice regarding the local contribution regulation. Without further discussion the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Chair Fields moved on the original motion to adopt the agenda of the June 4, 2025 meeting. Without further discussion the motion was passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Member McCollum indicated a possible conflict related to the portion of the agenda involving CTE awards. Chair Fields acknowledged prior communication with McCollum and clarified that, since there was no personal financial gain or involvement of relatives, there was no actual conflict of interest.

### Public Comment

**1. Rachel Posey**, a parent from the Anchorage School District, expressed concern during public comment about the proposed emergency policy change related to local contributions for school funding. She argued that the use of an emergency declaration to push the policy forward undermines the State Board of Education's mission to provide an excellent education for every student every day. Posey warned that implementing the policy immediately would disrupt districts statewide, create confusion, and offer no clear solution to the State's recent failure of the disparity test. She criticized the timing, noting that school districts and municipalities are just weeks from the end of their fiscal year and have already finalized budgets. Posey urged the Board to remove the proposed change from the agenda and instead allow for a thorough review with proper public input and stakeholder engagement.

**2. Jesse Kiehl**, State Senator for northern Southeast Alaska, provided public comment strongly opposing the proposed emergency regulation regarding school funding. He argued that the regulation does not meet the legal standard for an emergency, which requires it to be necessary for the immediate preservation of public peace, health, safety, or general welfare. Kiehl emphasized that the regulation does not directly affect whether schools open or whether students receive meals, making its classification as an emergency invalid.

He noted that while the regulation might impact state finances, it doesn't justify bypassing the standard process. Instead, he recommended appealing the federal determination through appropriate legal channels, pointing out that similar past federal misunderstandings about Alaska's education system were successfully resolved through hearings.

Kiehl also disputed the claim that the regulation merely clarifies existing law, stating it represents a significant change to long-standing rules. He warned that implementing it so late in the fiscal year—potentially shifting \$30 million from municipal school districts—would be unworkable and force municipalities to violate other state laws due to budgetary timelines.

Lastly, Kiehl pointed out that the school district that allegedly triggered the federal disparity finding would not be affected by the proposed regulation, rendering it ineffective in addressing the actual issue. He concluded by

urging the Board to reject the emergency regulation and pursue a proper public process instead.

**3. Frank Hauser**, Superintendent of the Juneau School District and a longtime Alaska educator, spoke in strong opposition to the proposed regulation on local contributions. Representing nearly 70,000 affected students, Hauser criticized the lack of transparency and public engagement in the regulatory process, questioning how such a significant decision could be made without parent or community input.

He emphasized that there is no true emergency justifying the regulation and stated that the State already failed the federal disparity test based on FY24 data—something that cannot be reversed by a regulatory change now. He argued that only federal impact aid processes, such as waivers or exclusions, can address the issue. Furthermore, he clarified that the disparity test failure was not caused by local contributions beyond the cap but by problems within the State's foundation funding system.

Hauser also pointed out that the Federal Impact Aid office explicitly stated it did not request or recommend a change to state regulations, and that the proposed regulation would be more restrictive than federal requirements, denying districts flexibility allowed by federal law.

He urged the Board to stop the regulation, review the actual federal documents, and uphold the principles of honesty, transparency, and local control.

**4. Roz'lyn Grady-Wyche**, Alaska Education Chair for the NAACP Tri-State Area Conference (Alaska, Oregon, and Washington), spoke in strong opposition to the proposed regulation on local school funding contributions. She emphasized that the regulation is not an emergency but rather a response to a state-created funding failure. She noted that no stakeholders—students, families, or school boards—requested this change, and criticized the lack of transparency and public input.

Grady-Wyche highlighted the harmful statewide impact, especially on the Anchorage School District, which serves over 40,000 diverse students, including Alaska Native, Black, Pacific Islander, immigrant, low-income, and special needs populations. She warned that reclassifying vital services like school meals, pre-K, transportation, and after-school programs as "non-instructional" would force cuts to essential classroom and support services.

Calling the regulation inequitable and destructive, she accused the State of punishing districts that do more for their students, undermining local control, and failing to properly fund education. She urged the Board to reject the regulation, restore public trust, and prioritize proper funding for public education.

**5. Jason Weber**, Superintendent of Valdez City Schools, strongly opposed the proposed emergency regulation on local school funding. He argued that the regulation would cause immediate and harmful impacts to students and families in Valdez and across Alaska. Weber criticized the lack of transparency and collaboration from the Department of Education, noting that neither his district nor municipal leaders had been meaningfully engaged in the process.

He emphasized that introducing such significant changes just weeks before the fiscal year ends is fiscally irresponsible and disruptive, as budgets have already been finalized. In Valdez, for example, community-funded in-town busing is crucial for student safety during heavy snowfall. The regulation would threaten this service and also reduce funding for student meals—an especially troubling move at a time when other states are expanding access to school nutrition.

Weber also warned that the new rules regarding in-kind contributions would create excessive red tape, weaken long-standing community partnerships, and place additional burdens on schools without state support. He criticized the erosion of local control and urged the Board to reject the regulation. Instead, he advocated for real

solutions, such as the Governor signing the bipartisan education funding bill passed by the Legislature.

**6. Andrew Ratliff**, Chief Financial Officer for the Anchorage School District (ASD), testified in strong opposition to the proposed emergency regulation on local contribution limits. He criticized the sudden move to implement the changes for FY2024–2025—less than four weeks before the end of the fiscal year—despite earlier assurances that any changes would be phased in for FY2026–2027.

Ratliff argued the regulation is being wrongly justified by the state’s failure of the federal impact aid disparity test. He clarified that the failure was due to the misreporting of interfund transfers, not the inclusion of local municipal contributions like those used for transportation. Thus, the regulation wouldn’t resolve the issue that caused the disparity test failure.

He warned that the change could cost ASD over \$15 million in funding earmarked for transportation and preschool. He also raised concerns about removing “city or borough” from the regulation’s definition of local contribution, which could result in unpredictable limits on revenues from sources like student fees, interest earnings, and reimbursements.

Ratliff concluded by urging the Board to reject the regulation, stating it offers no benefit to student outcomes, is being rushed without proper public input, and further harms already underfunded schools.

**7. Dr. Anji Gallanos**, Superintendent of Kake City School District, strongly opposed the emergency regulation redefining local contribution, primarily criticizing the lack of adequate notice and public process. She explained that the proposal was first shared with her district just 48 hours before the scheduled board action—during a busy end-of-school-year period—leaving no time for meaningful consultation with her school board, city leaders, or tribal leadership.

She emphasized that the regulation marks a significant shift in how education funding statutes are interpreted and that small, rural districts like hers deserve sufficient time and transparency to understand and respond. Gallanos argued that the cited fiscal concerns do not meet the legal standard for an emergency under Alaska law, as the relevant data has been known for months.

She urged the Board to remove the regulation from the agenda and instead initiate a full 30-day public comment period to ensure proper stakeholder engagement and uphold principles of good governance.

**8. Kathy Todd**, a member of the Valdez School Board speaking as an individual, testified in strong opposition to the proposed emergency regulation that would impose new limits on funding outside the cap. She expressed deep concern about the timing of the regulation, noting that her district's budget is already finalized, teachers have been hired, and key contracts—like for school buses—have just been signed. With these financial commitments in place, she warned that implementing sudden changes would be extremely disruptive. For example, the potential cut in transportation funding alone could mean losing a teacher in a district with only 50. She emphasized that the state’s lack of advance planning should not become an emergency for local school districts.

Todd also challenged the justification for the regulation on equity grounds. She argued that cutting funding from certain districts will not help others—it will only eliminate local resources that won’t be redistributed statewide. Drawing a comparison to Kurt Vonnegut’s dystopian short story *Harrison Bergeron*, she warned against achieving "equality" by weakening stronger systems, saying that handicapping better-funded districts will not improve the overall quality of education.

She concluded by stating that other commenters had articulated the issues in greater detail but emphasized that the real issue is the lack of information and transparency. This regulation represents a major shift and is being pushed through without sufficient consideration or input. She urged the Board to slow down, rethink the proposal, and

avoid implementing such sweeping changes without thorough analysis and public engagement.

**9. Nathan Duval**, City Manager for the City of Valdez, expressed strong opposition to the proposed emergency regulation concerning local contributions. He questioned the legitimacy of declaring the situation an emergency, stating it does not meet the legal or appropriate definition. Duval warned that the real emergency would arise if the regulation is enacted without a sufficient or transparent public process, calling it bad policy overall.

He emphasized that decisions about local contributions should remain under local control. If the State is unwilling to fully fund schools, he argued, local residents should be allowed to support education through their own funding mechanisms. Duval concluded by urging the Board to reconsider and thanked them for their time and service.

**10. Nicole Herbert**, Chief Financial Officer for the Juneau School District and an ALASBO board member, strongly opposed the proposed emergency regulation redefining local contribution. She noted that the Department of Education has known about the issue since 2023 and could have introduced changes through a proper, transparent process. She criticized the significant changes made to the regulation since initial feedback from districts and ALASBO, stating that key concerns—such as the treatment of pupil transportation—remain unresolved.

Herbert emphasized that the State currently excludes pupil transportation from the impact aid disparity test, which contradicts the justification for the regulation. She also expressed deep concern over the proposed removal of the definition of "local appropriations," which would now include all local revenue sources like school meal payments, fundraisers, and community donations. This change could result in districts being found noncompliant due to factors outside their control, especially if local governments fail to track in-kind services.

She warned that the proposal would unfairly burden under-resourced communities and create confusion, as districts have not been tracking these in-kind contributions and lack guidance on how to quantify or budget for them. She concluded by urging the board not to approve the regulation, especially with immediate implementation, which she said would put every district out of compliance through no fault of their own.

**11. Andy Holleman**, an Anchorage resident, retired educator, and current Anchorage School Board member (speaking personally), expressed opposition to the emergency regulation redefining local contribution. He acknowledged the complexity of issues like the disparity test and the Open Meetings Act and emphasized that local boards rely on the State Board and DEED to clarify—not complicate—federal requirements.

Holleman argued that the proposed regulation introduces more confusion around what counts as a local contribution and doesn't meet the threshold of a true emergency. Instead of solving a problem, he said, it creates one for local school boards, especially with such short notice. He urged the board to delay action, clarify the regulation's intent, and allow for sufficient public input. In closing, he asked the board to take the necessary time to find a well-informed, collaborative solution.

**12. Jacque Muelbauer** from Fairbanks, Alaska, strongly opposed the proposed emergency regulation change regarding local contributions to school funding.

She raised four main concerns:

1. **Lack of Emergency Justification:** The proposal does not meet the legal definition of an emergency since it doesn't address immediate health or safety issues. It's a funding issue that needs proper deliberation and public input.
2. **Harm to Students:** The change could negatively impact around 70,000 students statewide by threatening funding for essential programs such as pre-K, transportation, school nutrition, and extracurricular activities—particularly in districts like Juneau that already meet their local funding cap.
3. **Disparity Test Misalignment:** The regulation would not resolve the state's failure of the federal impact aid disparity test, which stems from audit-related issues—not local contributions. Therefore, the proposal

doesn't address the root cause.

4. **Threat to Local Control:** By counting all types of revenue—including for non-instructional services—toward the funding cap, the regulation would undermine local control and diminish support for key student services.

She concluded by urging the State Board to reject the emergency regulation and instead allow time for thoughtful public discussion and meaningful solutions that support, rather than harm, public education.

**13. Katie Parrott**, President-Elect of the Alaska Association of School Business Officials (ALASBO), testified in strong opposition to the proposed emergency regulation redefining local contributions, highlighting several serious concerns. She emphasized that the proposal has not been properly vetted and districts have not had adequate time to assess its wide-ranging implications. On the surface, the regulation may seem to impact only those districts receiving supplemental appropriations outside their operating funds, but due to vague changes in language—particularly regarding in-kind contributions—it could apply much more broadly and unpredictably.

Parrott pointed out that the regulation removes specific language that previously defined what qualifies as in-kind contributions, replacing it with generalized and ambiguous terms like “services.” This lack of clarity could result in inconsistent interpretations and enforcement across districts. She also pushed back against the notion that districts exploited a loophole; in reality, many districts worked closely with the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) to legally and transparently manage their funding in compliance with current laws.

Additionally, Parrott raised concerns about local control, noting that many school districts are central to their communities and provide cost-effective public services. Limiting how local governments can support school districts undermines the ability of elected officials to make decisions that best serve their communities. She argued that the regulation would strip communities of their ability to direct resources toward shared priorities.

Finally, Parrott warned that implementing the regulation immediately would create an overwhelming administrative burden and severely disrupt operations. It would also override lawful, democratically made decisions regarding resource allocation for the current fiscal year. She concluded by urging the Board not to approve the emergency regulation, citing the lack of due process, potential for harm, and the fundamental erosion of local governance.

**14. Emily Ferry**, a parent of three high school students at Juneau Douglas High School, expressed deep concern about the immediate and significant negative impact the proposed emergency regulation would have on her children's high school experience. While she supports a meaningful conversation about equity and opportunity for all Alaska students—even if it means some sacrifices like fewer sports trips or extracurricular activities—she stressed that this rushed regulation shuts down any chance for thoughtful dialogue. Instead of lifting up students, she believes the regulation would push them all down.

Emily emphasized that Juneau's community investment in sports and travel benefits students statewide. When Juneau funds travel for its teams, students from many other Alaskan communities—including Kodiak, Homer, Anchorage, and Fairbanks—also gain opportunities to participate and compete. Therefore, cuts would ripple across the state, affecting countless students beyond Juneau.

She acknowledged the resilience of students and teachers through recent challenges, such as the pandemic and the closure of a local high school but warned that this regulation change would create additional chaos and stress without any necessity. Emily urged the Board not to proceed with the regulation, instead calling for a more inclusive, thoughtful conversation involving students, schools, and families to find better solutions.

**15. Dr. Jharrett Bryantt**, Superintendent of the Anchorage School District (ASD), strongly urged the State Board of Education to table the proposed emergency regulation altering local municipal contributions to education funding. He emphasized the widespread confusion and alarm caused by the regulation's sudden

introduction, with teachers, families, and public officials statewide unsure about its implications. Concerns include potential layoffs, reduced transportation services, safety impacts in schools, and the possible loss of pre-kindergarten programs—all without sufficient information or communication from the Department of Education (DEED).

Dr. Bryantt criticized the lack of transparency and notice, stating that he was only informed late on June 2 and did not receive the written emergency finding until 4 PM on June 3. This left no time for public input or informed discussion. In fact, the issue disrupted an Anchorage School Board meeting that had been focused on improving student outcomes. He argued that if a superintendent cannot keep up with the changes, tens of thousands of others are likely in the dark as well.

He called the use of emergency regulations without public process “unlawful at worst and unethical at best,” warning that it undermines public trust in the State. Dr. Bryantt concluded by urging the Board to be a voice of reason, withdraw the regulation, and initiate a transparent process to rebuild trust. He also stated that, if the regulation passes, he would be compelled to pursue legal action to challenge it.

**16. Mandy McConnell**, a parent of two public school students and a public-school educator, expressed strong opposition to the proposed regulation that would reduce funding to the Anchorage School District (ASD) by \$15 million. She shared her surprise and concern after learning about the plan during a recent School Board meeting, where ASD Superintendent Dr. Jarrett Bryantt explained that the reduction stems from the State's use of \$81 million in federal impact aid as a replacement for State funding—ultimately causing the State to fail the federal disparity test.

McConnell emphasized that the proposal appears to be an attack on public education and urged the State Board to slow down the process. She stressed the public’s right to understand the implications of the regulation and how it will affect ASD. Referring to DEED’s mission and vision, she questioned how such a funding cut aligns with the commitment to provide an excellent education for every student every day. McConnell concluded by urging the Board to withdraw the regulation and instead support public education to ensure Alaska’s students continue to thrive and become the state’s future leaders.

**17. Fran March**, a retired educator with 35 years of experience teaching in Kodiak, expressed concern over the proposed regulation change, emphasizing that she only learned about it the day before. While she acknowledged that many speakers had already articulated strong points she agreed with, she shared personal reflections on the importance of community partnerships in education—such as water safety lessons at the pool, field trips to the Coast Guard station, and reading events at the library—that enrich student experiences.

March admitted she does not yet fully understand the implications of the regulation but believes it’s being rushed without sufficient time for public discussion or understanding. She referenced the broader strain on the education system, including school closures in Kodiak and teacher departures. She concluded by urging the State Board to slow the process down and postpone any decisions until next year to allow for more thoughtful discussion and understanding of the regulation’s potential impact.

**18. Nils Andreassen**, Executive Director of the Alaska Municipal League (AML), expressed strong opposition to the proposed emergency regulation change limiting local government contributions to education. He questioned whether the State Board of Education could, in good conscience and in alignment with its legal obligations, deem this situation an emergency as defined by law—one that threatens the public peace, health, safety, or general welfare. Andreassen argued that the true issue at hand is a long-standing fiscal problem within the State government, not a sudden crisis that warrants bypassing a full and transparent public process.

He highlighted that the State’s fiscal difficulties, including a stagnant Base Student Allocation (BSA) since 2015 and an overreliance on local contributions due to rising tax valuations, should not be used to justify restricting

local control. Rather than asking municipalities to reduce their support for students and services, the State should be examining its own failure to adjust funding in line with inflation. Andreassen emphasized that local governments are acting in the best interests of their communities and that limiting their ability to support schools would only worsen conditions for students, particularly in vulnerable areas.

Andreassen also criticized the State's handling of federal Impact Aid, pointing out that Alaska uniquely uses it to offset state obligations rather than directly funding school districts, contrary to how other states manage these funds. He asserted that this practice undermines the intended support for communities with low tax bases and exacerbates funding inequities.

In closing, Andreassen urged the Board to reject the emergency regulation and instead pursue a thorough, inclusive public process to address the complex fiscal and policy challenges at play. He emphasized that there is no legal or practical emergency and that the consequences of rushing this decision could be severe and far-reaching.

**19. Paul McDonogh**, an Anchorage parent of four and educator, voiced strong opposition to the proposed emergency regulation, joining over a hundred Alaskans in expressing concern. He acknowledged that many others had already addressed legal and procedural flaws in the regulation—including its questionable legality, lack of true emergency status, and potential for costly litigation—but chose to focus on the broader community implications.

McDonogh emphasized that Alaskans, particularly in Anchorage, have already stepped up over the past decade to support public education amid ongoing challenges. He cited local investment through property taxes and decisions made by the Anchorage Assembly to improve transportation, early childhood education, services for Native students, and school-community partnerships. These actions, he said, reflect the will of local residents to support and strengthen public schools.

He warned that adopting this regulation would signal a rejection of that local commitment and partnership. It would silence the voices of community members and override the authority of elected municipal bodies like the Assembly, ultimately alienating residents who are invested in their schools. McDonogh urged the State Board of Education to respect the will of Alaskans and remove the regulation from consideration, advocating instead for collaborative, transparent conversations about the future of education in the state.

**20. Margo Bellamy**, Vice President of the Anchorage School Board and past president of the Association of Alaska School Board of Directors, delivered a strong public comment opposing the proposed regulation on local school contributions. She criticized both the content of the regulation and the lack of a transparent, inclusive public process in its development. Bellamy emphasized that the regulation would significantly alter the financial structure supporting public schools without providing a clear fiscal analysis or rationale.

She expressed concern that the regulation would effectively cap or restrict local contributions, penalizing districts like Anchorage that have historically stepped up to support students when state funding has fallen short. Bellamy warned that this move would discourage local investment, erode the principle of local control, and impose a one-size-fits-all mandate that ignores the diverse needs of communities across Alaska.

In addition, Bellamy condemned the absence of meaningful public engagement, noting that there had been no forums, district-level collaboration, or transparent fiscal modeling provided to stakeholders. She urged the Board to reject or table the regulation until a legitimate, statewide public process could be held—one that includes open hearings in all regions and engagement with students, families, educators, and taxpayers. She closed by asking the Board to join her in “standing in the gap” for Alaska’s students, who deserve better.

**21. Izzy Farris**, a grandparent of two children in Anchorage public schools, voiced concern over the lack of

public awareness and short notice surrounding the proposed regulation change. She expressed appreciation for the prior speakers, whose informed testimony helped her understand the issue, as she had only learned of the meeting 15 minutes before it began.

Farris emphasized that the short notice likely prevented many parents from being informed or involved, which is troubling given the potential impact on students' educational opportunities. She called for a longer public comment period and more transparent communication moving forward. Based on these concerns, she urged the Board to reject the proposed regulation change.

**22. Carl Jacobs**, President of the Anchorage School District School Board, expressed strong opposition to the proposed emergency regulation. He argued that the rationale for enacting the measure under emergency conditions does not meet legal standards, noting that the issue has been publicly discussed for months. This undermines any claim that immediate action is necessary. Jacobs highlighted that the emergency finding document was only shared with a small number of stakeholders just hours before the meeting, leaving school boards, including his own, without sufficient time or information to evaluate the impact.

He warned that the regulation could lead to millions in lost revenue for Anchorage schools, harming students and families directly. While emphasizing that he does not seek conflict with the State Board of Education, Jacobs made it clear he would not allow Alaska's largest school district to suffer needlessly. He urged the board to follow a transparent, well-informed, and inclusive public process moving forward, stating that DEED's current actions fall short of those expectations.

Jacobs concluded by advising board members to consider how their individual votes on this issue will define their legacies. Despite the short notice, he noted that the public is watching closely and urged the Board not to let the Commissioner's poor judgment escalate into broader governance issues.

**23. Jim Anderson**, Chief Operating Officer for the Anchorage School District, voiced strong concerns about the proposed emergency regulation, focusing specifically on its impacts to transportation and Pre-K funding. He emphasized that the regulation is overly broad, potentially affecting many areas including donations and transportation support.

He explained that transportation funding has not been adequately updated in a decade, even though costs—especially driver wages—have significantly increased due to state laws tying wages to minimum wage, which continues to rise. Despite lower enrollment, the district must still maintain most bus routes across Anchorage's large geographic area. This year, the municipality covered 29% of the transportation budget—\$9 million—and is expected to cover 40% (\$13 million) next year. These municipal contributions are currently outside the local funding cap, and the proposed regulation would prohibit them, severely limiting ASD's ability to provide necessary transportation services.

He also noted that Pre-K programs are underfunded by the State, receiving only enough to partially cover costs. The municipality currently supports Pre-K through a \$2 million grant funded by alcohol taxes, which would also be disallowed under the proposed regulation. Anderson criticized DEED for urging a rushed approval of the regulation without proper analysis or time to understand its full consequences and urged the Board to follow a full 30-day public comment process instead of a rushed timeline.

**24. Matthew Singer**, Attorney representing the Anchorage School District, strongly opposed the proposed emergency regulation, calling it unlawful and warning that legal action will be taken if it proceeds. He stated that the district has already directed him to file a complaint and a motion for a temporary restraining order, and they will be in court next week if the Board moves forward.

Singer argued that the regulation fails to meet the statutory definition of an emergency, which legally requires an

action to be necessary for the *immediate preservation of public peace, health, safety, or general welfare*. He asserted that the regulation does none of these and instead harms Alaska students by disrupting local funding contributions. He described the rationale given for the regulation as pretextual, noting that the actual reason for the state's failed federal impact aid test was due to transportation fund transfers, not local contributions.

He also claimed the process violated the Open Meetings Act, as the emergency declaration was posted with less than 24 hours' notice—far too short for a decision of this magnitude. Singer challenged the Board to consider whether they could justify this as an emergency under oath in court and urged them to reject the proposal and instead take it up through the standard regulatory process, allowing for full public participation.

**25. Greg Smith**, Deputy Mayor of the City and Borough of Juneau, opposed the proposed emergency regulation, emphasizing the importance of local control over education funding. He acknowledged that broader education funding issues may be outside the Board's authority but stated that this regulation is within its power to reject.

Smith explained that Juneau allocates approximately \$2 million in local funds for essential services outside the state funding cap—such as school sports, after-school programs, student meals, and transportation. He noted that while this funding represents a significant financial commitment for the city, it is strongly supported by the community.

He warned that restricting the ability of municipalities to contribute in this way would undermine community efforts to support students and face intense local backlash. Smith urged the Board to support local control and reject the regulation.

**26. Billeen Carlson**, a lifelong Alaskan, parent, educator, and community member from the Kenai Peninsula, strongly opposed the proposed emergency regulation, calling it a hoax and not a true emergency. She argued that the regulation is not about promoting equity, but about covering up a state error in federal paperwork by penalizing rural schools.

Carlson described the regulation as part of a national trend to undermine public education under the guise of budget efficiency, stating the real intent is to destabilize schools and shift blame to local communities trying to fill funding gaps.

She cited multiple examples of Alaskan communities (Galena, Hooper Bay, Craig, McGrath) that provide essential support and services to schools through partnerships—calling these not "loopholes" but lifelines that reflect local commitment to education.

Carlson concluded by urging the Board to reject the regulation, accept responsibility for the State's mistakes, and support the traditional Alaskan spirit of backing public schools and communities. She also criticized DEED leadership for a lack of transparency during the meeting.

**27. Lon Garrison**, Executive Director of the Association of Alaska School Boards, delivered strong opposition to the proposed emergency regulation regarding local contributions to education. He emphasized that the use of the emergency process is inappropriate, unlawful, and unjustified, as the regulation has been under discussion for months or even years—disqualifying it as a true emergency.

He criticized the lack of public notice, the absence of a proper 30-day comment period, and the failure to incorporate feedback from education stakeholders. Garrison noted that school districts were blindsided by the sudden shift just days before the meeting, forcing them to potentially revise FY25 and FY26 budgets developed under existing guidance.

He expressed concern that the regulation would erode local control by expanding the definition of local

contributions to include items like community donations, fundraisers, and even school meals, without a clear or consistent methodology.

Garrison concluded by urging the Board to reject the regulation, highlighting the absence of fiscal analysis, lack of evidence that it will help with federal compliance, and the deeply negative impact on districts, municipalities, and students across Alaska.

**28. Rachel Blakeslee**, a parent of a public-school student in Anchorage, strongly opposed the proposed emergency regulation to redefine and limit local contributions to education funding. She argued the regulation does not meet legal or ethical standards for an emergency, calling it a disingenuous attempt to fast-track a major policy change without proper public input or scrutiny.

Blakeslee warned that the regulation would destabilize already underfunded school districts, effectively penalizing communities that have stepped up to support their schools where the State has fallen short. She emphasized that such complex issues require open debate, stakeholder engagement, and transparency, not a rushed, opaque process.

She urged the Board to reject the emergency regulation and instead pursue a transparent, inclusive approach to education funding reform.

**29. Austin Love**, Mayor Pro Tempore of Valdez and parent of two children in Valdez City Schools, spoke in opposition to the proposed emergency regulation. He cited three main concerns:

1. Lack of adequate public process for review and comment.
2. No legitimate emergency to justify bypassing the standard process.
3. Potential for immediate, negative impacts, including an estimated \$1 million loss in student services for Valdez schools.

He urged the Board to reject the emergency regulation and instead pursue changes through the normal public process.

**30. Laura Norton Cruz**, a mother of two Anchorage School District students and a social worker/public health professional in rural Alaska, testified against the emergency regulation. She emphasized that the rapid announcement excluded meaningful public comment and left many unprepared to respond. Drawing from her experience, she highlighted how inadequate state funding has made preschool and pre-K access extremely limited in rural areas like the Northwest Arctic—where public education preschool is often the only early learning option due to scarce licensed childcare. She warned the regulation would effectively eliminate these crucial preschool opportunities, worsening kindergarten readiness (currently only 30%), which impacts test scores, graduation rates, and future workforce quality. She supported previous speakers' points about equity, legality, and the regulation's harmful effects.

**31. Caroline Storm**, Executive Director of the Coalition for Education Equity, expressed strong opposition to the proposed regulation change. She stated that it does not legally qualify as an emergency and should therefore be rejected. She also criticized the lack of transparency and accountability from the Board and Commissioner regarding the rushed process and the regulation's impacts on school districts. She urged the Board to vote against the change.

**32. Olivia Foster**, a Valdez City Council member, expressed opposition to the emergency regulation. She highlighted concerns from the local school superintendent about its negative impact on Valdez students and emphasized the need for more thorough and meaningful discussion before any action. She urged the Board to oppose the regulation.

**33. Megan Gunderson**, Director of Technology at Valdez City Schools and parent, opposes the emergency regulation redefining local and in-kind contributions. She warns it would harm essential services like school

meals and transportation by counting municipal support against funding caps, forcing tough cuts. Gunderson argues the regulation undermines local control, disincentivizes community investment, and centralizes authority, which contradicts Alaska’s values of local governance. She emphasizes that true equity means lifting all students up, not penalizing communities that provide more support. She urges the Board to reject the emergency rule and instead engage in a deliberate, inclusive process with stakeholders before making such a significant policy change.

**34. Rebecca Brown**, a parent and active volunteer in the Juneau School District, expresses confusion and concern about the proposal. She asks what problem it aims to solve, its impact on districts and students, what alternatives were considered, and how the public has been meaningfully involved. She argues that without clear, transparent answers to these questions, the proposal is premature and urges the Board to respect the law and public input by tabling the proposal.

**35. Nanibah Frommherz**, a rising senior at Juneau-Douglas High School and military family member, thanks the Board for their service and shares concerns about insufficient state and federal funding for schools. She highlights how local contributions, like city help with bus costs, are vital since funding shortages have already made sports participation difficult and caused school consolidations. She notes that some classmates have left or switched to homeschooling, and favorite teachers are leaving due to funding issues. She is also concerned that the emergency process limits public comment on these important topics.

**36. Winter Marshall-Allen**, a resident and business owner on the Kenai Peninsula, opposes the proposed emergency regulation, stating it harms public education, which in turn negatively affects property values and local workforce quality. She criticizes the misuse of the emergency process, urging the Board to follow the standard 30-day public comment period and provide answers to previously raised questions about long-term impacts. She emphasizes that the funding shortfall is due to state-level decisions, not local communities, and calls for better, more thoughtful solutions to support Alaska’s education system.

**37. Sindy Mendez Espino**, Board President of Enlaces Alaska, a nonprofit serving over 49,000 Latinos in Alaska, strongly opposes the proposed emergency regulation due to its lack of public notice and community engagement. She criticizes the rushed process, which left no time to inform or involve their community—especially those with limited English proficiency. She urges the State Board of Education to reject the regulation and instead follow a lawful, transparent process that allows for inclusive public participation and reflects values of accountability and equity.

**38. Britteny Cioni-Haywood**, a member of the Juneau School District Board of Education (speaking personally), opposes the proposed emergency regulation on local contributions. She criticizes the rushed process, lack of transparency, and insufficient opportunity for public input, noting that the Board had only just learned of the proposal. Cioni-Haywood warns that the regulation could force school districts to choose between essential services like transportation and food and maintaining teachers and student programs—decisions that would negatively impact students. She asserts that the regulation does not address the underlying issue of the disparity test failure and does not meet the legal criteria for an emergency. She urges the Board to reject the proposal and pursue alternative, transparent solutions that protect Alaska’s students and public education system.

**39. Bill Wielechowski**, State Senator of East Anchorage strongly opposes the proposed emergency regulation, calling it illegal, unethical, and harmful to public education in Alaska. He argues it violates Governor Dunleavy’s Administrative Order 358, which freezes new regulations, and the Alaska Open Meetings Act, due to lack of public notice and participation. Wielechowski asserts the regulation fails to meet the legal criteria for an emergency, will not affect the FY2024 disparity test data, and was not requested by the U.S. Department of Education, according to prior testimony. He criticizes the lack of transparency from Commissioner Bishop and calls the regulation a deceptive attempt to undermine public education and local control. He urges the Board to remove the regulation from the agenda.

**40. Katrina Church-Chmielowski**, Chief of Staff for Representative Rebecca Schwanke, expressed gratitude to Commissioner Bishop, her staff, and Board members for their support and responsiveness throughout the year. She specifically thanked them for their engagement on education issues and help with major maintenance projects. She looks forward to continued collaboration and thanked everyone for their service to Alaska's children.

## **Work Session**

### **Agenda Item 9 – Legislative and Budget Update**

Jake Almeida, Special Assistant to the Commissioner and Legislative Liaison for the Department of Education, provided an update on the department's involvement during the first session of the 34th Alaska State Legislature. The session lasted 119 days, during which the department tracked over 79 bills that could potentially impact education. This included 45 education-related bills in the House and 34 in the Senate. Staff attended numerous committee hearings, excluding budget-specific floor sessions, and participated in 38 education-related presentations. In addition, they held over 40 meetings with legislators and their staff. Almeida expressed deep appreciation for the department's staff, who dedicated significant time and effort beyond their regular duties to meet the demands of the legislative session.

Only three education-related bills passed both legislative bodies. The first, HB 69, proposed a \$1,000 permanent increase to the Base Student Allocation (BSA), but was vetoed by the Governor and the veto was sustained. The second, HB 57, included a \$700 BSA increase, a 10% increase in pupil transportation funding, a ban on cell phone use during school hours, streamlined charter school application processes, shortened the appeals timeline from 90 to 45 days, and mandated tracking of high school graduates' post-graduation outcomes. It also established a legislative task force that the department will support. The third, HB 174, permits the REA and small municipal fund to be used for Mt. Edgecumbe High School projects and teacher housing. It also removes the \$70 million cap on the REA fund. This bill is currently awaiting the Governor's final consideration.

Almeida highlighted HB 59, a priority bill for the Governor, which proposes the creation of a five-year pilot program for state-tribal compact schools. This bill received four hearings in the House Special Committee on Tribal Affairs and one hearing in the House Education Committee, where it remains. The Department and Governor's Office hope for its prompt advancement in the upcoming legislative session.

In addition to legislative tracking, the Department was asked to present or meet on a variety of education issues including free and reduced meal programs, the Alaska Reads Act, absenteeism, cell phone usage, local contributions the disparity test, and the school construction and major maintenance list. Almeida concluded by thanking colleagues and department leadership for their hard work and emphasized that their efforts were essential in managing the busy and impactful legislative session.

Dawn Hannasch, Administrative Services Director, provided a high-level update on the current status of the state education budget. She noted that the enrolled operating budget was transmitted to the Governor on May 27, with the Governor expected to take action by June 19. House Bill 174 has not yet been transmitted to the Governor.

Hannasch highlighted key differences between the Governor's amended budget (submitted May 13) and the Conference Committee's enrolled operating budget (finalized May 20). While this was only a broad overview, she offered to provide a more detailed update if needed.

Importantly, the K–12 Foundation Program is anticipated to be fully funded at \$1.3 billion, and public transportation funding is fully supported at \$74.5 million. These increases are largely due to the approved \$700 increase to the Base Student Allocation (BSA), raising per-student funding from \$5,960 to \$6,660 for the upcoming fiscal year.

Hannasch concluded by noting that a final budget update will be available after the Governor takes action and

invited any questions from Board members in the meantime.

**Agenda Item 10 – State Board of Education’s Culturally Relevant Career & Technical Education Committee Awards for Recognition Program**

Lieutenant Colonel James Fowley, the State Board of Education Military Advisor and Chair of the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Committee, presented four outstanding CTE programs selected for recognition for the 2024–2025 school year. The committee received ten nominations statewide following a call for entries in April at the DEED-sponsored CTE Conference. After review in May, awards were given in two categories: Student Engagement and Work-Based Learning.

The first recognized program, under both categories, was the Razdolna School Welding Program in the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District. Launched in November 2023, the program began in a tent using community-donated tools and now operates in a dedicated facility with school-owned equipment. Responding to local commercial fishing industry needs, it teaches welding and small engine repair and has already produced 36 student certifications.

The second program, the Mat-Su Career and Tech Teacher Housing Build Project, addresses the statewide need for rural teacher housing. Students construct portable, one-bedroom efficiency units in collaboration with multiple industry partners. Each unit costs about \$80,000 to produce and can be transported to remote communities.

The third honored program was the Skagway School Woodshop, led by Aaron Schmidt. Starting with small woodworking projects, students have expanded to community-oriented efforts, such as building bridges for a disc golf course and raised garden beds for the local municipality, fulfilling real local needs through their skills.

The fourth program, the Galena Interior Learning Academy Aviation Program, provides students with flight and aircraft maintenance experience using an FAA-approved curriculum. Students gain hands-on skills in aviation, with potential access to observe military aircraft operations through a partnership with Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson.

Fowley praised all nominees and concluded by applauding the selected programs for their innovation, service, and impact on Alaska communities.

**Agenda item 11 – Questions Regarding Standing Reports**

The discussion focused on upcoming leadership transitions and land sales related to Mt. Edgecumbe High School. Member Stockhausen thanked Superintendent Suzzuk Huntington for her service and inquired about the hiring plan following her departure. Commissioner Bishop confirmed that a recruitment process has been approved, a waiver is being requested, and an inclusive hiring process will involve a committee and board recommendations. Suzzuk’s term ends on June 30, and updates will be provided as the process progresses.

Chair Fields asked for an update on Mt. Edgecumbe land matters. Commissioner Bishop stated that two parcels of land were successfully sold this year after a multi-year approval process. Deputy Commissioner Morrison added that a third potential sale, involving land by the Sheldon Jackson Museum, is still in progress. The proceeds from the land sales will go into Mt. Edgecumbe’s fund and can be used for capital or operating needs. Proceeds from any museum land sale will support museum services and preservation efforts.

**Business Meeting**

**Agenda Item 12 – Conditional State Approval for UAA Masters in Psychology Program**

The State Board of Education and Early Development discussed University of Alaska Anchorage’s (UAA) request for provisional state approval of its new *Master of Science in School Psychology Specialist Program* through June 30, 2029. First Vice Chair Stockhausen motioned for approval, seconded by Member Bergey, with the stipulation that UAA provide annual updates on progress toward NASP accreditation at the Board’s winter

meetings.

Member McCollum expressed strong concerns about the program's heavy emphasis on social justice throughout its materials, calling into question the sincerity of removing only public-facing content. She stated she would not support the motion. In contrast, Member Stockhausen voiced appreciation for UAA's efforts to address the need for school psychologists in Alaska and expressed interest in watching the program develop.

Chair Fields inquired about the consequences if the Board did not approve the program. UAA Provost Dr. Denise Runge and faculty member Dr. Hattie Harvey responded that while students could still obtain licensure through alternative routes, the process would be more difficult. They reiterated UAA's commitment to NASP accreditation and noted a memo outlining responsive changes was sent that morning, though not all Board members had seen it yet.

Member McCollum asked if the Board could receive an updated packet and delay a vote to review the revisions more thoroughly. Dr. Harvey indicated a delay would not disrupt the program's first cohort, as students were informed of the provisional status and alternative licensure paths.

Legal counsel Susan Greenlee Sonneborn and Commissioner Bishop confirmed the Board could table the motion and revisit it later.

Member McCollum then motioned to table agenda item 12 (Conditional State Approval for UAA Masters in Psychology Program) until the Board's next meeting on July 1, 2025. Member Bergey seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

### **Agenda Item 13 – Approval MEHS Advisory Board Member Selection**

Member Bergey motioned, and First Vice Chair Stockhausen seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development appoint Molly Kimzey as the Parent Representative and Blossom Teal-Olsen as the Sitka Community Representative for term C on the Mt. Edgecumbe High School Advisory Board. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

### **Agenda Item 14 – Regulations for Board Consideration**

#### **14A. Office of Education Advocacy**

Member Bergey motioned, and First Vice Chair Stockhausen seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development approve proposed regulation amendments to 4 AAC 06.864, 4 AAC 06.888, and 4 AAC 40.020 regarding the support the establishment of the Office of Education Advocacy and adopt the regulation. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

#### **14B. Native Language Standards**

First Vice Chair Stockhausen motioned, and Member McCollum seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education & Early Development approve proposed regulation 4 AAC 06.140 regarding the Alaska Native Language for K-3 Reading Standards and adopt the regulation.

### **Executive Session**

Chair Fields motioned, and First Vice Chair seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education Early Development convene an executive session to obtain legal advice regarding the proposed emergency regulations and potential litigation, a matter which is by law required to be confidential under the Open Meetings Act AS 44.62.310 C3. The motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

The following individuals participated in the executive session: members of the State Board of Education, Commissioner Deena Bishop, Deputy Commissioner Karen Morrison, Assistant Attorney General Susan Greenlee Sonneborn, and Attorney Morgan Griffin.

Chair Fields motioned that the board come out of executive session, and Member McCollum seconded the motion without further discussion or objection.

#### **14C. Local Contribution**

First Vice Chair Stockhausen motioned, and Member Bergey seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development open a period of public comment on proposed regulation amendments to 4 AAC 09 regarding the financing of public school and local contributions subject to Department of Law preliminary review.

Board members expressed gratitude for the public comments received, acknowledging their value and impact on the decision-making process. Chair Fields and Members Bergey, McCollum, and Stockhausen emphasized the importance of transparency, public engagement, and thoughtful timing in addressing the issue at hand.

Member Bergey highlighted the opportunity to align the process with the budget development season starting in December or January, allowing time for public input and potential legislative support. Member Stockhausen echoed the importance of timely action to support district planning.

Chair Fields apologized for any unintended anxiety caused by the discussions, reaffirming the board's commitment to integrity, thoughtful decisions, and doing what's best for students. He emphasized that public input is essential and that the board is open to extending the public comment period beyond 30 days if necessary to ensure a thorough and careful resolution.

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

#### **Agenda Item 15 – Commissioner's Year-End Report**

Commissioner Bishop presented a slideshow celebrating the accomplishments of the past year in public education. The presentation highlighted successes at the Board level, within districts, classrooms, and the Department of Education. It emphasized that while much attention is given to legislative efforts and data requests, important work continues year-round to support and advance public education across the state. The slideshow was intended as a fun and meaningful way to recognize and celebrate these collective efforts and achievements.

Member McCollum expressed appreciation for the presentation, noting how it highlighted the extensive work being done across the state and the wide range of important topics covered. Member Stockhausen echoed this sentiment, emphasizing the "vastness" of the work and praising the detailed information, particularly on capital projects. She suggested including photos in future presentations to visually showcase completed projects and provide a better sense of progress, especially for remote areas of Alaska.

**Agenda Item 16 – Selection of Meeting Dates**

Member McCollum motioned, and Member Bergey seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development to approve the following schedule of meeting dates, location, and format virtual meeting versus in person for the 2025 to 2026 school year. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

**Board Calendar Suggested Dates**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Meeting Type</b>
July 01, 2025	Virtual Meeting	Regular quarterly
October 8-9, 2025	Virtual Meeting	Regular quarterly
December 3, 2025	Virtual Meeting	Special – Commissioner Report
January 22, 2026	Virtual Meeting	Special – legislative and budget report
March 10-11, 2026	In-Person (Juneau)	Regular quarterly
June 3-4, 2026	Virtual Meeting	Regular quarterly

**Agenda Item 17 – Subcommittee Appointments**

Subcommittee appointments were reviewed, with members generally remaining in their current roles unless requesting a change. Member McCollum was assigned to two vacant positions: the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and the Governor’s Council on Disabilities. It was noted that TAC may not meet often, though Commissioner Bishop later clarified that it still meets and can do so electronically, especially for those interested in data and assessment.

Member Bergey will continue with the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE), which meets quarterly. There was also discussion about the joint subcommittee with the Board of Regents, with Member Stockhausen confirming she was appointed but has not yet attended a meeting. Efforts will be made to revive that subcommittee, potentially in the fall after the legislative session. Members were encouraged to reach out if they have interest in different subcommittees.

**Agenda Item 18 – Selection of Officers**

Commissioner Bishop announced that it was time for the Board to elect its officers, as required by the bylaws at the last regular meeting of the fiscal year—in this case, the June meeting. The current officers are Chair Fields, First Vice Chair Stockhausen, and Second Vice Chair Lorri Van Diest, whose term has ended. Nominations were to be taken, and votes cast—typically by open ballot. The new officer terms will run from July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026, or until successors are elected. Bishop noted that board members may serve consecutive terms and invited nominations to begin.

Chair Fields nominated Member Sally Stockhausen for Board Chair and Member Pamela Dupras seconded. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Commissioner Bishop announced that Member Stockhausen had been elected as the new Chair of the State Board of Education. She then turned the meeting over to Chair Stockhausen to proceed with taking nominations and motions for the positions of First Vice Chair and Second Vice Chair.

Member Pamela Dupras nominated Member James Fields for First Vice Chair. Member Stockhausen seconded. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Member Fields nominated Member Dupras for Second Vice Chair and Member McCollum seconded. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

**Agenda Item 19 – Consent Agenda to Approve Minutes**

Member Bergey motioned, and Member Tyndall seconded the following motion: I move that the State Board of Education and Early Development approve the consent agenda, consisting of approval of the minutes of the March 11, 2025 board meeting. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

**Agenda Item 20 – Career & Technical Education Committee Awards for Recognition Program**

Member McCollum motioned, and Member Fields seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development award the following nominees for the Culturally Relevant Career and Technical Education Program Recognition, 1) Razdolna Welding Program; 2) Housing Build Project – Matanuska Susitna Borough School District; 3) Skagway School Woodshop, Aaron Schmidt (teacher) – Skagway School District. 4) Galena Interior Learning Academy (GILA) Aviation Program – Galena School District. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

**Agenda Item 21 – Approval of Administrative Services Director**

Member Fields motioned, and Member McCollum seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development approve the Commissioner’s appointment of Dawn Hannasch as Director of Administrative Services, effective immediately. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

**Agenda Item 22 – Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District Presentation**

Superintendent Michael Robbins of Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District (KGBSD) presented an update highlighting the district’s progress and achievements. He began by congratulating Chair Sally Stockhausen and recognizing Sherry Bullert, a National Principal of the Year finalist. Robbins emphasized the district’s student-centered approach, supported by strong community involvement and a committed school board.

Key accomplishments include:

- **Graduation rates:** KGBSD achieved its highest brick-and-mortar graduation rates in 2 of the past 3 years, due to personalized graduation plans and credit recovery efforts.
- **MTSS framework:** A district-wide multi-tiered system of support ensures continuity of academic, behavioral, and emotional interventions for students.
- **Discipline reform:** Suspension rates dropped significantly, with an overall 50% reduction and a 51% decrease for Native Alaskan students, thanks to restorative practices.
- **AVID program:** The AVID program, supporting first-generation college students, has expanded and shown success, with five graduates this year and increased enrollment planned.
- **CTE and college courses:** Career and technical education and dual-enrollment opportunities have grown, enhancing student outcomes.
- **Tribal partnerships:** The district successfully defended the inclusion of tribal values in schools, strengthening ties with the Ketchikan Indian Community and Native students.

Despite ongoing challenges like political tensions and unstable state funding, the district has stabilized its finances with a focus on transparency and student-centered budgeting. Robbins acknowledged the strain public education faces but reaffirmed KGBSD’s commitment to keeping schools as inclusive, supportive spaces for growth.

He concluded by thanking educators across Alaska for their dedication and underscored that public education remains a unifying force and essential foundation for the state’s future.

Commissioner Bishop commended Superintendent Robbins for his strong leadership and professionalism during a recent landslide event that isolated Ketchikan, praising his ability to stay engaged and manage responsibilities remotely. She also thanked him for his service and impactful presentation.

Chair Fields inquired about truancy and attendance trends in the district. Superintendent Robbins responded by noting that prior to the pandemic (2016–2018), attendance rates were high—around 93–94%. However, following COVID-19, attendance dropped to around 89–90%, which, though seemingly minor, represents a significant number of missed school days across the year. This decline has primarily affected elementary students, whose attendance rates fell from 95–96% to 91–92%, while high school attendance has remained more stable.

Robbins explained that COVID-19 changed how families and communities perceive attendance, and many students now engage in learning through alternative or hybrid models, such as virtual learning and homeschooling. While effective in areas like credit recovery, these shifts have slowed the return to pre-pandemic attendance levels. He concluded by highlighting that while adults may have resumed routines quickly post-COVID, younger students—especially those in elementary school—experienced a fundamentally different disruption that continues to influence their learning behaviors.

### **Agenda Item 23 - Executive Session for DEED Commissioner Evaluation**

Member Fields motioned, and Member Dupras seconded the following motion: I move the State Board of Education and Early Development convene an executive session to evaluate the performance of the Commissioner of Education and Early Development. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

The board held an executive session to evaluate the performance of the Commissioner of Education and Early Development. Present were the Board members, Commissioner Bishop, and Deputy Commissioner Karen Morrison.

Chair Fields motioned that the board come out of executive session, and Member Bergey seconded without any objection.

### **Board Comments**

**Member Fields** expressed appreciation for Superintendent Suzzuk Huntington's dedicated service to Mt. Edgecumbe High School and wished her well in her new role. He also thanked members of the public for their comments, acknowledging that while public input can sometimes be difficult to hear, it is essential for understanding perspectives from parents, teachers, administrators, and community members when making statewide decisions. He extended gratitude to the Department of Education for their ongoing work and to Commissioner Bishop for the comprehensive annual report. Lastly, he congratulated Chair Stockhausen and Second Vice Chair Dupras on their new leadership roles.

**Member Tyndall** shared his appreciation for the depth of information presented and acknowledged there was much to absorb. He congratulated Sally Stockhausen and Pam Dupras on their new leadership roles and thanked James Fields for his guidance on the board. He praised Lieutenant Colonel James Fowley and the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Awards, noting their high standards and growing recognition. Tyndall expressed particular interest in the Commissioner's year-end review, highlighting impressive CTE participation numbers, cell phone policy developments, PBA expansion, and language initiatives—especially meaningful to him due to his granddaughter's work in Anchorage on the Aleut language. He also appreciated the Ketchikan presentation and emphasized the value of visiting different schools. Lastly, he noted his intent to further explore local contribution issues based on feedback he's heard through his work with the Borough Assembly.

**Member McCollum** congratulated Chair Stockhausen on her new role and expressed appreciation for Chair Fields' leadership and example. She shared her gratitude for the opportunity to work with the board and looked

forward to future accomplishments. McCollum found the public testimony insightful, valuing the diverse perspectives shared by parents, teachers, and leaders. She praised Commissioner Bishop's comprehensive summary and requested it in a document format to reference and share. Lastly, she acknowledged Commissioner Bishop's hard work during the legislative session and expressed a preference to meet in person rather than over Zoom, though noted she's adapting to the virtual format.

**Member Bergey** expressed deep appreciation for the leadership of the State Board, highlighting Chair Stockhausen's appointment and James Fields' long-standing service and leadership. She emphasized the importance of steady leadership in achieving long-term policy change. Bergey also acknowledged her scrutiny of the University of Alaska Anchorage's psychology program but affirmed support for its development, noting its value in providing in-state education. She encouraged continued improvements to ensure the program serves Alaska's youth effectively.

She congratulated the new Mt. Edgecumbe High School Advisory Board members and urged them to be strong advocates for students and parents. Bergey celebrated the progress in reading achievement driven by strong policy and support and expressed hope for similar strides in math. She looked forward to seeing data that reflects progress from the board's strategic planning efforts.

Bergey also praised Lieutenant Colonel James Fowley for leading the CTE Awards process and congratulated all CTE award recipients for their impactful work with students. She thanked public participants for contributing their voices, acknowledged Superintendent Huntington's service to Mt. Edgecumbe, and closed with gratitude to Commissioner Bishop and staff for their behind-the-scenes work supporting board activities.

**Member Dupras** apologized for missing the morning portion of the meeting due to her commitment to teaching summer school. She reflected on the previous day's discussions and emphasized the complexity of educating children in Alaska, noting the many stakeholders involved. Dupras acknowledged the significant responsibility carried by Commissioner Bishop, recognizing her ability to manage numerous moving parts and keep the board well-informed. She expressed appreciation for the Commissioner's leadership and said she plans to review the parts of the meeting she missed, especially the public comments.

**Member Lt. Col. Fowley** expressed gratitude to all the schools that applied for the CTE awards, recognizing the daily dedication of staff and the additional effort it takes to submit nominations. He shared a personal tradition of ending dinner with a positive reflection and noted that his "good thing" for the day would be the strong participation in public comments, including one from a student. He said this demonstrates how much Alaskans care about education and looks forward to continued dialogue on the topic.

**Student Advisor Sherman** expressed gratitude for the opportunity to serve on the board and noted that this was her final meeting as the student advisor elect. She will now officially step into the student advisor role, succeeding Joshua, who set a high standard. While still learning the ropes, Sherman is confident in her ability to meet expectations and looks forward to working more closely with the board.

**Member Stockhausen** thanked the Department for their extensive work, especially for organizing the high-quality reading symposium. She expressed appreciation to school staff—including educators, administrators, paraprofessionals, and support personnel—for their efforts throughout the school year. She wished everyone a safe and refreshing summer. Stockhausen also recognized Chair Fields for his many years of leadership, thanking him for his service and expressing eagerness to continue learning from him. Finally, she thanked the public for their valuable comments and engagement.

The board adjourned at 1:48 p.m.