

**GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL  
EDUCATION  
Education Committee Meeting**

**LOCATION  
Governor's Council Conference Room  
3601 C Street  
Anchorage, Alaska  
Teleconference**

**Meeting Date  
November 3, 2011**

**Attendees:**

Anna Attla  
Tonja Updike  
Taylor Gregg  
Ernie Manzie  
Donna Swihart  
Terese Kashi

**Community Members/Guests:**

Geri Benshoof  
Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus  
Christine Inglet

**Staff:**

Jennifer Jones

Prepared by: Paula DiPaolo  
Peninsula Reporting

**CALL TO ORDER – 1:30 p.m.**  
**ROLL CALL**

**Welcome from the Chair**

**Review of the Council Mission Statement**

The Council mission statement was recited by Taylor Gregg.

**Announcements and Good News**

Anna Attla announced that she is going to Galena for Thanksgiving.

**Approval of Agenda**

There was not a quorum and the agenda was not approved.

**Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**

There was not a quorum and the previous meeting minutes were not approved.

**Correspondence**

**Update of October Council Meeting**

Anna Attla reported that she was glad they did not have to do a complete revision of the bylaws during the meeting.

Ernie Manzie stated that he felt the presentation by Lorri Unumb from Autism Speaks was very worthwhile.

**Letter to Commissioner Hanley re: Follow-up Suggestions for the State Board of Education on the HSGQE**

Jennifer Jones summarized the content of the letter the Council wrote to Commissioner Hanley. They presented him with some options on things that other states are doing, such as IEP teams deciding the cut score for each individual student.

Terese Kashi commented that one of the downfalls she sees to the exit exam is that once students take the exam in 10<sup>th</sup> grade, they seem to lack motivation to complete their coursework because they feel like they have accomplished what they need to in order to get a diploma. Geri Benshoof qualified that by saying that the exit exam is only one requirement for graduation. Students must also have acceptable grades and earn the credits required for graduation.

Geri further stated that the State Board of Education and the Department are reluctant to pursue the elimination of the exit exam because it was brought into play by the State legislature.

Ernie Manzie stated that he is in support of the idea of differentiated diplomas and for IEP teams to have input into the testing. He also believes that the test provides accountability.

Terese Kashi stated that end-of-course exams is another alternative. Geri Benshoof commented that the State would need to develop an end-of-course exam that coordinates with the State standards. The cost to do so would be great in both time and resources, but it is something the Board and the Department have discussed.

Christine Inglet suggested that students be tested in 9<sup>th</sup> grade to see if they need accommodations for the exit exam so they don't have to take it and fail it first before an accommodation is provided.

Geri Benshoof stated that the people from the Department in charge of testing will be holding a task force meeting on accommodations in the spring. She suggested getting the comments regarding accommodations in writing for them.

### *Comments to Murkowski on ESEA Reauthorization*

Jennifer Jones stated that Senator Murkowski's office contacted the Governor's Council for comments regarding Senate Bill 1571, which is an amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. One of the issues around this bill is it would negatively affect students with disabilities because it would allow states to remove students with disabilities from the accountability piece. She stated that if students with disabilities are not included in the accountability piece, it would take away from all the strides

they have made in the last ten years or so in including students with disabilities.

Jennifer stated that they have also shared this letter with other senators and representatives. She stated that the bill is still in committee.

### Comments on WorkKeys for State Board of Education

Jennifer Jones stated that the State Board of Education and Early Development is asking for comments on adapting the Alaska supplement for the WorkKeys assessment. She stated that ACT, who developed WorkKeys, has developed a number of reasonable accommodations that they will allow students to use when taking the WorkKeys assessment. She stated that one thing they do not allow is for any student to have clarification on any word in the test in their native language. She noted in her letter how this would impact Alaskan Native children.

She will send the supplement to the committee members, and anyone with additional comments should direct them to Jennifer Jones.

### Meeting with Senator Begich's Staff

Jennifer stated that they met with Senator Begich's staff to discuss early intervention issues. She stated that the staff really want to keep in touch with the Governor's Council on issues, and are willing to be of assistance in any way that they can.

### Report from State Board of Education

Geri Benshoof stated that the Board had a teleconference meeting to discuss waivers that the school districts had requested.

She noted that their next meeting is December 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>.

### Report from SESA

A report from SESA was not available.

### Report from DEED

A report from DEED was not available.

**Work Plan Goal 1: Advocate for alternative routes for students with disabilities to pass the high school exit exam or graduate with a diploma.**

Jennifer Jones stated that the activities they will be doing toward this goal include:

- Continuing work with the Department on the high school qualifying exam and giving comments.
- Supporting any legislation that was introduced on the exam.
- Supporting the State Board of Education on the implementation of WorkKeys. She noted that they may also want to advocate for the use of COMPASS, Accuplacer, or AKCIS.
- Advocating for a focus on early learning.

**Important Future Meetings/Conferences/Trainings**

- Face-to-face meeting, spring
- State Board of Education, December 15, 16
- ASSEC, February 20 – 22, 2012.

**Time and Date of Next Meeting**

The next teleconference for the Education Committee is scheduled for December 1, 2011, at 1:30 p.m.

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.