

**ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION:
BEST—BUILDING EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS
TOGETHER**

FIELD HEARING
OF THE
**COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS**
UNITED STATES SENATE
ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON

EXAMINING BUILDING EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS, FOCUSING ON
EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES FOR ALASKA NATIVE CHILDREN

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OCTOBER 19, 2012 (ANCHORAGE, AK)
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BEST—BUILDING EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS TOGETHER

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2012

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS,
Anchorage, AK.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 4:04 p.m., in Room 6, Dena'ina Center, Hon. Lisa Murkowski presiding.
Present: Senator Murkowski.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR MURKOWSKI

Senator MURKOWSKI. We are calling to order the Field Hearing of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. Thank you for joining us here this afternoon to talk about BEST—Building Educational Success Together, focused on educational initiatives with our Alaska Native children, where we are doing well, the good things, the challenges, the opportunities.

I apologize, first off, for the late start. But we were held up upstairs with the ongoing dialogue, and when you're sitting at the front panel, it's really tough to get out. I could have left Congressman Young on the hook there, but we finished it up. So I apologize for the late start. But, hopefully, we will be able to have plenty of time for a good dialogue down here on an issue that I think we would all agree is extraordinarily important.

I want to thank AFN for their leadership in hosting this discussion, for really placing a focus on education, and for their work in bringing us together today. I especially want to thank Rosita Worl, as a board member, as well as Gloria O'Neill. Gloria was upstairs with me on the other panel—but in addition to what you've done today to help, just your focus and advocacy at the Federal level on education and student success.

We are very fortunate to have a good panel, a strong panel of individuals that are here to share their experiences, their perspectives, as well as their recommendations. And because the voice of our youth is absolutely key, absolutely critical, I've given each of our witnesses the option to select a student who can share an essay about their experiences in Alaska's schools, their recommendations for change, if any. And we've got folks that are listening to this field hearing today on the Web, so I appreciate their attention to this as well.

As I mentioned, the title of the hearing is Building Educational Success Together. Certainly, the history of Alaska Native peoples show us that collaboration is absolutely key to any level of success.

I think there's an awful lot that we can learn from each other. Much that is positive can be adopted, duplicated, built on.

The purpose of the hearing today is threefold, first, to learn about some of the successful programs and partnerships that are occurring all over the State so we can expand and just build on or duplicate them. The second purpose is to talk about how we can improve and expand the collaborations, how we're making that happen. And then the third is in keeping with the theme here at the convention, "Barriers to Success", we need to identify those barriers that the Federal Government has put in front of success so that we can break through them. What are the impediments holding us back? What are the impediments holding our kids back?

I think we recognize that we all have to be working together to benefit our kids. Children need to feel like they're connected within a classroom. I've been working to deal with our Federal laws that, quite honestly, sometimes don't allow for that connection, if you will, dealing with Federal laws to allow our elders to teach Native language, culture, and history in our schools, working to improve on the Alaska Native Education Equity Program. Gloria was able to focus in on that in the dialogue upstairs. And, again, I've indicated that I think we've got a lot of room to grow in this area. How we're building, how we're working on that to improve it is going to be key.

I've also been working to give Native language immersion programs greater flexibility. I've been working to help the U.S. Department of Education understand Alaska and the needs of our Alaska Native students better. I'm also working with NCAI, which is the National Conference of American Indians, and the National Indian Education Association on some specific proposals that they have been building to more meaningfully involve tribes and our Native organizations in many aspects of what we know as No Child Left Behind. But there's so much more that we have to do.

We know the statistics. We'll probably hear some of those repeated here this afternoon. We're dealing with low academic proficiency in areas, high achievement gaps, low graduation rates. And while we clearly have to identify the problems in order to fix them, I think we are eager—I am certainly eager to focus on how we can build on what the success stories are out there, the positive stories that we know.

According to data from the State Department of Education, there are school districts in all regions of the State where we're seeing rising graduation rates and achievement gaps are closing. And this brings me to just one final point before we move to our participants here, and that is a concept that I know many in the room and outside the room have thought about. That is the difference between student achievement and student success.

I think what we're really striving for here, what we're hoping for, is this broader term, which is student success. That includes academic achievement, but it's so much broader than just the academics. It includes the knowledge to have preparedness, to be prepared for the future, contribute to the community and the State. It includes being a responsible, caring person, who has a self-discipline and focus to reach goals.

It means having a positive connection to the community and to the schools, and it also means being able to be a contributing member of society and a positive role model to others. So I'd like to think that we can focus on the well-rounded kind of student success today, rather than defining it in this narrow form of academic achievement.

To start off, I will call on each of our witnesses here today to just give a short summary. They've all presented us with written testimony. I believe that that testimony is available for those who would like to see them. I would ask you to try to keep your comments to 2 to 5 minutes, but we've got room on the tape to go longer if we need to. After that, we'll open it up to a roundtable discussion among the witnesses. And I have asked them to be prepared to respond to a couple of key questions.

So with that, why don't we begin with you, Chris, on the end. And let me just make sure that everyone knows who we have up here in the panel. I apologize. I would love to have more, but our format in the Senate, as an official hearing of the HELP Committee, a field hearing, we are limited to the number of witnesses. And we do have an opportunity to leave the record open for other input and would welcome you for that.

But those that are before you this afternoon are Chris Simon. He is the rural education coordinator with the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development. Next to Chris is Peggy Cowan. Peggy is the superintendent of the North Slope Borough School District. And next to her is Rosita Worl, who is president of the Sealaska Heritage Institute. To my left here is Doreen Brown, who is the supervisor of Title VII Education in the Anchorage School District. Next to her is Carl Rose, who is executive director, Association of Alaska School Boards. And then, finally, we have Sonta Hamilton Roach, who is a teacher at Innoko River School out in Shageluk, which is in the Iditarod School District.

So welcome to each of you.

And with that, Chris, why don't you kick off with your comments, and we'll just go straight on down the line. Thank you and welcome.

**STATEMENT OF CHRISTOPHER SIMON, RURAL EDUCATION
COORDINATOR, ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND
EARLY DEVELOPMENT, JUNEAU, AK**

Mr. SIMON. Thank you, Senator.

My name is Chris Simon, and I'm the rural education coordinator for the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development. I spent my entire career working in rural Alaska, and it is something I hold close to my heart. My experience includes working 2 years as an itinerant school counselor, 4 years as a teacher, 5 years as a school principal, and 6 years as a superintendent of schools.

I am here today to speak specifically to the statewide issue of Alaska Native students' successes and challenges and the role the Federal Government can play in building upon the successes. The challenges to Alaska Native success are well-known and longstanding. Alaska's rural districts face a high turnover of teachers and principals. In some cases, small rural schools cannot offer the

range of courses that urban schools do. Alaska's villages experience family violence, substance abuse, and suicide.

Yet there are many Native student successes. Extracurricular activities create a high sense of community pride. In some Alaska schools, rural and urban, 75 percent or more of the Native students score proficient on State assessments in language arts or math. The Nome School District operates a Science Academy. The Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program supports students from high school through college graduation.

The University of Alaska enrolls a thousand more Native students today than 5 years ago. In the first year of the merit-based Alaska Performance Scholarship, 8.3 percent of Native high school graduates qualified for the scholarship, and 36 percent of the qualifiers used the scholarship.

The Alaska Native Cultural Charter School was named a Title I Distinguished School. Mount Edgecumbe High School, a predominantly Native-run boarding school, has a 96 percent 4-year graduation rate. Alaska Student Governments instigated a State suicide prevention program that mandates teacher training.

The Federal Government could contribute to Native student success by providing Alaska the greatest possible flexibility in using Federal funds. In Alaska's Elementary and Secondary Education Act waiver application, the State would assist schools primarily on the academic achievement and growth of students, attendance, and graduation. As needed, the State system of support would provide schools with teacher mentors, administrator coaches, content coaches, professional development, and an online self-improvement tool.

Alaska is a strong, local-controlled State. The State government has increased its commitment to districts with funding to build rural schools, work cooperatively with the 40 lowest achieving schools, fund career and technical education improvements, provide scholarships for college and technical schools, and fund distance courses by highly qualified Alaska teachers. Alaska and its districts should be free to focus on curriculum, assessment, instruction, support of learning environment, professional development, and leadership. Those are the paths to student success.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Simon follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CHRIS SIMON

SUMMARY

My name is Chris Simon and I am the Rural Education Coordinator for the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development. I spent my entire career working in rural Alaska and it is something I hold close to my heart. My experience includes working 2 years as an itinerant school counselor, 4 years as a teacher, 5 years as a school principal, and 6 years as a superintendent of schools. I am here today to speak specifically to the statewide issues of Alaska Native student successes and challenges and the role the Federal Government can play in building upon the successes.

The challenges to Alaska Native success are well-known and long-standing. Alaska's rural districts face a high turnover of teachers and principals. In some cases, small rural schools cannot offer the range of courses that urban schools do. Alaska's villages experience family violence, substance abuse, and suicide.

Yet there are many Native student successes. Schools' extra-curricular activities create a high sense of community pride. In some Alaska schools, rural and urban, 75 percent or more of the Native students score proficient on State assessments in language arts or math. The Nome School District operates a science academy. The

Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program supports students from high school through college graduation. The University of Alaska enrolls a thousand more Native students today than 5 years ago. In the first year of the merit-based Alaska Performance Scholarship, 8.3 percent of Native high school graduates qualified for the scholarship, and 36 percent of the qualifiers used the scholarship.

The Alaska Native Cultural Charter School was named a Title I Distinguished School. Mt. Edgecumbe High School, a predominantly Native State-run boarding school, has a 96 percent 4-year graduation rate. Alaska's student governments instigated a State suicide-prevention program that mandates teacher training.

The Federal Government could contribute to Native student success by providing Alaska the greatest possible flexibility in using Federal funds. In Alaska's Elementary and Secondary Education Act waiver application, the State would assess schools primarily on the academic achievement and growth of students; attendance; and graduation. As needed, the State System of Support would provide schools with teacher mentors, administrator coaches, content coaches, professional development, and an online self-improvement tool.

Alaska is a strongly local-control State. The State government has increased its commitment to districts with funding to build rural schools; work cooperatively with the 40 lowest-achieving schools; fund career and technical education improvements; provide scholarships for college and technical schools; and fund distance courses by highly qualified Alaska teachers.

Alaska and its districts should be free to focus on curriculum, assessment, instruction, supportive learning environment, professional development, and leadership. Those are the paths to student success.

My name is Chris Simon and I am the Rural Education Coordinator for the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development. I spent my entire career working in rural Alaska and it is something I hold close to my heart. My experience includes working 2 years as an itinerant school counselor, 4 years as a teacher, 5 years as a school principal, and 6 years as a superintendent of schools.

I am here today to speak specifically to the statewide issues of Alaska Native student successes and challenges and the role the Federal Government can play in building upon the successes.

The challenges to Alaska Native success are well-known and long-standing. Alaska's rural districts face a high turnover of teachers and principals. Many new teachers are not familiar with Native culture or rural lifestyles. In some cases, small rural schools cannot offer the range of courses that urban schools do. Alaska's villages experience family violence, substance abuse, and suicide. Native families do not always know how to navigate the system of formal education, advocate for their children, or plan for postsecondary education and training.

Yet there are many Native student successes. Schools' extra-curricular activities create a high sense of community pride. In some Alaska schools, rural and urban, 75 percent or more of the Native students score proficient on State assessments in language arts or math.

Here are a few examples from last school year's results: In Tanana Middle School, 90 percent of Native students were proficient in language arts. In the James C. Isabell School in the Bering Strait School District, 78 percent of Native students were proficient in language arts and 75 percent in math. In the Sand Point School in the Aleutians East Borough, 88 percent of Native students were proficient in language arts and 70 percent in math. In the Goldenview Middle School in Anchorage, 74 percent of Native students were proficient in language arts and 79 percent in math.

School districts have developed programs and schools to address students' needs. The Nome School District operates a science academy. Galena runs a boarding school with academic and career courses. Advocates in Fairbanks established the Native-oriented Effie Kokrine Charter School. School districts offer 32 distance programs, serving home-school students, alternative students, and brick-and-mortar students who need additional courses.

At the Northwest Alaska Career and Technical Center in Nome, a partnership of the Bering Strait and Nome school districts, students outside of Nome live on campus. In intensive sessions throughout the school year, students receive independent living skills as well as the skills they need to acquire jobs or to go on to further training and education. Students have the opportunity to receive dual credit with the University of Alaska. The program motivates students to finish high school, formulate career goals, and develop the skills they need for the world of work.

The School to Apprenticeship Program of the Department of Labor and Workforce Development works cooperatively with employers, unions and school districts. Stu-

dents choose a career pathway that provides direct entry into a formal apprenticeship program. Apprenticeships provide a reason for students to stay in school, take relevant courses and graduate. Apprentices can earn credits through the University of Alaska System toward a degree.

The Alaska Native Cultural Charter School was named a Title I Distinguished School. Mt. Edgecumbe High School, a predominantly Native State-run boarding school, had a 96 percent 4-year graduation rate last school year. Alaska's student governments instigated a State suicide-prevention program that mandates teacher training.

The Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program supports students from high school through college graduation. The University of Alaska enrolls a thousand more Native students today than 5 years ago. In the first year of the merit-based Alaska Performance Scholarship, 8.3 percent of Native high school graduates were eligible for the scholarship, and 36.1 percent of the eligible Native students used their scholarship.

The Federal Government could contribute to Native student success by providing Alaska the greatest possible flexibility in using Federal funds. In Alaska's Elementary and Secondary Education Act waiver application, the State would assess schools primarily on the academic achievement and growth of students; attendance; and graduation. As needed, the State System of Support would provide schools with teacher mentors, administrator coaches, content coaches, professional development, and an online self-improvement tool.

Alaska is a strongly local-control State. The State government has increased its commitment to districts with funding to build rural schools; working cooperatively with the 40 lowest-achieving schools; funding career and technical education improvements; funding pilot pre-kindergarten programs; providing scholarships for college and technical schools; and funding distance courses by highly qualified Alaska teachers.

Alaska and its districts should be free to focus on curriculum, assessment, instruction, supportive learning environment, professional development, and leadership. Those are the paths to student success.

Alaska and its school districts have demonstrated they can work together:

RESOLVED LITIGATION OVER FUNDING OF RURAL SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

Alaska resolved the long-standing Kasayulie litigation and committed to fund the five highest-priority rural school construction projects over the coming years. Alaska has kept that pledge this year by funding school construction in Emmonak and Koliganek for \$61 million. See <http://www.alaskadispatch.com/sites/default/files/Kasayulie%20settlement.pdf>.

RESOLVED LITIGATION OVER ACADEMIC ADEQUACY IN RURAL SCHOOLS

The settlement of the Moore lawsuit is funded at \$18 million over 3 years. It creates a mechanism by which the State and rural school districts cooperate closely and combine their funds to improve student achievement, implement early education, retain teachers, and help students pass the graduation exam.

The settlement maintains the Alaska principle of local control while meeting the State's constitutional responsibility to provide assistance to, and oversight of, struggling schools. It is a step forward in the quality of Alaska's schools. See http://education.alaska.gov/news/releases/2012/moore_settlement_signed.pdf.

ESTABLISHED MERIT-BASED SCHOLARSHIP FOR TECHNICAL AND COLLEGE PROGRAMS

Another step forward has been the Alaska Performance Scholarship. Students who complete a rigorous high school curriculum and achieve qualifying grade point averages and test scores are eligible for scholarships worth up to \$4,755 a year for college or technical education.

In its first year, the scholarship provided nearly \$3 million to 870 Alaskans from the high school Class of 2011. The State recently established a sustainable fund for this merit-based scholarship and for needs-based postsecondary grants.

The second high school graduating class has now received its Alaska Performance Scholarships. The Class of 2012 faced more rigorous course requirements than did the Class of 2011, but a greater percentage of the 2012 graduates earned the highest levels of scholarship. That tells us that students and schools are rising to accept the scholarship's invitation to excellence. See www.aps.alaska.gov.

ESTABLISHED DISTANCE COURSES FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

To help schools offer the required courses for the Alaska Performance Scholarship, especially in rural Alaska, the State and school districts operate Alaska's Learning Network, in which high school courses are taught by distance by highly qualified Alaska teachers. This fall, the learning network is offering 42 courses. See <http://aklearn.net/>. The program also has created Alaska's Digital Sandbox, an online repository of free resources developed by Alaska teachers for K-12 teachers. See <http://www.alaskadigitalsandbox.org>.

Distance education is highly dependent on reliable access to broadband service, yet many rural Alaska communities have only the most basic broadband access. Recent initiatives by the Federal Communication Commission to reform the universal Services Fund appear to lessen Federal support for improvements to broadband access in rural Alaska. The State of Alaska continues to monitor these reforms and will highlight threats to distance education as they arise.

CONTINUED MENTORING OF TEACHERS AND COACHING OF PRINCIPALS

The State is continuing programs that serve rural Alaska with trained mentors for several hundred new teachers a year and coaches for dozens of new principals.

The Alaska Statewide Mentoring Project, funded by Alaska Department of Education & Early Development and the University of Alaska, has flourished for 8 school years. It matches veteran teachers who are trained mentors with teachers in the first 2 years of their career. The goals are to increase teacher retention and improve student achievement. The project encourages beginning teachers to be reflective and responsive to the diverse cultural backgrounds and academic needs of all of their students.

Mentors observe and coach the new teacher, serve as trusted listeners and sounding boards, assist with planning, help with classroom management strategies, teach demonstration lessons, provide supplemental resources that support the district's curriculum, and facilitate communication with the school and its community. See <http://alaskamentorproject.org/>.

The Alaska Administrator Coaching Program's purpose is to positively influence student achievement and increase principal retention. It has existed for 7 school years, serving approximately 80 principals a year.

Coaches work with new principals for 2 years, which includes three professional development institutes a year, covering topics such as instructional literacy, teacher observation, supervision and evaluation of staff, organizational literacy, teacher collaboration, assessment literacy, school improvement planning, and classroom assessment practices. See <http://aacep.pbworks.com/>.

EMPHASIZED CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHERS

The State Board of Education & Early Development now requires beginning teachers to be prepared as culturally responsive teachers, and requires all teachers to know Alaska's standards for culturally responsive schools. The State, working with Native educators, recently completed the first guide to implementing Alaska's cultural standards for educators. See http://education.alaska.gov/standards/pdf/cultural_standards.pdf.

RAISED STANDARDS FOR LANGUAGE ARTS AND MATHEMATICS

In an effort to spur greater student achievement, after 2 years of collaboration across the State, Alaska has adopted its own new standards in English and mathematics. They are the State's first standards to extend from kindergarten through grade 12, and they are the first to address the need for students to be ready for careers and further education after high school. See <http://education.alaska.gov/tls/assessment/GLEHome.html>.

SOUGHT A WAIVER FROM ASPECTS OF NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

Alaska has applied to the Federal Government to be released from the most unproductive and unpopular aspects of the No Child Left Behind Act. In its place, if the State receives a waiver, we will implement a school accountability system by Alaskans and for Alaskans. Our proposed system emphasizes local responsibility and levels of State assistance, depending on the needs of schools. The Federal Government has set some conditions for States' waivers, but a waiver would be a step forward from No Child Left Behind. See <http://education.alaska.gov/nclb/esea.html>.

STRENGTHENED THE STATE SYSTEM OF SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS

The Alaska Department of Education & Early Development created, and is continually strengthening, a system to support struggling schools and districts to improve instructional practices and increase student achievement.

With funding from the legislature and a legislative mandate to help turn around schools and districts that need improvement, the department created the State System of Support (SSOS), housed in the commissioner's office.

The State System of Support helps districts build their capacity to improve student achievement through the domains of curriculum, assessment, instruction, supportive learning environment, professional development, and leadership.

Alaska STEPP is a web-based system that guides districts' improvement teams through a continuous cycle of assessment, planning, implementation, and progress tracking. The tool focuses on an honest assessment of a district's strengths and challenges, and on actions to sustain strengths and address challenges. STEPP stands for "steps toward educational progress and partnership." See <http://www.eed.state.ak.us/nclb/SchoolImprovement.html>.

PROPOSED REGULATIONS TO IMPROVE TEACHER QUALITY

Educators from school districts, the university and the department have developed regulations to improve teacher quality in Alaska, to include: a stronger link between the needs of districts and teacher preparation programs; improving standards for teachers and methods of evaluating teachers; more paths to certification; tying certificate renewals to student achievement; and improving our mentoring program for new teachers. Some of these regulations are now out for public comment. See http://education.alaska.gov/regs/comment/4_AAC_04.pdf.

DEVELOPED AND FUND THE ALASKA CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION PLAN

The Alaska Department of Education & Early Development, the University of Alaska, the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, and industry have written an action plan to revitalize career and technical education, open the shops in Alaska's high schools, and integrate career and technical education into the regular high schools. EED and DOL&WD are working with the Alaska Workforce Investment Board to coordinate the development of career education and to support a gas line training program.

In its first year of implementation, the State awarded 14 grants to implement portions of the plan. Examples include training in welding in the Bering Strait School District, implementing Personal Learning Career Plans for all 9th-graders in the Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District, and increasing rural high school students' access to health education through distance delivery from the University of Alaska. See <http://labor.state.ak.us/awib/cte.htm>.

DEVELOPED A LITERACY BLUEPRINT FROM BIRTH TO GRADUATION

The Alaska Department of Education & Early Development worked with educators to create the Alaska Statewide Literacy Blueprint from Birth to Graduation. The blueprint addresses the content and delivery of instruction, interventions, assessments, leadership, family and community engagement, and professional development. The department produced and distributed "I Am Ready" brochures for parents of young children. See <http://education.alaska.gov/blueprint/>.

Additionally, the State established the Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council. See <http://www.hss.state.ak.us/ocs/AECCC/default.htm>.

DEVELOPED A VOLUNTARY HEALTH AND SAFETY FRAMEWORK

The Alaska Department of Education & Early Development collaborated with the Alaska PTA and Alaska experts on health, domestic violence, safety, nutrition, and physical education to write the Alaska School Health and Safety Framework. The document promotes a voluntary system of coordinated school health programs.

Additionally, the State created the multi-agency Alaska State Suicide Prevention Plan, which mandates prevention training for high school teachers. See <http://education.alaska.gov/tls/suicide/>.

In conclusion, Alaska's State agencies and school districts recognize there is much work to be done to improve the success of Native students. These efforts must be owned by families and communities. The closer the decisionmaking process and implementation are to them, the greater the chances of success. The Federal Government's most useful role is to support the State and districts in their initiatives and vision.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Chris.
Peggy.

STATEMENT OF PEGGY COWAN, SUPERINTENDENT, NORTH SLOPE BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT, BARROW, AK

Ms. COWAN. Senator Murkowski, thank you for inviting me to this hearing, and I am honored to represent the North Slope Borough School District.

I am Peggy Cowan, Superintendent of Schools. Ours is a district of 8 villages and 11 schools across the Arctic Slope. The district is the largest geographical school district. There are only 11 States that are larger than the 89,000 square miles of our district. In a way, we reflect the great State of Alaska that we are part of with vast distances and few people. Our student population is 1,850, primarily Inupiaq.

I am here today to share with you our long-term systemic change effort to transform the learning of our students through changing the curriculum to acknowledge the geographical and cultural context within which they live. To understand our current curriculum work, you need to understand the context.

The first mayor of the North Slope Borough, Eben Hopson, stated 40 years ago,

“Among our entire international Iñupiat community, we of the North Slope have achieved true self-government with the formation of the North Slope Borough. We have the greatest opportunity to direct our own destiny. Possibly the greatest significance of home rule is that it enables us to regain control of the education of our children.”

This vision of home rule and control of education is the foundation of the current work in developing a culturally relevant curriculum. The home rule is actualized today through the local board of education. There are three elements of our curriculum work: first, the locally developed Inupiaq Learning Framework, which is behind me; then the Alaska State Standards and Content Areas; and, finally, Understanding by Design.

The curriculum process that the district is following is called Understanding by Design, a research-based best practice in curriculum and instructional design, whose aim is student understanding, the ability to make meaning of and transfer important learning. Understanding by Design is a mission-driven curriculum process. The teachers and staff of the district are accountable to the same national requirements of adequate yearly progress and the State requirements of standards-based assessments, but are also accountable to the local board of education for the mission, which is: Learning in our schools is rooted in the values, history, and language of the Iñupiat.

Students develop the academic and cultural skills and knowledge to be: critical and creative thinkers, able to adapt in a changing environment and world; active responsible contributing members of their communities; and confident, healthy young adults able to envision, plan, and take control of their destinies. The curriculum work actualizes that mission. The knowledge and skills of the Iñupiat knowledge systems are articulated through the Inupiaq Learning Framework, the foundation of the curriculum.

The Inupiaq Learning Framework is the product of multiple year process of asking the communities across the slope two questions: No. 1, what knowledge needs to be acquired to truly live as a healthy Inupiaq? And, No. 2, what does a well-educated, well-grounded, 18-year-old Inupiaq look like? Our director of Inupiaq education visited every community in the North Slope and brought the feedback of these questions to a group of community members from across the slope. The articulation of what the communities envisioned is the Inupiaq Learning Framework represented by our blanket of life.

The Inupiaq Learning Framework is divided into four realms of the Inupiaq world, the environmental realm, the community realm, historical realm, and individual realm. Within each of the realms are core themes. For example, within the historical realm are the core themes of stories, North Slope history, and modern history.

The State's content standards determine what to teach in the academic areas, and the district developed performance expectations for the Inupiaq Learning Framework core themes articulate the understandings for the local culture and history. Both the entire curriculum and classroom instructions are developed collaboratively by school district staff combining these two elements into the units that are rigorous, academically and culturally relevant.

Examples of these elements are substituting in lessons stories of local elders for lessons in language arts textbooks, middle school science labs on density where students measure the difference when putting whale meat or whale fat in a beaker of water, an algebra I lesson of using a formula for a body going up and down on a blanket toss, or an algebra II lesson using the arch trajectory of a harpoon.

The district is starting year 3 of a 5-year plan to transform the curriculum. Many staff have contributed, but the two lead individuals have been Lisa Parady, assistant superintendent, who has led it from the start, and Jana Harcharek, who has given voice and shape to the Inupiat Learning Framework. I am grateful to them and the district. The district must stay the course and continue the process to provide our students with a foundation that fits both the Inupiaq and western worlds.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Cowan follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF PEGGY COWAN

SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

To understand our curriculum work, you need to understand our context. The first Mayor of the North Slope Borough, Eben Hopson, stated 40 years ago,

“Among our entire international Inupiat community, we of the North Slope are the only Inupiaq who have achieved true self-government with the formation of the North Slope Borough. We have the greatest opportunity to direct our own destiny. . . . Possibly the greatest significance of home rule is that it enables us to regain control of the education of our children.”

This vision of home rule and control of education is the foundation of the current work in developing a culturally relevant curriculum. The home rule is actualized today through the North Slope Borough School District Board of Education.

CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT INTEGRATION AND MAPPING IN THE NSBSD

There are three elements of our curriculum work, the locally developed Iñupiaq Learning Framework, the Alaska State Standards in Content Areas and Understanding by Design. The curriculum process that the district is following is called Understanding by Design (UbD), a research-based best practice in curriculum and instructional design. In UbD the educational aim is student understanding—the ability to make meaning of and transfer important learning. Understanding by Design is a mission-driven curriculum process. The teachers and staff of the district are accountable to the same national requirements of Adequate Yearly Progress and the State requirements of Standards-Based Assessments, but are accountable to the NSBSD Board of Education for the mission, which is, “Learning in our schools is rooted in the values, history and language of the Iñupiat. Students develop the academic and cultural skills and knowledge to be:

- Critical and creative thinkers able to adapt in a changing environment and world;
- Active, responsible, contributing members of their communities; and
- Confident, healthy young adults, able to envision, plan and take control of their destiny.”

The curriculum work actualizes that mission. The knowledge and skills of the Iñupiaq knowledge systems are articulated through the Iñupiaq Learning Framework, the foundation of the curriculum. The Iñupiaq Learning Framework is the product of a multiple year process of asking the community two questions:

- “What knowledge needs to be acquired to truly live as a healthy Iñupiaq?”
- “What does a well-educated, well-grounded 18-year-old Iñupiaq look like?”

Jana Harcharek, director of Iñupiaq Education visited every community in the North Slope Borough and brought the community feedback on these questions to a group of community members. The articulation of what the communities envisioned is the Iñupiaq Learning Framework represented by Mapkuqput Iñuuniagnigmi—Our Blanket of Life. The Iñupiaq Learning Framework is divided into four realms of the Iñupiaq world, the Environmental Realm, Community Realm, Historical Realm and Individual Realm. Within each of the realms are Core Themes. For example, within the Historical Realm are Core Themes of Unipkaat, Quliaqtuat, Uqalukutuat (which are legend/old stories, one’s life experience and true story), North Slope History and Modern History.

The State’s content area standards determine what to teach in the academic areas and district developed performance expectations for each of the Iñupiaq Learning Framework Core Themes articulate the understandings for the local culture and history. Both the entire curriculum and classroom instruction are developed collaboratively by school district staff combining these two elements into units that are rigorous academically and culturally relevant. Examples of these lessons are substituting stories of local Elders for lessons in language arts textbooks; middle school science labs on density where students measure the difference when putting whale meat or whale fat in a beaker of water; an algebra I lesson using a formula for a body going up and down on a blanket toss; or an algebra II lesson using the arched trajectory of a harpoon.

The district is starting year 3 of a 5-year plan to transform the curriculum. The district must stay the course and continue the process to provide our students with a foundation that fits both the Iñupiaq and Western worlds.

Thank you. Quyanak.

 INTRODUCTION

Thank you for inviting me to this hearing. I am honored to be here today and to represent the North Slope Borough School District (NSBSD). I am Peggy Cowan superintendent of schools. The North Slope Borough School District is a district of 8 villages and 11 schools across the arctic slope of Alaska. The district is the largest geographical school district. There are only 11 States that are larger than the 89,000 square miles of our district. In a way we reflect the great State that we are part of, with vast distances and few people, our student population is 1,850 preschool through twelfth grade, primarily Iñupiaq.

I am here today to share with you our long-term, systemic change effort to transform the learning of the students through changing the curriculum to acknowledge the geographical and cultural context within which they live.

BACKGROUND

To understand our curriculum work, you need to understand our context. Our district exists because the Borough was founded 40 years ago so that the people of the arctic slope of Alaska could direct their own destiny. The first Mayor of the North Slope Borough, Eben Hopson, stated at that time,

“Among our entire international Iñupiat community, we of the North Slope are the only Iñupiaq who have achieved true self-government with the formation of the North Slope Borough. We have the greatest opportunity to direct our own destiny as we have for the past millennia. Possibly the greatest significance of home rule is that it enables us to regain control of the education of our children.”

This vision of home rule and control of education is the foundation of the current work in developing a culturally relevant curriculum. The home rule is actualized today through the North Slope Borough School District Board of Education. The curriculum revision is part of the Board developed and adopted strategic plan for the district and enables the district to meet the mission.

CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT INTEGRATION AND MAPPING IN THE NSBSD

There are three elements of our curriculum work, the locally developed Iñupiaq Learning Framework, the Alaska State Standards in Content Areas and the Understanding by Design Curriculum Framework. The curriculum process that the district is following is called Understanding by Design (UbD), a research-based best practice in curriculum and instructional design. In UbD the educational aim is student understanding—the ability to make meaning of and transfer important learning. Understanding by Design is a mission-driven curriculum process. The teachers and staff of the district are accountable to the same national requirements of Adequate Yearly Progress and the State requirements of Standards-Based Assessments, but are accountable to the NSBSD Board of Education for the mission, which is,

“Learning in our schools is rooted in the values, history and language of the Iñupiat. Students develop the academic and cultural skills and knowledge to be:

- Critical and creative thinkers able to adapt in a changing environment and world;
- Active, responsible, contributing members of their communities; and
- Confident, healthy young adults, able to envision, plan and take control of their destiny.”

The curriculum work actualizes that mission and the Board’s strategic plan first goal, “All students will reach their intellectual potential and achieve academic success through integrating Iñupiaq knowledge systems into core content areas.”

The knowledge and skills of the Iñupiaq knowledge systems are articulated through the Iñupiaq Learning Framework, the foundation of the curriculum. The Iñupiaq Learning Framework is the product of a multiple year process of asking the community two questions:

- “What knowledge needs to be acquired to truly live as a healthy Iñupiaq?
- What does a well-educated, well-grounded 18-year-old Iñupiaq look like?”

Jana Harcharek, director of Iñupiaq Education visited every community in the North Slope Borough and brought the community feedback on these questions to a group of community members from across the slope called Iñiñniagnikun Apquisiuqtit, “People who break trail for learning.” The articulation of what the communities envisioned is the Iñupiaq Learning Framework represented by Mapkuqput Iñuuniagnigmi—Our Blanket of Life. The blanket represents our learning framework, it is bond together by spirituality and language. The Iñupiaq Learning Framework is divided into four realms of the Iñupiaq world, the Environmental Realm, Community Realm, Historical Realm and Individual Realm. Within each of the realms are Core Themes. For example, within the Historical Realm are Core Themes of Unipkaat, Quliaqtuat, Uqalukutuat (which are legend/old stories, one’s life experience and true story), North Slope History and Modern History.

The State’s content area standards determine what to teach in the academic areas and district developed performance expectations for each of the Iñupiaq Learning Framework Core Themes articulate the understandings for the local culture and history. Both the entire curriculum and classroom instruction are developed collaboratively by school district staff combining these two elements into units that are rigorous academically and culturally relevant. Examples of these lessons are substituting stories of local Elders for lessons in language arts textbooks; middle school science labs on density where students measure the difference when putting whale meat or whale fat in a beaker of water; an algebra I lesson using a formula for a

body going up and down on a blanket toss; or an algebra II lesson using the arched trajectory of a harpoon.

Just as the root of the work is in the community's vision for education, we return to the communities for feedback. Each content area curriculum committee will bring their work to a Steering Committee of local people to review and provide feedback to let the staff know if we are meeting their vision.

The district is starting year 3 of a 5-year plan to transform the curriculum. Many NSBSD staff have contributed to this effort, but three individuals have led the process. Lisa Parady, assistant superintendent, conceived the curriculum process and has led it from the start, Jana Harcharek has given voice and shape to the ILF. Jay McTighe has used his groundbreaking Understanding by Design process to train our team. As Superintendent, it has been especially gratifying to support the whole, to have the entire structure bear the fruit of systemic change, that lasts and truly begins to align and integrate the Inupiaq culture and western academics. The district must stay the course and continue the process to provide our students with a foundation that fits both the Inupiaq and Western worlds.

Thank you. Quyanak.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Peggy.
Rosita.

**STATEMENT OF ROSITA WORL, Ph.D., PRESIDENT, SEALASKA
HERITAGE INSTITUTE, JUNEAU, AK**

Dr. WORL. Senator Murkowski, thank you for holding this hearing on a subject of vital concern to the Native community. May I also express the gratitude of the Native community—and I think that I can do that as a board member of the Alaska Federation of Natives—our deepest gratitude to you for your staunch advocacy and support for Alaska Native education.

In honor of my ancestors and in respect to this committee, I am privileged to tell you who I am. I am also hopeful that we might use it as a lesson as to why it is so important to have Alaska Natives involved in education. My Tlingit names are Yéideilats'ok and Kaaháni. I am of the Thunderbird Clan and the Eagle moiety. I am from the House Lowered From the Sun, and I am a child of a Sock-eye Clan.

This is my Tlingit identity, and I will tell you that it took years and years for me to be able to resolve my Tlingit identity with who I am in this modern society. That is a conflict that many of our children continue to experience.

I shared this traditional identity with you to offer you a glimpse into our world, our relationship to the land and to the environment, and also the complexity of our culture. It is just a simple measure to illustrate the complexity and the vast differences between our societies. The essence of our being in our Native world view is rarely taught in school. We do not see our Native self in our schools. We do not even see Native people in the curriculum, in the photos that our children see. And I think just that alone demonstrates why we need to work to change that, to ensure that we can be engaged in education.

At the Sealaska Heritage Institute, our thesis has been to integrate language and culture into all of our programs. And in all of the programs that we administer through education—and we run a number of education programs—we have found that our children do better academically when language and culture are integrated in the schools.

In 2000, the Sealaska Heritage Institute partnered with the Juneau School District, and the result of that was systemic change.

We funded the program through an ANEP program for the first year. The school district took it up, and then this year, they funded that program. So this is a classic example of systemic change where the Juneau School District saw the benefit of having language and culture in the program and continued to fund that.

In the 10 years since we started that program, what we have found—and we did a longitudinal study. We found that our children did better academically. And the number that I'd like to report just for the record now is—and it is contained in our report—is that in contrast to the 50 percent graduation rate we have of Alaska Native students from schools, we had in this program over 70 percent of our students who came through the class. In all those classes where they were taught Tlingit language and culture, they had a more than 70 percent graduation rate.

The important thing for us here is that Alaska Natives need to be involved in education. And the Federal funding that we have been receiving from the ANEP program and, hopefully, from others that we are pursuing will allow Alaska Native organizations to be at the table. We want to have a meaningful role in education, and we think that having the funds go directly to the Native organizations and then developing the partnerships with the university and the school districts really gives us the leverage to have a meaningful role in our education.

In the Sealaska Heritage Institute, we have signed MOEs with the university and with the Juneau School District. For the very first time, we are sitting at the table as new teachers are being interviewed. I don't know how the union feels about that, but we are there. And I think what we are able to show is to really bring our knowledge to the table and what we think is good for not only Native students but other students. So I think these educational programs really allow us to be at the table.

But the point that I want to stress is that it must be the Native organization that has the lead in receiving these funds. We think that it's a true measure of self-determination, and we want to be engaged in the education of our children.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Worl follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ROSITA KAAHÁNI WORL, PH.D.

SUMMARY

The purpose of the hearing will be to learn what **efforts by Alaska Native organizations** to improve the educational outcomes of Alaska Native children and youth are working, what **challenges** remain, and the **role of the Federal Government** in helping to build on success.

EFFORTS BY NATIVE ORGANIZATIONS

- Focusing on Native educational achievement.
- Integrating language and cultural restoration in school as a means to improve academic achievement of Native students.
- Monitoring progress of Alaska Native education and Federal funding for Native education and language.
- Promoting systemic change in educational systems to address Native educational needs.
- Specific Actions:
 - Teacher training and employment in school districts.
 - Curriculum Development.
 - Professional Development.
 - Partnerships with school districts and Alaska's university system.

Summer Academies and programs.
Federal and State funding for Native education.

- Case Study of Native Education in Juneau

CHALLENGES

- Positive Native identities.
- Cross cultural training and understanding.
- Increasing number of Native teachers and administrators and their employment in schools.
- Recognition by schools, government and public that integration of indigenous culture and language into schools promotes academic achievement.
- Funding to support Alaska Native organizational participation in educational efforts.

THE ROLE OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

- Advocacy, support and funding for Native educational and language programs.
- Support research efforts to understand barriers to Native academic success.
- Fund Alaska Native organization to become full partners in educational efforts.

Gunulchéesh, Aanshaawatk'i, Deisheetaan, Yeíl, Angoon Kwáan

Senator Murkowski, thank you for holding this hearing on a subject of vital concern to the Native community. May I also express the gratitude of the Native community for your staunch advocacy and support of Alaska Native education.

In honor of my ancestors and in respect to this committee, I am privileged to tell you who I am:

Lingít x'eínáx Yéideiklats'ok ka Kaaháni ax saayí.

Shangukeidí ka Cháak' naa xat sitee.

Kawdliyaayi Hit áyá xát.

Lukaax.adi yádi áyá xát.

My Tlingit names are Yédeilats'ok and Kaaháni

I am of the Thunderbird Clan and the Eagle Moiety.

I am from the House Lowered from the Sun of Klukwan.

I am a Child of the Sockeye Clan.

My English name is Rosita Worl, and I serve as president of the Sealaska Heritage Institute (SHI), whose mission is to perpetuate and enhance the cultures of the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshians and to promote cross-cultural understanding and cultural diversity.

My Tlingit names, clan and house are the basis of my social identity and cultural values. They establish a bond between me and my ancestors, and they create a responsibility to our future generations.

I shared my traditional identity to offer you a glimpse into our world, our relationship to our land and environment and the complexity of our culture. It is also a simple measure to illustrate the differences that exist between the Native and non-Native society. The essence of our being and our Native world view are rarely taught in schools or understood by educators.

One of our institutional goals has been to ensure that our children have the opportunity to develop a positive identity around their cultural heritage and legal status as Native Americans and Alaska Natives. Although seemingly simple, a basic premise we hold is that a "positive identity" contributes to one's well-being and academic achievement. This knowledge of self and one's heritage and history have been historically denied to Native students. Today we are trying to resolve the many social and educational dilemmas afflicting past and current generations caused in part by undervaluing our Native identity, self, and heritage.

I previously submitted a summary responding to the three questions that you had posed, which is also included here in my written testimony. I would like to briefly review the success of Native students who participated in Alaska Native Education Program (ANEP) funded programs in Juneau school and summarize my written statement on the participation of Alaska Native organizations (ANO) in Native educational programs.

EFFORTS BY NATIVE ORGANIZATIONS TO IMPROVE THE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES OF ALASKA NATIVE YOUTH

- Focusing on Native educational achievement.

- Integrating language and cultural restoration in school as a means to improve academic achievement of Native students.
- Monitoring progress of Alaska Native education and Federal funding for Native education and language.
- Promoting systemic change in educational systems to address Native educational needs.
 - Specific Actions:
 - Teacher training and employment in school districts;
 - Curriculum development;
 - Professional development;
 - Partnerships with school districts and Alaska's university system;
 - Summer academies and programs; and
 - Federal and State funding for Native education.

CHALLENGES

- Positive Native identities.
- Cross-cultural training and understanding.
- Increasing number of Native teachers and administrators and their employment in schools.
 - Recognition by schools, government and public that integration of indigenous culture and language into schools promotes academic achievement.
 - Funding to support Alaska Native organizational participation in educational efforts.

THE ROLE OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

- Advocacy, support and funding for Native educational and language programs.
- Support research efforts to understand barriers to Native academic success.
- Fund Alaska Native organization to become full partners in educational efforts.

SHI AND NATIVE EDUCATION REVIEW

In 2000 the Sealaska Heritage Institute, in partnership with the Juneau School District, launched a pilot program in Harborview Elementary School that over the next 10 years would make an unprecedented impact on the District. The program was designed to turn the tide of low academic performance and family engagement of Alaska Natives by creating a place-based, culture-based "school within a school" where the Tlingit language and culture were integral to daily instruction, where they were celebrated and respected. Over the next 10 years it evolved into the Tlingit Culture, Language and Literacy (TCLL) program with support from three consecutive grants awarded by the ANEP and the Office of Bilingual Education in the U.S. Department of Education. The initial grant was awarded to the SHI. The following two grants were awarded directly to the Juneau School District. Although SHI was identified as a partner in the school district grants, SHI was not involved in the programmatic development nor actually were we aware that we were a partner or understood the authorities that came with being a partner. Several other Native organizations donated funds to the school district to support various aspects of the TCLL Program.

During the last decade, SHI together with other Juneau-based Native organizations developed educational programs, curriculum, supplemental material, teacher training programs, cultural workshops and summer leadership programs around Native culture and language that were primarily funded by ANEP, the Administration for Native Americans and other sources of public and private funding.

We were keenly interested in the overall impact of the Native language and culture programs on Native student achievement during the last 10 years. We commissioned Dr. Annie Calkins, a former assistant superintendent of the Juneau School District, to conduct an evaluation of students who participated in the TCLL program. We would like to share a few highlights of the draft report that we will make available to you upon completion of the final report:

- **70 percent of the first group of students (17) enrolled in the ANEP-sponsored TCLL graduated from high school in 2012.** This is double the percentage of Native students in the district who typically graduate.
- One student, who participated in the TCLL program from grades 2–5 was awarded a Gates scholarship and will attend Stanford University in 2013.
- TCLL students generally do as well or better than their Native peers on standardized tests in reading and writing.

The TCLL program was available to a rather small number of the Juneau School District population averaging 25 to 30 students each year. We believe the data and

success of these students reflect that ANOs should have the opportunity to expand and implement this approach to a greater number of students and schools. It has nurtured positive connections with Native parents, many of whom had negative experiences with schools as students, and parents of students.

The Alaska Native Education Equity, Support and Assistance Act was authored by the late and our dear friend, Senator Stevens, to ensure a funding stream designed to specifically meet the needs of Alaska Native students. His second objective was to ensure that Alaska Native people were maximally involved in the planning and management of Alaska Native Education programs. Senator Stevens authored the Alaska Native Education Equity, Support and Assistance Act in response to these disparities, and to create an opportunity for equity in education for Alaska Native people. ANEP was designed to address Alaska Native students' needs in a threefold way by:

1. focusing attention on the educational needs of Alaska Native students,
2. investing substantial funding in the creation and operation of supplemental educational programs for Alaska Native students, and
3. maximizing participation of Alaska Native people in the planning and management of Alaska Native education programs.

Tribes elsewhere in the country can utilize Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) funding to establish and run their own tribal schools and programs. However, Alaska receives no BIE funding, and in Alaska, the State is responsible for educating all Alaskans, including Alaska Natives.

Historically, the State's and districts' track records on educating Alaska Native students have been poor. As noted above, our data reflect that Native students who were able to participate in a Native language and culture-based program are doing better than other students. However, the overall record for Native academic achievement remains dismal as reflected by data extracted from the Alaska State Report Card:

	2002 [ln percent]	2003 [ln percent]	2004 [ln percent]	2005 [ln percent]	2006 [ln percent]	2007 [ln percent]	2008 [ln percent]	2009 [ln percent]	2010 [ln percent]	2011 [ln percent]
Alaska Native student dropouts in grades 7–12, as percentage of all Alaska Natives.	23.3 ...	23.7 ...	24.3 ...	24.7	25.2	25.1	23.2	22.8	22.8	22.5
Alaska Native student dropouts in grades 7–12, as a percentage of total number.	34.5 ...	39.7 ...	40.6 ...	33.7	36.6	37.8	37.9	37.3	38.3	41.2
Graduation rate of Alaska Native students.	N/A	N/A	N/A	43.0	45.0	51.0	48.1	55.4	55.4	50.9

Direct Native participation in the education of our students is possible with funding the ANOs have received, and it serves to improve the status of Native education. However, ANOs are increasingly concerned that the manner in which the Department of Education is implementing the ANEP is paying inadequate attention to the most important principle of the authorizing legislation: Equity.

Senator Murkowski, you, and all members of the Alaska delegation, have strongly advocated for the ANEP program in both the authorization and appropriations processes. And, may I emphasize again that we are especially grateful for your unwavering support for the program over the years when it has been attacked as an earmark and/or as duplicative of other programs.

We want to introduce another reason for you to continue your support for this program: We believe that putting ANOs in the position as lead grantees for ANEP funding will make a marked difference for Alaska Native students. From our experience over the last decade we have observed that being a lead grantee in an ANEP grant allows ANOs to come to the table as an equal partner with larger educational entities such as school districts and universities. This equality creates fertile ground for systemic change. Unfortunately, since 2005, over three-quarters of the funding and three-quarters of the grants have been awarded to non-Native entities.

Alaska Native Education Equity Act—Award/Funding Analysis 2005–11

Organization type			Percent of grants	Percent of funds
Alaska Native Organizations:	31 grants	\$39.3 million	23.3	21.70
ANO competitive awards only	23 grants	\$27.3 million	17.29	17.72
Other Organizations:	102 grants	\$114.7 million	76.70	78.30
School districts	50 grants	\$75.7 million	37.5	41.9
Non-profits	30 grants	\$37.2 million	22.5	20.60
Universities	22 grants	\$28.3 million	16.50	15.60

Sec. 7302(2). It is the policy of the Federal Government to encourage the maximum participation by Alaska Natives in the planning and the management of Alaska Native Education programs.

Sec. 7302(7). The Federal Government should lend support to efforts developed by and undertaken within the Alaska Native community to improve educational opportunity for all students.

In our concern for the inequitable allocation of funds, the Alaska Federation of Natives passed a resolution (enclosed) last spring urging Congress to ensure that grants funded by the Alaska Native Equity Program are administered through ANOs and as lead grantees. Our analysis of the 2012 grants reveal that ANOs made modest gains with the percent of grants and the percent of funds both increasing by 12 percent.

Alaska Native Education Equity Act—Award/Funding Analysis 2012 only

Organization type			Percent of grants	Percent of funds
Alaska Native Organizations:				
ANOP competitive awards only	11 grants	\$6.17 million	29	30
Other Organizations:	27 grants			
School districts	15 grants	\$7.60 million	39	36
Non-profits	8 grants	\$4.80 million	21	23
Universities	4 grants	\$2.28 million	11	11

Some non-Native organizations, like school districts and universities, may argue that funding is being taken away from them. Maximizing ANO involvement as lead grantees will simply realign implementation of the ANEP program with the original intent of the statute: Equity and maximum involvement of ANOs.

As ANO's, we are concerned that the program is not being adequately implemented, particularly in relation to the purpose of maximizing Alaska Native participation. In fact, in April 2012, AFN wrote to you detailing our concerns about the program. First, the law requires that the Department of Education (the Department) prioritize funding to Alaska Native regional organizations, but as I have already mentioned, the majority of ANEP funding over the last decade was awarded to non-Alaska Native organizations and entities (including school districts and universities).

The statute provides a clear priority to Alaska Native regional nonprofits or consortia that include these organizations. However, this priority is being increasingly undermined by other priorities as identified by the Department. In the last 2 years, Request for Applications (RFA) for the ANEP program gave the same number of points to applications from Alaska Native regional nonprofits (ANRO) as it did for programmatic priorities identified by the Department. Furthermore, the programmatic priorities identified were neither targeted to Alaska Native needs, nor relevant goals for supplemental education programs focused on outcomes for Alaska Native students. In fact, the priorities in the RFA were not even reflective of the priorities listed in the statute. In addition to last year's programmatic priorities, this year, novice applicants, including non-Native organizations, were given a five-point priority. Again, ANROs were given only two points. As a result, the statutory priority given to ANROs was subordinated to other priorities.

Current statute allows the Secretary to make grants and enter into contracts with non-Native organizations, and at the same time it also requires that Local Education Agencies (LEA) and State Education Agencies (SEA) apply in consortia with Native organizations. ANOs are often enlisted for the value of their imprimatur, but not considered or involved as full partners in the consortia as we reported above. It is time for this to change.

Opponents claim that the ANEP program is duplicative and unnecessary. On the contrary, this program is essential and beneficial to Native students. The Alaska

Native Educational Equity, Support and Assistance Act was designed to ensure equity, not duplication. ANEP funding can make a significant difference for Alaska Native students, in the right circumstances. The right circumstances involve strong, equal partnerships between Alaska Native and non-Native organizations as required by the statute.

Congress is likely to tackle reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in the new Congress. I urge you to leverage the reauthorization process to realign this essential program with the original goals of the legislation.

Educational policy and laws that were once written in order to maximize Alaska Native Organizational involvement in education and the management thereof are being implemented in such a fashion that actually, through the grant-making process, minimizes Alaska Native Organizational involvement. We urge you to support efforts that ensure ANOs are the lead organizations and that partnerships are partnerships of equals. ANOs in the position as lead grantees for ANEP funding will make a marked difference for Alaska Native students.

Alaskan Natives believe in self-determination and want an active role in the education of our children. We want to be trusted with the future of our own children—educationally, socially, and economically.

Gunlchéesh.

ATTACHMENT

ALASKA FEDERATION OF NATIVES, AFN BOARD OF DIRECTORS—RESOLUTION 12-03

TITLE: TO AMEND ALASKA NATIVE EDUCATION EQUITY ACT AND INCLUDE DIRECTIVE LANGUAGE IN APPROPRIATIONS BILLS SO THAT FUNDING IS ADMINISTERED BY ALASKA NATIVE ORGANIZATIONS IN ORDER TO IMPROVE EDUCATION FOR ALASKA NATIVE YOUTH.

WHEREAS: The Alaska Native Education Equity Act was enacted by Congress in 2002 and provides approximately \$33 million per year in funding for programs across the State that address the needs of Alaska Native students—from early childhood education to secondary school preparation programs; and

WHEREAS: The Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) does not contribute funds to the education of Alaska Native students;

WHEREAS: The Alaska Native Education Equity Act authorizes the use of funds under the Act for the development of curriculum and educational programs that reflect and are aligned with the cultural diversity, language and contributions of Alaska Native people and for other supplemental educational programs that support Alaska Native college and career readiness; and

WHEREAS: The Alaska Native Educational Equity Act states that it is the policy of the Federal Government to encourage maximum participation by Alaska Native people in the planning and management of Alaska Native Education programs; and

WHEREAS: The Act also authorizes the Department of Education to fund programs under this act administered by Alaska Native Organizations, educational entities and cultural and community-based organizations; and

WHEREAS: Assessments of grant funding reflects the following:

- Decreasing awards granted to Alaska Native Organizations
- Increasing awards to school districts, University of Alaska, and other organizations, and
- Alaska Native Organizations may be identified as “Partners” with school districts, University of Alaska, or other organizations, but in actuality have little to no control or oversight of the grant development, implementation, and programs; and

WHEREAS: School Districts and Universities have access to other funding that Alaska Native Organization are ineligible to apply for; and

WHEREAS: The Act specifically prioritizes funding for Alaska Native regional non-profit organizations or consortia that include such Alaska Native organizations; and

WHEREAS: Native Cultures and Languages have been documented to serve as resilience factors in youth, and inclusion of such content in meaningful ways can support academic success; and

WHEREAS: Alaska Native corporations, organizations, and tribes throughout the State of Alaska are working to improve Native Education through intentional and strategic programs that utilize culturally relevant curricula; and

WHEREAS: Over the last 10 years, Alaska Native Organizations have successfully demonstrated that they can provide programs that improve academic performance of Alaska Native students; and

WHEREAS: Alaska Native Organizations, working in partnerships with Schools, Universities, or other Organizations as the lead can ensure the success of Alaska Native students; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the Alaska Federation of Natives supports the continuation of Alaska Native Education Equity Act funding in order to meet the dire needs of Alaska Native students, and urges the delegation to pursue every means possible to amend the House version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to ensure inclusion and continuation of the Alaska Native Education Equity Act and sufficient funding in the appropriations and authorization processes; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Alaska Federation of Natives further urges Congress to take action to ensure that grants funded by the Alaska Native Equity Program are administered through Alaska Native Organizations and as lead grantees with partners, and that the Department of Education consults with Alaska Native Organizations to identify programmatic priority areas for future funding.

ADOPTED THIS DAY, 22ND
OF FEBRUARY 2012

JULIE E. KITKA,
President.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Rosita.
Doreen.

**STATEMENT OF DOREEN E. BROWN, SUPERVISOR, TITLE VII
INDIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT, ANCHORAGE SCHOOL
DISTRICT, ANCHORAGE, AK**

Ms. BROWN. Thank you, Senator Murkowski, for having me sit at the table today and to be able to share information with you about our program in the Anchorage School District, or many of our programs.

My name is Doreen Brown. My family is from Aniak, and I'm also the proud mother of two children that attend the school district now. I am here to discuss the urban education experience. I think it's really important. I think sometimes we forget that particular conversation and how school districts and Native organizations can come together to be more synergistic partners in encouraging academic success for our students.

I am the supervisor for Title VII Indian Education that is embedded within NCLB. If you ever need some reading material—it's actually title VII—to go to sleep at night, it's really exciting stuff. But it is really important, because it is something that our government—is an obligation for them to serve our students—one way. That language does need to be stronger, I think, and we need to hold our districts' feet to the fire to make sure that they're implementing that with rigor, with true accountability to our people, and making sure our people have a voice with what's being done with those funds.

I stand before you, and I feel like I really do do that. I have a great parent committee, and I have a lot of input from the community of Anchorage. With that, I just want to let you know that we are the largest grantee for title VII funding. I have over 8,800 Native students in this district. I think people are really shocked at that number. I say children are either currently our customers, they've been our customer, or they're going to become our customer.

Here's some statistics from last year. We started out with about 8,800 Native students at the beginning of the school year last year. We ended in May with about 8,500 students. But the total number of students that came in and out of Anchorage was 10,300. That's 1,800 students that withdrew. They went somewhere. Some of them dropped out, as you know from our indicators throughout the State.

I don't think anyone here is not familiar with those statistics. But most of them leave, and they go on to a rural area. So we have to be included in these conversations and these decisions that are going on within our State.

So I'd like to address four questions today. The first one is: Why is there an increase in Native students in the Anchorage School District? I think if you were participating in the conversation with Senator Murkowski and Congressman Don Young, you would have heard the cheese story, and that was one of the factors. But I'll elaborate on that in a minute.

What are the challenges that face our students that come into urban areas? What are we doing to assist the students, families, and staff as they work to encourage the success of our Native students? And how are our Native organizations working together to help our students achieve success?

In thinking about the increase of Native students, urbanization is occurring globally. It's just a natural occurrence that's going on across our globe. The other thing is that we are able to more effectively identify our students. Before, we only got to choose a box, either white or Native. But now we are able to self-identify and to choose more than one box. We're able to identify more students that way.

The other thing is transients. People come in. They come in for a variety of reasons. Maybe it's healthcare. Maybe it's for education. Maybe it's just for access to all the great things that Anchorage has. It sounds really good at the beginning, and then oftentimes they leave. So there's many reasons why we have an increase of Native people. And the last one is because of just pure population growth. I think we're a healthy, robust population.

And what are the challenges that our children face when they come to Anchorage? East High School has over 2,000 Native students. You can imagine that this is pretty intense when we have kids that are coming from small villages that only have maybe 300 to 500 people in the entire village. This school is larger than their village, and to access that is just overwhelming. Trying to get a lunch is pretty profound for some of our students that are coming in from those areas. Even kids that are urbanized going into those large urban areas—when you're really about making connections with people, it's quite difficult.

So besides that, there's also educational disparity. And I'll just read some statistics just from the Anchorage School District. Only 53 percent of our students are proficient in reading, 46 percent proficient in writing, 43 percent proficient in math, 40 percent proficient in science, an 8 percent dropout rate, and graduation rate is about 50 percent.

So other issues include social. I think one of the things our kids really struggle with is about connections. My family is from Aniak. I taught out in Kalskag, and we knew everyone. We waved at everyone. We knew everyone's business. We knew where Mingo was. We knew if somebody was sick. We knew if somebody needed something. We helped one another out.

Kids that come in sometimes often don't have those connections. I will say, personally, I have many family members in the Anchorage area. I very rarely see them. I Facebook them, but I very rarely see them. So taking kids away from that is really hard, and so we do try to make those connections within the school.

For example, at East, we had a class—not last year, but the year before when we had a lot of kids coming in, we had a class at the very beginning of the school day so that they can meet kids coming in from rural areas or new to East High School to assist them, thinking about the school profile, the physical tour of the school, introductions, explanation of policies and procedures of that school, how to ride a bus. Many of our students maybe have never ridden a bus before or have walked eight city blocks to get to school in the dark when they don't know anyone and their parents have to go to work—just school resources.

And then also getting to know the families—what are their needs and how can we help them in setting up community organizations? I think one of the main things we know is that they really lose connections with their culture. I have about 60 staff members in the schools. We have 110 schools. We're not in every school. Chinook Elementary School, which is on the Diamond side, has 165 Native students. I have two staff members there. They don't see every kid.

So it's really difficult to do that, and we know, based on research—and I'll cite Demmert and Towner in 2003 and Kana'iaupuni in 2007—defined cultural-based education. All of you referenced cultural-based education. It's critical. We see elements of it in the school district, but not much. We need to change that. They talk about Native languages, a pedagogy, teaching strategies that align to traditional culture. Curriculum is really important and understanding the strong Native family connection and also community connection. And there's more if you'd like to read on that particular research.

So what are we doing to help families, students, and staff, actually, within the school district? We do some staff training. We need to have more. There's one of me. I need everyone to help with this particular endeavor. It's good for everyone.

We are also, as a district, really moving and have been a key player with social-emotional learning—that has really helped with our students—and creating a plan of support, locating resources for students and families. We also provide some language, but not very much. It's very limited. And we struggle with trying to find teachers that can teach language and putting them within the system

and having our system really honor and respect that and utilize the people that teach that.

So title VII really addresses this. I really look at our staff as really being liaisons and champions for our students. But it takes a whole community. So we have more work to do with that.

Currently, we have two ANEP grants. The first one—and these are really exciting ways to be innovative with our students and our families. For me, I actually went to schools. This came from our Native—one of the grants came with an idea from one of our Native advisory committee members. And she said, “You know, my son is really having a hard time accessing and finishing this particular area. I wish that we could talk about dealing with mobility.” He kept coming back from Nenana to Anchorage, Nenana to Anchorage.

So we sat down and we had some more dialogue. And then I started having more dialogue with other people, and we thought, “Wouldn’t that be great if we infused some 21st century learning tools, thinking about how do we address this mobility issue so we can make sure that kids are successful?”

So this great idea came up, and it’s called Project Puqigtut, and it’s actually an online course offering. We looked at the courses that students typically fail, and we started offering those online. But the key there, and why we have a 70 percent success rate with this particular grant and over 40 students as of—actually, almost 50 students that have graduated because of this program, is because we have aligned with BOT courses, but we adapted those courses to be culturally responsive.

The other components that—we broke down barriers. What were the barriers that kids were having? I actually went from school to school. I had groups of kids, at-risk students, engaged students, and gathered data from them and from families. Internet is expensive. We asked the wrong question: How many of you have Internet? We need to ask: How many of you have consistent Internet? How many of you have Internet that you share with your students? You know, your iPhone doesn’t count when you’re trying to do an assignment on it. So we provide Internet that people can check out and also computers and transportation.

And the other thing is that they really want those connections. So we hire teachers that are really dynamic with our youth, and they have the opportunity to meet with them on a consistent basis. And this has just been a wonderful, exciting program, and we’ve had many students that have traveled throughout the State and have been able to complete their high school classes that way. So I think it’s been wonderful.

The other project is called Project Ki’l, and that’s a Dena’ina word for boy. This is a boy specific program at eight schools. We looked at our data, and I would say we’re at the bottom of the barrel—these boys. Our Native boys are underneath the barrel, academically, socially. So one of the things that we talk about and we really strive for is that cultural connection, the rights of passage, making sure that we have role models that are engaging with our youth, and really looking at attendance and also academic success.

This, too, has shown great results. We’re in year 4, and we look forward to having more results for both of these particular pro-

grams. They're innovative, and I know that many—there's a program called iSchool with a Native school district that is replicating some of the services that we've been providing with Project Puqigtut. If it works for our kids, it'll work for all kids. Project Ki'l—there's elements also that I know the schools around the school district are looking at as well and replicating.

I'd also like to just mention the Alaska Native Culture School. They have done some great things within our district. And I know that we look at them, and we say, "Great job for title I—a distinguished school." But it goes beyond that because families, kids and parents, really feel welcome there. So thank you. And I know they're in the audience right now.

The other thing that I'd like to highlight is that, as you know, many of you are probably facing budget cuts, and we are as well. And one of our school board members asked the question: What kind of services are we having? There were two people that were going to be cut that provide services to students. So they ordered a study called the McDowell Study, and it looked at all the services that are being provided within the Anchorage School District, and it was a lot.

And Gloria O'Neill, if she's in here—she gathered us all together to look at the particular report and decided to have STRIVE, a creative framework for building what we're calling Cradle to Community. I appreciate her leadership, and it's been a wonderful opportunity. We're really at the very beginning stages of it.

But this is about a community partnership. And if you can visualize lots of different agencies doing all kinds of great things for students and families—but the arrows were going all over. We all have our own directions. We all have our own funding sources. We all have our own objectives. Right? Sometimes we write grants to win the grant, not necessarily because it aligns with what we're doing.

And then we look at education, and maybe the arrows are going in the same direction. But with STRIVE and the work that we're doing as a community, we're aligning those arrows. And we're going to have three to five outcomes that are measurable. And guess what? We have agencies. We have CIRI, CITC, UAA, the mayor, United Way—people that we've never really had strong partnerships with—joining us to make sure that those arrows are aligned.

We have hope, and we are really optimistic about the services and having those specific goals for our students. It is imperative that we collaborate on a fundamental level, whether with Anchorage or within the State. And we need to look at each other as allies with whom we can work together to address and dispel the disparity that exists in educational achievement within our State for our future.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Brown follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DOREEN E. BROWN

SUMMARY

Doreen E. Brown will be discussing the urban education experience, and how school districts and Native organizations can become more synergistic partners in

encouraging academic success for our students. As the director for the Anchorage School District's (ASD) Indian Education Program, which is the largest title VII grantee in the Nation with over 8,700 Alaska Native/American Indian (AN/AI) students enrolled in the Districts' 110 schools, she will share her expertise. The topic is critical, because in order to meet the cultural, social, and academic needs of these students, our Native organizations must work together.

There are four questions that will be addressed:

1. Why is there an increase of Native students in the ASD?

Answer. Major contributors to the increase include: urbanization, increased transience and employment mobility and population growth.

2. What are the challenges that face them?

Answer. Significant disparity in educational achievement, moving into large urban centers from a smaller community (the school total population is often bigger than the community the student has moved from), and the lack of a cultural-based education.

3. What we are doing to assist students, families and staff as they work to encourage the success of our students?

Answer. The Indian Education Program, the Alaska Native Education Program, and many community and Native organizations work in partnership for Native student success.

4. How are our Native organizations working together to help our students achieve this success?

Answer. Native and many other city-wide organizations are creating a framework for building a Cradle to Community infrastructure with STRIVE. The infrastructure includes a shared community vision, evidence-based decisionmaking, a collaborative action plan, and developing an investment and sustainability strategy as well.

It is imperative that we collaborate on a fundamental level, and look at each other as allies with whom we can work together to address and dispel the disparity that exists in educational achievement in our District.

Purpose: To determine the efficacy of efforts being made to improve the educational outcomes of Alaska Native and American Indian students, to problem-solve what challenges remain, and to explore the role of the Federal Government in helping to build on our successes.

Date: October 19, 2012

Time: 4:00–5:30 p.m.

Location: Dena'ina Center

I am pleased to be here today to discuss the urban education experience, and how school districts and Native organizations can become more synergistic partners in encouraging academic success for our students. My name is Doreen Brown, and I am the director for the Anchorage School District's (ASD) Indian Education Program, which is the largest title VII grantee in the Nation. Today in Anchorage there are over 8,700 Alaska Native/American Indian (AN/AI) students enrolled in the Districts' 110 schools. Our topic of discussion here today is critical, because in order to meet the cultural, social, and academic needs of these students, our Native organizations must work together.

There are four questions I wish to address today:

1. Why is there an increase of Native students in the ASD?

2. What are the challenges that face them?

3. What we are doing to assist students, families and staff as they work to encourage the success of our students?

4. How are our Native organizations working together to help our students achieve this success?

WHY IS THERE AN INCREASE OF NATIVE STUDENTS IN ASD?

There has been a significant increase of Native students in the ASD over the past 10 years, as determined by the number of completed 506 eligibility forms on file at our office, and also by self-reported ethnicity codes. The number of Indian Education eligible students with completed 506 forms in the 2005–6 school year stood at 5,758. Today that number is 7,737. Based on self-reported ethnicity codes, we have potentially another thousand students who may be eligible for our services.

There are numerous reasons for this increase, including population growth, increased transience and employment mobility, and continuing urbanization.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

Educational

One of the greatest challenges facing Alaska Native/American Indian people is a significant disparity in educational achievement. Below is a snapshot of the data from the Anchorage School District's 2010–11 Profile of Performance:

- Grades 4–10 Reading: Percentage of proficient students Alaska Native/American Indian (AN/AI) **53.18 percent**.
- Grades 4–10 Writing: Percentage of proficient students AN/AI **46.01 percent**.
- Grades 4–10 Mathematics: Percentage of proficient students AN/AI **43.56 percent**.
- Grades 4–10 Science: Percentage of proficient students AN/AI **40.31 percent**.
- Grades 7–12 Annual Dropout Rate of AN/AI students **8.47 percent**.
- 4-Year Cohort Graduation Rate of AN/AI students **50.88 percent**.

Social

Many rural students are enrolling in Anchorage schools that are larger than their home community. They and their families need assistance in acclimating to our school system. This assistance could include: school profile, physical tour of school, introduction and explanation of school personnel, school bus operation and schedules, school resources, input from family about student's educational history, and setting up social supports within the school and community.

Culture

Many AN/AI students in an urban environment such as Anchorage lack opportunities to connect with their heritage, language and culture that may be more readily available in rural settings. Research has identified several components of Cultural Based Education that are critical to improving Native student performance. In recent literature reviews of these studies, Demmert and Towner (2003) and Kana'iaupuni (2007) defined Cultural Based Education as having these critical elements:

1. Recognition and use of Native languages;
2. Pedagogy using traditional cultural characteristics and adult-child interactions;
3. Teaching strategies that align with traditional culture and ways of knowing and learning;
4. Curriculum based on traditional culture and Native spirituality;
5. Strong Native family and community participation in education and the planning and operation of school activities;
6. Knowledge and use of the community's political and social mores;
7. Meaningful and relevant learning through culturally grounded content and assessment; and
8. Use of data from various methods to insure student progress in culturally responsible ways.

WHAT WE ARE DOING TO ASSIST STUDENTS, FAMILIES AND STAFF?

Indian Education Program

The Anchorage School District's Indian Education Program is crucial to meeting the cultural and academic needs of Native students that schools do not otherwise address. Our program staff works hard to improve academic outcomes for Native students, while encompassing social-emotional learning, and building connections to heritage, culture and language. They also perform other critical tasks, such as researching the educational history of new-to-District students, addressing individual needs of the student, creating a plan of support, locating resources for the student and family, finding or assisting with Indigenous language translations (over 270 Yup'ik and 60 Inupiaq students enrolled in the ASD's English Language Learners Program in 2011), making personal connections, and conducting culturally responsive professional development at each school site. Funding is limited, therefore our resources are limited as well. In 2010–11, the Indian Education Program provided direct supplemental services to 3,378 AN/AI students.

Alaska Native Education Program (ANEP)

Alaska Native Education Program funds provide critical resources for the creative solutions needed to address the issues facing our Alaska Native and American Indian students. We currently have two successful projects through this funding source. The first, Project Puqigtut (Cup'ik word for "Smart People"), is a groundbreaking high school success program, launched in 2008 for 21st century Alaska Native and American Indian students. Students can earn core credits through culturally responsive online coursework, either to get ahead, or get back on track in

order to graduate. Project Puqigtut incorporates cultural role models and Native ways of knowing into a 21st century learning model. It can operate outside of the school day, so that it has the unique ability to meet students where they are—at school, at home, at a shelter—and prevents them from falling through the cracks. Project partners include Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Job Corps, King Career Center, the University of Alaska, Anchorage. Project “P” has brought over 300 high-risk students closer to graduation and has quite literally made it possible for them to complete high school.

Our second program funded by ANEP is Project Ki’l (Ki’l is Dena’ina Athabascan for “boy”). This highly innovative project was launched in 2007, and serves over 500 Alaska Native boys between the ages of 3 and 10 each year. Native boys are one of our highest risk and most vulnerable student groups, and among the most likely to experience academic failure and/or drop out. Project Ki’l reaches these boys and their families early in the boys’ development. It seeks to demonstrate that culturally responsive education results in higher academic outcomes, and brings in fathers and other male role models to foster high self-esteem and success. This model helps parents, educators, and community supporters such as Cook Inlet Head Start, the Alaska Native Heritage Center, University of Alaska, Anchorage, and Cook Inlet Tribal Council meet the unique and pressing needs of Native boys—all as partners in their education. Project Ki’l reaffirms the boys’ identity by celebrating, sharing, and embracing their heritage and traditions.

HOW ARE ORGANIZATIONS WORKING TOGETHER?

During the spring of 2010, the ASD was tasked with the difficult task of making budget cuts. One of the proposed cuts was to two positions that primarily served AN/AI high school students. One of the ASD school board members, Jeannie Mackie, performed several site visits to learn more about the services these two positions supported. In addition to learning about these services, she made connections between other agencies and ASD departments that also offered support to students and families. Mrs. Mackie found that there are many services for Native students and families from numerous organizations, she then requested that a study be conducted that reviewed and consolidated the services, the McDowell study was completed in February 2011. The STRIVE school board initiative was borne out of these connections.

STRIVE creates a framework for building what is called a Cradle to Community infrastructure. It is a way for the community to organize itself around a shared vision and identify the things that achieve results for children. STRIVE improves and augments these efforts over time, targeting the investment of the community’s resources in different directions to increase their impact.

It is imperative that we collaborate on a fundamental level, and look at each other as allies with whom we can work together to address and dispel the disparity that exists in educational achievement in our District.

REFERENCES

Demmert, W.G., Jr., & Towner, J.C. (2003). A review of the research literature on the influences of culturally-based education on the academic performance of Native American students [Final paper]. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Available at <http://educationnorthwest.org/resource/561>.

Abstract: One of the major tasks facing Native American communities (American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians) is to create lifelong learning opportunities that allow all the members to improve their quality of life, and to meet their tribal responsibilities through meaningful contributions to the local, national, and world communities in which they live and interact. The greatest educational challenge for many is to build learning environments that allow each of their young children to obtain an education that “creates good people that are knowledgeable and wise.” The formal reports cited in this review of the literature present the position that knowing, understanding, and appreciating one’s cultural base are necessary starting points for initiating a young child’s formal education. The theory is that it sets the stage for what occurs in a youngster’s later life. The task of this report is to review the research literature to determine whether there is a direct relationship between a culturally-based education curriculum and improved academic performance among Native-American students.

Kana’iaupuni, S.M. (2007). A brief overview of culture-based education and annotated bibliography (Culture-Based Education Brief Series). Honolulu: Kamehameha Schools, Research & Evaluation. Available at <http://www.ksbe.edu/spi/cbe.php>.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thanks, Doreen.
Carl.

**STATEMENT OF CARL ROSE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
ASSOCIATION OF ALASKA SCHOOL BOARDS, JUNEAU, AK**

Mr. ROSE. Thank you, Senator, for this opportunity to speak with you and be on the record. I would like to associate myself and maybe establish my credibility. I am not only the executive director of the School Board Association. I am also very interested in the American Indian and Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Act. I happen to be Hawaiian.

As a young boy, I was taught the term, when you have no more love in the soul of the Hawaiian, then there is no more Hawaii. Then there is no more Hawaii. So I want to report to you that many of the people in Hawaii—though there are very, very few pure Native Hawaiians, Hawaii is alive and well because of their language and their culture.

So with that, I think I want to proceed with some of my comments, if I may. I've been asked to preface some of the opportunities that are available to Alaska and its people that maybe many of you don't realize. So I will take a couple of minutes to say that in the Constitution of the State of Alaska, under Article VII, Health, Education, and Welfare, the legislature shall establish by general law and maintain a system of public education open to all children. That is profound.

The Alaska legislature has seen fit to delegate certain educational functions to local boards, in order that Alaska schools might adopt and reflect the varying conditions in various locales around the State. We're talking about local control here. The decisions over your schools are held largely locally. And I want to touch on something that Doreen said. The public, you, need to hold your school districts accountable. You need to hold your boards' feet to the flame.

Now, that sounds kind of strange for the executive director of the School Board Association. But, if nobody attends our meetings, nobody is monitoring public schools. You need to engage yourself.

School boards are created in the statute. This is their authority under AS 14.12.030 and also in the unorganized borough under AS 14.12.170. The Rural Education Attendance Areas, the REAAs, are part of the unorganized borough, and they are recognized as school districts. Therefore, their governing bodies are school boards as well.

So it doesn't matter where you're at in the State of Alaska, whether you're in organized Alaska or unorganized Alaska. Your borough assembly in unorganized Alaska may be the Alaska legislature. But your schools are governed by local school boards. And that's a real opportunity I think you should avail yourself of.

The authority of school boards over their budgets and district operations—school districts have broad discretion over procedures, procurement, and finance decisions. And in statutes, in courts, they quote that the court should exercise great caution before disturbing the districts' boards' authority. That doesn't mean you can't overturn them. But that means you should observe that they represent the people locally.

The duties of the school board is to determine and disburse a total amount of funds available for salaries, compensation for all school employees and school district operations, and provide an educational program during the school term every year. This should be of interest to you. In AS 14.14.100, bylaws and administrative rules, the school board policies related to management and control of the school district shall be expressed in written bylaws formally adopted by regular school board meetings.

Every year, school boards review their policies. And, in fact, at every meeting, you have an opportunity to speak on those policies. They have to be clearly stated in bylaws, and they're available to the public. The chief school administrator may be selected and employed and needs to be a qualified person and shall be compensated and controlled as well as all administrative officers. The Association of Alaska School Boards is also in statutes as a representative agency of school board members of the State of Alaska.

So what I'm trying to say is that the process for governing our schools is really quite clear. Through statutes, through regulations, through negotiated agreements, through budgetary decisions that are being made and also court decisions, this is the framework that is set for school districts. Aside from all that jargon, the thing that you need to know is that your elected officials are responsible and accountable to you. And so these are their responsibilities, but you need to hold them responsible.

One of the difficulties we have that faces the public is the active exercise of citizen ranks in a representative government. Too few citizens understand how schools are governed, how they're financed, how they're controlled, and how they're overseen. Let me repeat that. Too few of our citizens understand how we're governed, how we're financed, how we're controlled, and how we're governed. Some people in this room may be in that group.

The public in public education in many ways are absent from the representative form of government. I don't say that to be critical. I'm saying that many of us expect something to happen without us being part of the solution. So communities being actively engaged, intentionally engaged, in their civic responsibilities are key to the public success in public education. The public is key.

We can blame school boards. We can blame teachers. We can blame administrators. We can blame anybody we want. The fact of the matter is it's clear in statutes that the public has the ability to ensure that the process works, so the process is clear. And I think that that kind of leads me to some of the comments that I wanted to make, and I'm trying to preface my written testimony.

But, understanding the challenges that we face is a pretty important issue. When you talk about quality, performance, accountability, and fairness; quality, performance, accountability, and fairness—those are our challenges. Do we understand that? I don't know that we do. In many cases—not anybody in this room—but in many cases, we go straight to blame before we even start to understand what our responsibilities are and what the challenges are that we face.

At AASB, we have done some research to try to determine what have been the overriding factors that contribute to student success in terms of staying in school or leaving school. And we find that

there are some personal problems and some family pressures that really top the list, and they are—like you don't already know—drug and alcohol use, peer pressure, lack of family support, economic reasons, early parenthood, and mental health reasons, depression. Some of our kids suffer from depression, and many of them in our schools have to go it alone—followed by this negative experience with peers, teachers, and authority figures in schools, the lack of positive connections and support from teachers and staff in the belief that school will help them in their future careers. They lack that belief.

I think right there, where are the families? Where are the parents? Where are the people who care for our kids? Doreen asked you. We need help. We need help.

So, I would share with you there are some distinct differences that make good schools. And these are responses from some of the students that we surveyed and asked. These are from Native students, non-Native students. These are people who are engaged, not engaged. The list goes on. In terms of the things that they think are good with schools is that they feel connected with schools. And, of course, if they don't feel connected, they're not too keen on schools.

So when you take a look at the importance of feeling connected in schools, when you take a look at the kind of academic opportunities you have, extracurricular opportunities, good teaching structure, and teacher expectations, they view those items as critically important to them to want to stay in school. To the contrary, when we lack that expectation for our kids, maybe we get what we get. But we shouldn't.

The two major issues we're dealing with here today, not so much health, but education, I think, are critically important in our communities. So, when I talk about my association, I am governed by a 15-member board that's elected from the regions of the State. I have 333 school board members elected. They're created in statutes and they are empowered with what I just told you. They come from 53 school districts and they represent the interest of 129,000 kids.

And so what is it that they do when they come together as an association? Well, we have decided that as a result of what we're seeing in the field in over the last 11 years, we have engaged in a community engagement, the Initiative for Community Engagement, Alaska ICE. We think that if you engage parents, families, and communities in the intentional concern for your students and how you might be able to interact with the entities that exist, mainly school boards, your chances of success go way up in terms of impacting the system.

I will tell you that the reason we have this program or had this program was over the last 11 years, we have been recipients of dollars from the Alaska Native Equity Program. We did not get that money this year. And I will tell you what I told my board of directors. The day may come when we say that might have been the best thing that happened to us.

I understand why Native people want to have more control of Native moneys. That does not negate the fact that community engagement is critically important. So the school board association is going to take it upon themselves to sustain that effort through

whatever means necessary. We have some designs in terms of how we're going to do that.

The other concerns that we have are early childhood development at the community level and pre-kindergarten—critically important. We know that if our kids are better prepared to take advantage of an education, that is, a free education that they'll never receive again, their chances of success go way up. And if they're proficient in reading and writing and mathematics by the third grade, it is the leading indicator of success through the educational process, the leading indicator. If they're not prepared, that's where the performance gap starts, because the curriculum steepens and they fall farther and farther behind. If we know this, why are our systems not paying more attention to that?

Another thing that came up here shortly, and we are deeply involved in, is the whole issue of digital learning. We think it's a great equalizer. The kind of technology that's available to us today is critically important. The ability to give kids the opportunities that everybody else enjoys via digital instruction requires some investment to be made. Do we have enough bandwidth? No, not yet. Do we have enough professional development? No, not yet. Is it worth the investment to ensure that our kids get the best bite of the apple? Absolutely.

Senator, I think that's one area we may want to pay attention to rather than a competition for Federal funds such as Race to the Top dollars that we are not included in.

What I want to say is that, in conclusion, the challenges that we have regarding fairness and equity—I think everything that I've heard here today and comments that were made outside is that Native Alaskans feel that fairness and equity is not being provided like everywhere else. And I think the same is true in our State. I think many of our citizens feel like fairness and equity is not provided for us.

Now, I'm getting into the deep end of the pool here. But if you take a look at the census data and the reapportionment, if you look at the representation in our State, the rail belt is represented quite well. So you know what the alternative is. We've lost much representation across rural Alaska. And it's important that all of us recognize that and remind people that we have responsibility under our constitution.

So if I could share with you this idea of engaging people, when we talk about engaging and having citizens exercise their rights, communities and public and private entities getting engaged in schools, these are our children. And though many of us don't have kids in school anymore, we have grandkids in school. These are our children. These are our communities. It is our responsibility.

So I would share with you—join us in helping kids succeed Alaska style through the Initiative for Community Engagement. It's in your communities.

Senator, I've gone on quite long enough. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak and thank you for being here.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Rose follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CARL ROSE

SUMMARY

Educational opportunities and student proficiency in Alaska will improve if the “public” in public education were to engage in “Helping Kids Succeed Alaska Style.”

Understanding the challenges we face as we address issues of quality, performance, accountability and fairness are critical to ensuring the most appropriate solutions are applied. Although there are no “silver bullets,” we know the root causes and initiatives need to remedy the challenges facing us.

AASB researched reasons why students stay in school or leave early. We asked students directly—engaged and disengaged, Alaska Native and non-Native, rural and urban, and youth who had recently dropped out—about why they or their peers leave school. Across all groups, they listed personal problems and family pressures as the top reasons (drug or alcohol use, peer pressure, lack of family support, economic reasons, early parenthood and mental health reasons (depression)), followed by negative experiences with peers, teachers or other authority figures at school, lack of positive connections with or support from teachers and staff, and belief that school will not help them in their future careers).

But these groups also showed some distinct differences in their views on what makes a good school: disengaged students put higher importance on feeling connected to school and adults; Alaska Native and disengaged students more often listed academic and extracurricular opportunities, good pedagogy, structure, and teacher expectations as important.

Clearly, the two major issues this committee is examining today—health and education—are closely intertwined.

AASB believes that proven ways to improve student achievement in Alaska revolve around empowering parents, families and communities to take a greater interest in their children’s education. We are already seeing great dividends from AASB’s Initiative for Community Engagement (Alaska ICE), which has built working partnerships between school districts, non-profits, tribes, local communities and other agencies that advocate for children and families.

AASB also believes that Alaska must continue to improve early childhood development through community-based family engagement programs and pre-kindergarten to prepare our youngest citizens to be ready for school.

A greater investment in digital learning will also level the educational playing field between urban and rural communities. Alaska needs additional bandwidth, curriculum and professional development to take advantage of advances in digital learning. This investment would produce more dividends than a competition for Federal education funds.

Chairman Harkin, Senator Murkowski, members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify on an issue of critical importance to my State and Nation.

Alaska differs from any other State in many ways, but we share some notable similarities with rural America when it comes to education. Because of changes in our census data and reapportionment, there has been a realignment of representation that has left rural Alaska in a secondary position when it comes to education.

When Alaska became a state in 1959, we inherited a system of schools operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in rural Alaska. Following a difficult transition to State Operated Schools and the Molly Hootch consent decree, Alaska made a commitment to fund and operate high schools in small rural communities so that students could stay at home and families remain united. And so the Rural Education Attendance Areas were born in 1976.

Alaska invested in the REAAs by building schools and establishing elected regional school boards to make important decisions about curriculum and staff. For some of our smallest communities, the local school board was the first form of local government they had. Naturally, there have been challenges with such a new and Western concept of local control of education.

The Association of Alaska School Boards is a small 501(c)3 non-profit organization. AASB represents 333 elected school board members, 53 school districts and the interests of 129,000 public school students. We meet annually to resolve ourselves behind core belief statements and resolutions. AASB is governed by a 15-member board elected from the judicial districts of the State. We are organized under a long-range strategic plan that identifies clear goals, objectives and strategies that guide our efforts. AASB is assisting school boards to create the vision and structure for successful K–12 schools. Our Board Standards, our Policy Service, and our Quality Schools initiative are used by nearly all school districts in Alaska. AASB’s board of

directors made the decision years ago to spend less time fighting labor issues and instead focus proactively on being an advocate for Alaska's youth and on success for all of Alaska's students.

As a result, since passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, AASB has been instrumental in implementing a key provision of that law, title VII's Alaska Native Education Program. A small but critical portion of annual funding provided by title VII has helped AASB empower families, communities and parents to take a greater role in their children's education. For the last 11 years, AASB, through our Initiative for Community Engagement (Alaska ICE), has built working partnerships with school districts, non-profit organizations, tribes, faith communities and other groups with an interest in kids to change the environments surrounding youth and increase their chances for success in school and the workplace. Alaska ICE is highly successful, and we have data to prove it.

As you know, America's schools do not exist in isolation. Neither do schools in Alaska. What happens in our homes and on our streets inevitably affects the child as he or she arrives at school each morning.

One of the challenges is the lack of basic infrastructure in some of our most remote communities. Transportation is expensive. Groceries, utilities, heating all cost more, sometimes double. Communication with the outside world is improving, but stubbornly spotty as bandwidth continues to be a barrier. These may be the facts of life in rural America. But it is neither fair nor equitable that the water and sewer systems we take for granted in America are still absent in too many rural Alaska homes. If these conditions existed in our Railbelt communities, they wouldn't be tolerated.

As you may know, the Alaska constitution requires our legislature to establish and maintain an education system for all children. And we have some excellent schools serving rural students. Students graduate and go on to attend Dartmouth, Harvard, and Stanford.

But too many students struggle.

Today, the statewide graduation rate for Alaska high schools stands at just over 70 percent. The Department of Education & Early Development calculates that the graduation rate for Alaska Native students is just over 58 percent.

Why is that? AASB decided to ask students themselves.

Each year, we work with participating school districts to measure the climate of our schools and the degree to which students and staff feel connected. Climate and connectedness are directly correlated with student engagement and achievement (higher school-wide proficiency rates in reading, writing and math and higher graduation rates), and also with fewer student risk behaviors (drugs, alcohol and violence). In the last school year we surveyed more than 31,000 students and 6,700 staff in 28 school districts across Alaska. This is the School Climate and Connectedness Survey, another innovative service that AASB staff has pioneered in Alaska.

AASB also recently undertook a research project to delve into what matters to students and especially to understand what drives students to stay in school or leave early. With the help of four school districts, we interviewed a broad spectrum of students at 26 schools about why they and their peers stay in school or drop out. Students—engaged and disengaged, Alaska Native and non-Native, rural and urban, middle and high school, and some young people who had already dropped out—had quite similar opinions about why they and their peers leave school; across all groups, they listed personal problems and family pressures as the top reasons. Their answers (by frequency of response) were:

1. Drug or alcohol use;
2. Choosing to spend time with peers or a boyfriend or girlfriend who dropped out;
3. Lack of family support for education;
4. Needing to help support their family (from a financial or practical perspective);
5. Early parenthood;
6. Laziness or not wanting to get up in the morning;
7. Depression;
8. Negative experiences with peers at school (bullying, being picked on, being isolated);
9. Negative experiences with teachers or other authority figures at school;
10. Lack of positive connections with or support from teachers and other staff; and
11. Belief that school will not help them in their future careers, so it would be better to drop out and start earning money.

But these groups also showed some distinct differences in their views on what makes a good school where students want to be:

- Feeling connected to school and adults is viewed as significantly more important by disengaged students than engaged students.

- Alaska Native and disengaged students more often listed academic opportunities, rigor, good pedagogy, structure, academic and extracurricular options and teacher expectations as important.

- And while it appears that schools are not “pushing” students out as much as students are being “pulled” out by personal and family pressures, it may be that adults at school can especially help disengaged students resist that pull by reaching out and teaching well.

Those answers from young Alaskans lead me to the conclusion that we cannot separate family and community issues from school-related problems for students who leave high school early. The two major issues this committee is examining today—health and education—are closely intertwined.

Regardless, we know what the solutions are, and they don’t necessarily originate in Washington, DC. Our experience with NCLB has taught us many lessons, not all positive. Despite its good intentions, NCLB never adequately addressed how we should improve curriculum, instruction, professional development and assessments. Schools were forced to put everything on hold to teach the basics and then measure progress. In the end, the only job left for us to do under NCLB was to deal with the sanctions the law imposes on even our best schools.

Now the latest solution from the Federal level asks schools to join in a Race to the Top.

Instead of a competition for education dollars, I would advocate that the Federal Government provide a level playing field. We know a relatively small investment can pay huge dividends when it helps empower families, parents and communities to take more interest in their kids’ education. As citizens we need to take more responsibility on ourselves to make sure our schools and communities serve the needs of our children.

One significant investment that would provide educational opportunity for more students is digital learning. This can be the great equalizer for rural and urban Americans. Not every family can afford the Encyclopedia Britannica, but today that 100 pounds of knowledge is available on a computer near you.

Does rural Alaska have enough bandwidth to enter the age of digital learning? Not yet. Are America’s teachers getting the professional development they need to make digital learning successful? Not yet. Are our students worth the investment to bring the world and all it has to offer to them digitally? You bet. Perhaps Congress can lend a hand to Alaska and other States.

AASB members also believe that Alaska must continue to improve early childhood development through community-based programs and pre-kindergarten to prepare our youngest citizens to be ready for school. We know that children who are proficient in the basics by the third grade are much more likely to be successful in school and in the workforce upon graduation.

In conclusion, the challenges to provide equity and fairness are immense but not insurmountable. AASB and its elected membership accept this challenge and encourage all of our citizens, communities, public and private entities to assist us in “Helping Kids Succeed Alaska Style.”

Mr. Chairman, once again, thank you for allowing me to testify today.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Carl. Appreciate it.

And let’s hear Sonta.

STATEMENT OF SONTA HAMILTON ROACH, TEACHER, INNOKO RIVER SCHOOL, SHAGELUK, AK

Ms. ROACH. Thank you so much for having me, Senator Murkowski. I am very honored to be serving on this panel today. As you can see, my title right now is teacher in Shageluk. I just took off my hat as the director of Future Educators of Alaska, and I think that also is why I’m here to talk about growing our own educators.

I really heard today that the main topic, which we should focus on is ownership of education and what that means, and that’s one of the things I’m going to talk about in my testimony. But I want to say that that’s really kind of the foundation of what I’m going to be talking about, and also the importance of having education brought to AFN.

We had a real education caucus 2 years ago, and it was held in Fairbanks. And it does need to be pushed to the forefront of AFN and our corporations. Education is something that is the future for our corporations and our communities. So I thank you for bringing this conversation here today.

Through my experience as a local teacher from my own community—I am in Shageluk right now teaching—and, like I said, formerly the director of FEA, Future Educators of Alaska—being the director is one thing, but then actually being in the classroom, seeing it, being with the students—that’s entirely another thing. And it has really opened my eyes to the need to grow our own educators, and not just teachers, but also administrators, superintendents, more paraprofessionals, and more funding and support to develop pathways for students to go through, finish in a timely manner, and be back in their communities and in their schools.

I’m focusing on three things. One is the need, of course, for more Alaska-grown educators. The second is ownership of education, and it’s just another kind of spin on what we’re talking about, culturally relevant curriculum, engagement, community engagement. Ownership, I think, means a little more. It’s just the word I’ve been putting on it. It’s community members being empowered, contributing to the process. The last one is the career pathways and workforce development.

As a student in rural schools, you often see teachers coming and going year after year. This is a big topic that we’ve all heard, just the high turnover rates, and teachers still leave mid-year. We need to get teachers that are in the community, staying. We’ve done some successful things in terms of the courses that they have to take for teachers that aren’t from Alaska, the culturally relevant course. And that has helped tremendously. I think there needs to be more of an effort, though, for supporting the programs that would support teachers, growing our own educators.

Education needs to be seen as a career pathway. And I think the Future Educators of Alaska did a really good job of that. We had 600 students across 29 school districts in Alaska, and one of our big successes—and it’s still kind of in the process of being ironed out right now—is at each of the MAUs, the UAF, UAS, and UAA, we’re looking at an Ed 100 level course that’s geared toward—I shouldn’t say geared toward—both juniors and seniors in high school and freshmen in college can take this Ed 100 level course that’s accepted at each of the campuses.

And that’s still in the works. I think it’s important to say that that’s a huge success for our students in our districts across Alaska that have that opportunity when we talk about access to colleges, to education. That’s been tremendous, I think, for us—and just to continue to support that.

Bringing it back to me, personally, as a student in Shageluk, one of the things that I knew—if I could go back to Shageluk, I either had to get a job in the tribe or an education. And I really worked hard with both my degrees, rural development and elementary education, because I knew I wanted to get back there. And I think that’s important when we’re talking about career pathways. What are those pathways for our students? Where do they see themselves, and how can we help them achieve those goals?

Ownership of education means local level control. This is—and I know we just briefly talked about this—not our definition of having, local school boards, but instead it’s community planning as it relates to what our children, the whole child, should know while going to school. It relates to our culture, those skills that they need, their traditions. And the planning and implementation process will directly affect their test scores.

Students desire to live and learn in their own communities. And I think, along the same page of what other people are saying, those conversations need to happen locally, regionally, statewide. They need to be facilitated in a manner that’s proactive and progressive, whether it’s getting more elders into the school, the tribe into the school, and at the regional level, corporations, and the nonprofits helping develop some of those career pathways for students. I see that really being a benefit to communities and to schools, and for that ownership, of feeling like we know what our children want to be.

We’ve thought about career opportunities in the community for them. Those career pathways need to be made. We talk about high dropout rates and other issues that happen when they get to high school. You know, maybe it is because they don’t see themselves going to college anymore.

I teach K through second grade now, and one of my second graders wants to be a policeman, and I said, “Yeah, that’s great.” And we talked about college and what that means. But we talked about, can you be a police officer in Shageluk? And even at second grade, they can understand that. I think that speaks volumes. Career pathways—and I keep mentioning it. We need to ask ourselves: Where do students really see themselves after high school?

And, finally, I want to stress the importance of student count. I know I’m kind of switching gears here, but I want to wrap it up. Shageluk, as well as a couple of other communities in our school districts, are on the verge of the magic No. 10. You know, school closure. If you get under 10, your school is going to be closed. And we’ve really gone through—or made some strategies in terms of getting people to come back.

I think it’s really important to think about formula funding. We have a lot of students at the high school level that go to regional boarding schools. I went to a regional boarding school. I don’t have any negative things to say, other than a lot of our students go, come back during Christmas, and that funding stays with that school. So I think it’s a big concern, especially for our small schools that are facing funding issues.

And, again, I appreciate the opportunity to talk today. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Roach follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SONTA HAMILTON ROACH

Through my experience as a local teacher from my own community, and over the years as director of Future Educators of Alaska, I have focused my attention on three things: increasing the number of Alaska Native/local teachers and administrators in Alaska schools; “ownership” of education and empowering communities through education; and the need for career pathways and workforce development.

As a student in a rural school, you often see teachers coming and going year after year. Often, and many Alaskan students have experienced this, teachers will leave mid-school year. The reasons we are all familiar with: culture shock, lack of accom-

modations, difference in communication, and distance from family and cities. With less than 5 percent of the teaching workforce being Alaska Native, and over 90 percent of students in rural schools being Alaska Native, there is a strong need for more Alaska Native teachers, para professionals, principals, superintendents. Funding needs to be aimed at this goal. Education needs to be seen as a career pathway. When I was a student, I viewed either teaching or tribal work as my career goals because that way I could live and work in my community.

“Ownership” of education means local level control. This is not, as our definition stands, having a board for school districts. It is not local school boards. Instead, it is community planning as it relates to what their children—the whole child—should know while going to school. It relates to their culture, their local skills, their traditions. I believe that this planning and implementation process will directly affect, in a positive manner, student test scores, students’ desires to live and learn in their own communities, and community revitalization as a whole. Our communities are in need of this—many of our schools are facing school closure, and the school and education can play a role in making positive change.

Career pathways should be a strong focus for our rural Alaska schools. We need to ask ourselves—Where do students REALLY see themselves after high school? When they’re in elementary school, perhaps they say *dentist* or *police officer*, but when they reach high school, is this dream still possible? Do they want to work at the city or tribal offices? What are the career pathways? Who is talking to them? I don’t see this being a focus, and I believe it should be. Realistically, students need to know what jobs are available in the cities and what’s available in the villages. They need access to resources, scholarships, jobs, programs—we need access and communication of resources.

FINALLY—I want to stress the importance of student count and the impact it has on communities. I didn’t preface this earlier, but I think it’s everything we need to focus on. We need to look at the student count and formula funding. What are the benefits of waiting until October to do the student count? We get MOST all of our students back from boarding schools after Christmas. Funding should follow the student wherever they are.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Thank you, Sonta.

Thank you to each of you. There’s been a lot of—if not the same words used, certainly the same suggestions and ideas, whether we refer to it by way of engagement or ownership or community planning. So much of it seems—at least this conversation up here seems to be focusing on how we really do work collaboratively in an effort to make these connections with the kids.

I want to ask a couple of questions. I had specifically asked each of you to be kind of prepared to speak to what barriers in Federal law, regulation, or policy need to be changed in order to help better facilitate our students’ successes. And then, more broadly, how can Native organizations and our schools and our tribal governments, our communities, the parents, the students, everybody that is involved, all stakeholders, really be working together to, again, improve our students’ success?

But I want to ask a couple of specific questions, and it stems from your comments, Peggy, on the curriculum that has been developed there in the North Slope Borough and your framework, your Inupiaq Framework. And everybody, I think, has mentioned the need to have culturally relevant curriculum. It allows you to make that connection to school, whether you’re in Barrow or whether you are in Anchorage.

How big of a challenge is it to implement culturally relevant curriculum? And maybe this takes us back to some of the Federal laws and regulations and policies. It sounds easy enough. You can just go ahead and put together a nice chart. Is it really that easy? How difficult is it, given what we’re up against with some of the Federal initiatives and policies that we’re dealing with?

I'll start with you. But anybody else can jump in. This is supposed to be a dialogue. This is not me posing individual questions. So go ahead and start us off.

Ms. COWAN. It's hugely difficult. But, I mean, we're on year 3 of a 5-year plan, and we're not going to be done at the end of that, and it's taking a lot of resources. But there's a lot of levels of difficulty. Sonta's emphasis on local teachers and local people in our schools and career paths—and those are critical. And your emphasis on collaboration and community people, community folks in our schools—because we are largely a community of teachers from largely the lower 48 and largely not Native, even those from Alaska. So that's a huge thing which, again, Sonta's program and others do.

But then the emphasis—that's why I made the big push and echoed some of your words on the mission-driven curriculum, because at the same time that we need to be accountable to adequate progress and tests that don't necessarily measure what our students know and don't emphasize authentic learning and could have a cultural bias—so we're juggling those at the same time we're trying to get to significance. And so it's a matter of—and not having materials, because our textbooks and everything are from the lower 49.

So not only do you have to have local people with a deep understanding and ability to articulate the cultural knowledge and help the teachers in those things. You also have to have a really rigorous understanding of content area, because the reason you teach from a textbook is that if you can't look out the window and see the math or see the science or see the concepts in the world around you, because it's a foreign world to you, and you don't have really great depth of understanding of the knowledge, then you rely on the textbook.

I'm in North Slope now, but years ago I was down in the Lower Kuskokwim area. And I mention it because I was trying to help a teacher. His textbook said that the largest wetlands in the United States were in Louisiana. And I was sitting in the Lower Kuskokwim area, in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. But the teacher I was working with didn't know that the textbook was wrong.

But back to the Federal Government. The emphasis on NCLB and all your efforts are really focused on making it more flexible, making it more responsive, making it so it's not one-size-fits-all for Alaska in terms of the remedies, are critical. And so it's a huge challenge, and that's one of the reasons it hasn't been done in all these years. And teacher retention is another issue. If you don't have people that live there and understand and can work on it and build it, then that's—so all of those things lead into it.

And then not directly related, but since you sort of opened the ground to me, another thing I would refer to is the bilingual laws and the current definitions. If they would include heritage language as an asset rather than a deficit—because the current labeling is hurtful, not necessarily helpful. So I'll put that in there just in our work to talk about.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Rosita, if you want to, jump in on how difficult it is to build a culturally relevant curriculum.

Dr. WORL. Well, first of all, I have to say I have great appreciation for developing curriculum. I came from the university system, where professors develop lectures. And so that's what I thought I would have to do when I came to the Sealaska Heritage Institute and do curriculum. I had no idea about the complexity of doing curriculum. But I will say that with the adequate funding, we were able to do that.

And I don't know that it's that difficult. I mean, it is complex and I certainly had to hire educators to come in and help me. But we had to have our Native people there as well. And I'm an anthropologist by training, so much of the work that we were doing centered around cultures that I hadn't studied. But I will tell you that even if you have your educators, in trying to meet all the different standards, you have to have the knowledgeable Native person there who is reading that and making sure that all of the nuances, that Native culture, is represented.

We have developed curriculum that we use extensively in our schools. I can appreciate that teachers are always so busy, and I understand now that you have to have almost everything all there for them because they are so busy. They have so many requirements. And what I found out that was best was we developed a curriculum, but we also developed supplemental material that could be made available to feed in as they were doing curriculum. So it was a two-step process for us.

But then we also had to go and try to grab the teachers and have professional development so that they could use that curriculum material. So we count that as part of a major project. We not only have to do the curriculum development and the supplemental material, but we hold professional development for the teachers so that they can use it.

The other thing that we have done is everything that we have produced—and I would invite school districts from around the State to look online. Everything that we have done, we have put online. And I will tell you that we get calls from all across the State wanting to use our curriculum. It's there for people to use.

But it really is a matter of do we have the funds to do that. And when we first started to get involved, we saw the Alaska Native Education Program Act or ANEP, and we put in for grants. We were very frustrated when we wouldn't get grants. And I think we have a good team of grant writers. But what we found when we really started to do the analysis is that there was this inequity in the allocation of funds.

I think we've sent to you some material that shows that up until last year, we were receiving 15 percent going to Alaska Native organizations. This year, we're up to 30 percent. And I'm sorry, Carl, if you lost yours, but I'm glad it's going to lead to systemic change and you're going to do that. But Native people have to be involved in that. And I think if we become good partners—and it's been a two-way learning process for us.

I will tell you that I am chagrined sometimes when I see somebody going to Native organizations. I know they're well-meaning, but I will tell you they do not know—if they're Anchorage-based and they're going to be working in our villages, I have great concerns about that. And I try to monitor it to make sure that there's

not harm coming to our children because they don't know the communities, they don't know the families.

We can call immediately to a community and find out, what are the issues there and where are the problems. And, I'm sorry, we do have families that are not functional, and we certainly don't want to have any of our children put into that. So I just can't stress enough that I think we have to be at the table in trying to work on curriculum, trying to help out with the education of our children.

We started a language program about 12 years ago. I worked to help the Alaska Native Language Center get established. And in the 30-some years that it was established, we had two Tlingit people who came out of their programs, and neither of them were working in our language restoration.

So going in, I said, "OK. What do we do to do language restoration?" And I will say, Carl, we went to Hawaii and learned the model there. But then we found that we had to take it to a different level because we didn't have the teachers and we didn't have the curriculum. So we had to start focusing on that. But maybe we didn't know—I'm not a linguist, and I hadn't been involved at the Alaska Native Language Center. But I knew that model wasn't working for us.

So we've had to develop our own models, and sometimes it's been hit or miss. We have a summer program and actually wanted to start off with just focusing on Native males. But it was like the same problem. We couldn't get the Native males to come to those programs.

Now, we've slowly built up the equity, so we have gender equity. We always get in trouble at Sealaska because we hire mostly women, and I always say we hire the best. But we know we need to be concerned about Native male education. And so right now, we're looking at ways that we could do that. I was hoping we had the AFN implementation funds, but, unfortunately, I just couldn't get any of the funds extricated to focus on Native men.

And this is why I think it's so important to go back to the culture. We went and we asked our men, "How did you train the young men? Why aren't our Native men doing well today?" And in my naiveté as a Tlingit and as an anthropologist, I thought it was physical strength that our men were trained in, just physical strength. So we have a council of traditional scholars that oversees our curriculum development. All of our program—we have to let our council of traditional scholars look at that. And they are traditional leaders. They're clan leaders.

And I found what I was missing was strength of—it's not only body, but mind and spirit. And they taught us some things that—sometimes I didn't know if I liked it because in the traditional training, when some men weren't doing so well, they would say, "There goes a man who was raised in the arms of his mother." And the discipline was strong, hard training. They used to put rocks on their ears, like earrings, to remind them they had to care for their family.

So we've tried to figure out how do we take that kind of traditional training and integrate it into the school. We want academic success. But we know if we're going to have academic success, then

it has to be relevant to our kids. Right now, we participate in the university listening session, and we found our kids aren't doing well in math. I kind of knew that, but when I heard we're not getting our Native students into nursing, we're not getting them into engineering, we're not getting them into finance—because of math. They weren't doing well in math.

And I know our teachers—we have a good teacher training program, Preparing Indigenous Teachers for Alaska Schools (PITAS), in southeast Alaska. But our students were taking 3 years just to get through that Math 106 or something like that. They could not pass that. So this year, we're developing a curriculum on culture-based math. And we've got people who are expert in that area. We're going to be teaching math around basketry, around construction of canoes.

So it can be done, but, unfortunately, it does require those resources. And the major barrier that we see that we need to address and that I'm hopeful—I know your office has tried to be helpful on it, and I think the law is there. But I think it's the implementation in the Department of Education. And I know Karen has tried to work with us in trying to pursue that to make sure that we have more equity there. But I think we need to take a closer look at it.

Senator MURKOWSKI. And we want to do exactly that with you, and I think we all recognize that we're dealing with tough budgets. And as pies shrink, there's typically more competition for that pie. At the end of the day, I think what we need to keep in mind is that ICE may lose the grant, but knowing that we're working together to pick up that work and ensure that the good things that were going on are continuing in terms of the level of engagement—how we best meet the needs of our Alaska Native students that are out there.

I've had a chance to be in the school there in Juneau at Harborview. Selina is my namesake, if you will. But to have an elder working with the kids, teaching them song, teaching them dance, is what I think we would like to see everywhere. You can kind of understand how you can do it in a place like Barrow. And even though you've got such a huge school district, you're not this big melting pot that Doreen is dealing with, to have 8,000 Native students from all over the State.

How we can provide for that culturally relevant curriculum when there's this mindset that I'm dealing with in Washington, DC—a Native is a Native, just like a Hispanic is a Hispanic. You tell that to a Cuban-American, that he's the same as a Mexican-American, and they look at you and tell you you're crazy.

Well, the same holds true with our Native population. And yet there's no real acknowledgement—Iñupiat and Athabascan or Tlingit—it's a good thing everybody is still sitting together here. You know, there was a time when the relationships were not all that good. But it speaks to the differences and how we do right by our kids when we're talking about culturally relevant, how we make these connections.

I'd like everybody to pivot just a little bit to the technology side—because one of you mentioned that this can be the equalizer out there—and how you can take concepts as basic and as historical and age-old as going out and hunting for a whale and using tech-

nologies that we have at our disposal to make this meaningful for these kids. Now, there's a great barrier for us here in Alaska. And I'd like you all to talk about where we really are.

I've been in schools in the State where they take me into the computer room and they show off their computers, but not one of them is plugged in because they don't have the broadband capacity and things just don't work. So the kids have the machines sitting there but nothing else. Talk to me a little bit about where we are with technology.

Chris and then Doreen.

Mr. SIMON. Thank you for the question, Senator. All I can tell you is a story about when I was the principal in my hometown of Huslia. We had a bunch of seniors there, and I met with every one of them at the beginning of the year, because my goal was that every senior leaving Jimmy Huntington School in Huslia was going to be doing something after high school. Whether it was postsecondary training, the military, college, or a job, they were going to be doing something. I wanted to set that bar for them.

And so I met with every one of them, and they told me what their goals were. Then I turned around and sent them to Fairbanks for the Career and College Day. That's what it was called. They came back with brochures, and I sat down with them again, and we talked over their plans. There was an itinerant counselor because their school is so small. I sat down with—I think it was a lady at the time—and told her the goals of our students and that we needed to start the paperwork process now.

She was itinerant so we were going to do it by video conference. We tried that, and because it was always going down or there was all this freezing, it didn't turn out very well. I'm happy to say five of the six seniors did go out and do something after that year. But just the whole idea of broadband—we're lacking there.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Doreen.

Ms. BROWN. We really are diverse in Anchorage, and we have people from all over the world and, specifically, from all over the State that are indigenous, so it is difficult. Not only that, but we also have between 96 to 110 different languages spoken at one time in the Anchorage School District. It's the second most diverse city. Honolulu is actually No. 1.

So with technology, we're always looking for ways to incorporate that. And I'll just share one particular story. This is when iPods were really big. I think we have to now move to iPads. But we had carts of iPods. And what we did was we took free resources off the Internet. We did different dances from across the State. And we incorporated this in our summer program, sort of piloted it in our summer program, and then pushed it out to the music teachers and they loved it, because we can't get every dance group from all over the State.

And it was so powerful to see the kids just sitting there, each individually with an iPod, to be able to see the different dances and to do like a Venn diagram with the differences and the similarities and the history of that. So that's just one way that we've utilized technology. We use it all the time, even for AFN. We have Google Docs. We have it on our blog. We shared information—we did a presentation on what is a resolutionist.

We did a lot of prep work with our students and also shared that with AFN or first Alaskans so we could build a data bank of—like a scavenger hunt that we did for an elders youth conference. But we're always looking at things, and, really, we're just a bunch of borrowers, so I'm writing notes down as people are talking.

Senator MURKOWSKI. It's called collaboration.

Ms. BROWN. Well, I am a true educator, so we really are borrowers. So I look forward to hearing what other folks have to say. Thank you.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Sonta and then Carl.

Ms. ROACH. I'll be brief. I have nothing but good things to say about the technology in the schools and the video technology conferencing, VTC, as we say. But it's really helped bridge a huge gap, I think, in access to education, especially when we're having issues with getting highly qualified teachers teaching some of those core content courses like math, especially in a school district like ours that has three very, very small schools. And maybe others can talk about other school districts.

In my former job with FEA, I had the privilege to go to a couple of school districts, Lower Kuskokwim School District and North Slope Borough School District, and to go into a classroom and see students taking a class, and it was rich. It was curriculum rich. I mean, it was good content and instruction. And I think that it really does help bridge that gap.

And then the language program that's available on the Internet in North Slope Borough School District is amazing. And I've seen a couple of the students actually—you can click on a dialect, so it's more local-based, I think. And I just think that's amazing to see that now.

Ms. COWAN. Let me pick up on that, if you would.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Go ahead.

Ms. COWAN. The VIVA program is wonderful, and we do it in the different dialects, so our technology is significant. But I remember 10 years ago—I think it was then Secretary Paige, when NCLB was first passed—so back to your Federal Government—came up here. And the question was, "What are we going to do about small sites?" And the answer was distance delivery.

And we are still trying to meet that vision, and broadband and latency are huge issues in our area and other areas of rural Alaska, which really prevent us from—I mean, VIVA is wonderful, but we base it on our own computers so we don't have to get into the net. And the more robust—which is what's happening—the media becomes, the more crippling our technological limitations become.

We just got a new VTC system. We're thrilled about it. But the curriculum program I told you about uses Adobe—I mean, Rubicon Atlas to create the units, and we can't have the video conferencing at the same time that the teachers are on their computers on the Internet, because one will shut down the other. So the idea was they were all supposed to be on—connecting together and then being on the computers. And we have only one or the other. We've got to turn one or the other off. So the broadband and latency are still crippling and become more so the more robust the technology becomes.

Senator MURKOWSKI. I see what you're saying.

Carl.

Mr. ROSE. Thank you, Senator. I'll try to make my comments brief. I heard a wise man say one time you're never trapped unless you're trapped in your own mind. And I think many times we see barriers and we consider that to be the end of the road. The fact of the matter is that broadband is an issue for everyone.

But did any of you know that there are 32 school districts that are currently involved in digital learning and 12,640 units are out there. We were dependent heavily on broadband, but we were able to use satellite, nano-links, and microwaves to take advantage of technology as it was in 2006.

How many of you knew that the iPhone came on in 2007 and the iPad came on in 2010? The changes in technology have allowed us to reduce our dependency on bandwidth, not that it's not important. But we can contain instruction in the classroom through the use of iPads by networking through a computer for the teacher that we can either store, No. 1, within the equipment that we have; No. 2, within the servers that we have; or, No. 3, on Google Docs.

The world is really wide open to us. If we wait for bandwidth, we do ourselves a disservice. We should struggle because, as you heard from your mother, if you didn't struggle for it, it's not worth very much in terms of being meaningful to you. We should do whatever we can to give our kids what we can in terms of digital technology. It's available to us. Do we have everything we need? Not yet. But if you were to look to any other area in education for our kids, you are not going to find another opportunity greater than digital technology.

Let me give you an example. Is Melissa Borton in the room? She is a school board member from Kodiak. She's the executive director of the Alutiiq Native Corporation. She's carrying around an iPad right now where they have the Alutiiq talking book. We worked with the Alutiiq region and developed a talking book in the Alutiiq language. It's on an app, and she's carrying it around right now. And there are other areas of language that we want to be able to do.

Now, just think about this. If we were to work with the Alaska Native Cultural Center and all the documents that they have, put it in context, and place them on iTunes U, which is a repository for content, that could be available to everyone. I'm not going to go any farther, because there's so many opportunities that are available that we need to avail ourselves of.

But if you're thinking that bandwidth is the problem and we can't go any further, you're badly mistaken. There is a lot that we can do. We should do everything that we can. I'm sorry for taking all your time.

Senator MURKOWSKI. No, it's a good reminder to us, because I think we do kind of lock ourselves into the technology that we have right now, today. But how quick did it take us to get to the iPhone 5? I don't have one. But just think about how the generations move so quickly, but it all takes money, just about money. And, unfortunately, that's one of the challenges that we face—making sure that our kids have access.

I was out at the Kalskag school with the principal of the year there and walked into a middle school classroom, and all the kids

are working on their iPads. And as he reminded me, if we are not communicating with our kids in the way that they're talking, through their Smart Phones, we're going to be the ones behind. It's no wonder that they're not going to be following what's going on at the front of the room if we're not catching up with them. So technology is something that I think we always key in on.

I want to ask a question about—Rosita? Go ahead.

Dr. WORL. May I comment on technology?

Senator MURKOWSKI. Absolutely.

Dr. WORL. Thank you. Well, I'm an advocate of it. I totally support it. We are hoping to include that in our Walter Sobeloff Center. I actually have a staff person today down in San Jose meeting with Google folks to talk about—they want to know what it is that we need in terms of technology. But the point I want to stress is we also need to make sure that we have Native people involved in it.

I have two examples. Someone was trying to use one of our recordings to teach language and oratory and about our culture. But, unfortunately, what they did was they tried to repeat this. It was a recorded piece of oratory from Hoonah. But what happened was that they ended up calling up the spirits. And so we ended up having to rush into that classroom to try to restore the balance, the spiritual balance and the social balance. The teacher was well-meaning but just didn't know enough about the culture to be able to protect our cultural values.

Our clan stories are owned by clans. And we wanted to be able to use it in a performance at Perseverance Theatre, and we brought it to the Council of Traditional Scholars. At first, they were just adamantly opposed—no, you can't do that. And we argued that the younger people need to have this. So we ended up arguing with the elders about how we were going to use it. In the end, the elders said yes, the council said yes, but you have to have all of these protections around it, that it is clan-owned.

So then we brought it to Perseverance Theatre. And the script writer, the playwright, wanted to have the copyright, and we said, "No, you can't have the copyright." So we ended up going through a process where we negotiated out, to protect the script writer, the playwright's rights and our clan rights. So these are the kinds of things that have to be mediated as we move into these kinds of things.

Senator MURKOWSKI. That's kind of a segue into the last question I wanted to throw out to you. I think we recognize that we can have great curriculum, we can have great technology, but, ultimately, it comes down to great teachers and teachers who know and understand that this is culturally appropriate or, to use Peggy's example, knowing that Louisiana doesn't have the most wetlands in the Nation.

What role do you think, whether it's the districts, whether it's the communities, whether it's the parents—we haven't really talked about the parent piece, which is so key. But we can bring good energetic teachers in, particularly out in remote villages. We have a tough time retaining them. We have a tough time keeping them.

To what extent does a school or a school district need to have a—I don't know if I want to call it a planned process, but just some kind of a process where you have elders that sit and visit with them, talk with them, those that are raised within the community, to not only make them feel welcome—that's one thing—but to really kind of act as a mentor to these new teachers. They're coming in, and they've got the academic credentials, but that's not what it's all about necessarily.

Sonta, with your experience with Alaska Future Educators—I don't know. Maybe this is something that is already done. But I worry about the support that we give to our educators who want to try to do the right thing but perhaps just step in it inadvertently because they don't know. How can we do a better job working with them?

Ms. ROACH. This is something that I think a lot of our schools face and something that definitely Future Educators—the main goal of it was to grow more educators of our own because of the high turnover rates and because of those teachers leaving because of culture shock or because the amenities aren't what they're used to in the communities. And I think as much prep that the school district can do, that the community can do, the better.

I know that some districts have things in place that help that process by having maybe their school board members helping with the process of selecting teachers or the now requirement to have that course, the multicultural education course, for new teachers that come into the districts. But at the local level, I think it's critical. And you hit on a good point of elders perhaps being mentors. I don't have solid examples of what works. Maybe others do.

But I think that's a great idea for having elders in there, their tribal leadership, and that solid partnership between the tribal government and the school is huge, because the tribes also have funding that can go toward education. And the more they can communicate, I think, the better.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Carl.

Mr. ROSE. I just want to comment that, one of the things that we have some difficulty with is understanding the issues at hand. And I will share with you this. I was in an audience maybe 15 or 20 years ago where some gentleman got up and said, "I'm really sensitive to your issue." And somebody else got up and said, "Sensitive? I don't want you to be sensitive to my issue. I want you to understand what we're talking about, a keen understanding of what we're doing."

Somewhere between there, our school districts and the programs that they provide may not be hitting the mark because we don't have a better understanding of what's needed. So what I told you earlier—this system of local control is designed for you, the people. If we don't take advantage of it, we can't expect our systems to function like we want them to.

So if you take anything away from here—democracy is chaotic. But representative government, as a republic, is a much more effective way of doing our business. What if everybody wanted to run the school? It can't happen. So you elect your leaders to do it on your behalf. So I would share with you, if you want a better understanding and a better product of your needs out of your schools,

you've got to organize to be able to bring that to the decision-makers so they can effect policies that serve your needs.

Thank you, Senator.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Doreen, how do we get more of you to address the needs if there's so many Native students in the Anchorage School District?

Ms. BROWN. Well, I practice what I preach, and I always have mentors. In our summer enrichment program, in the summer, I hire high school students. Sorry on that, but I actually pay them a little bit more than other people because we may not have them for as long, just to entice them to come and participate in our summer enrichment program. They want to work. They may have a desire to go into education, so I nurture them along with my staff. And they're working with our Native students. So that's one way.

And I always mentor people that are working with me. We have to do that. I mentor my cousins. It's about living, eating, breathing what we're supposed to be doing, and I do that. So I have somebody right now that I'm mentoring for 1 day when I decide to do something different. It's a constant thing, and we just have to do that.

I want to also touch on the teacher training part of that. There's a couple of things that I'm really noticing. Because we have a new superintendent, he needs training. He is coming from Florida. He needs training. Our school board needs training. We have huge communication issues. So who's doing that? Who's doing that in your communities and in other communities? We talk about teachers, yes, but it's the leadership that's working with the teachers that we need to address as well, and I don't think we're doing a really good job of that.

The other part of that—I'm hopeful—within the Anchorage School District, we're looking at our evaluation process. And I am so excited that they are actually considering two areas that are actually culturally responsive standards, to look at that and start assessing teachers if they're using Alaska Native cultural standards within their classroom. I mean, I'm cheering for that. Let's make it happen.

And then the other thing is let's go down to the child level and also the family level. We have to make sure and say this to our kids, "It's your time to learn. Make it happen. This is your opportunity"—just constantly giving that message, because it's their responsibility as well as ours.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Good words.

Rosita.

Dr. WORL. Thank you. First of all, I lived in Barrow for some time. I did my field work up there, and I saw teachers coming up there and I saw the trauma they went through. And I'll tell you, they do go into culture shock. So I know that it's a serious problem. I just attended—the university sponsored an education workshop just for teachers, or a session on what could we do about these issues.

And I would say, first of all, we need to hire Native teachers that have gone through the system and are not hired by the school district. And I will tell you that that's a problem. It is a problem that Native teachers who have gone through our university system are

not hired as teachers. I know that for a fact, and I beat up the school district for not doing that.

It is a reality, and I kept telling the university we need to work with the school district to find out why they're not hiring our Native teachers. We've tried to take care of those Native teachers when they're not hired by the school district, pulling them into our program so we could keep them in education. As much as I need help, I will never take a Native teacher out of the classroom to help us in our programs, because I know they need to be in that school district.

But I will tell you, Carl, that the schools do not always hire Native teachers. And so one of the things we did was we got on the employment—where they hire the teachers, so we sit there, and we now have an input into that. And I think it's unusual—I didn't know it was that unusual where Native organizations have these MOAs with the schools so that they can participate in that area.

The other thing that we did was with the MOA, and even before we signed the MOA, we started doing orientations for teachers. We didn't have the program money, but we squeezed things together where we were able to do that. Some of our villages brought people out to their culture camps. And in our summer camp, we try to bring teachers in there, and we've had teachers coming into our leadership camp to participate so that they can get exposed to the culture, to the environment, and to the realities of Native children.

The other thing that we did—we started having orientations for educators who teach our teachers. And I think that was the first for us where we had about 25 faculty members from the University of Alaska Southeast come in to Sealaska for—we had a 2-day training session. Maybe it wasn't enough, but we brought them there into the board room, and then we took them out in the field.

The other thing that I am determined that we're going to start doing now is to look at—I know we have teacher aides in our villages. And in our region, I think I counted that we had at one time—no, it was teachers and school aides—we had only 80 in all of the southeast school districts. So we are going to be developing a project where we can start working with the school aides people to do career development for them.

The other thing I think that we could do that we've found is successful in other areas is internships. And we are producing right now—we'll probably have more Native archivists than we will have Native archives, but we're doing that. So we're doing that in other areas, and so I think it's a good approach that we might want to explore. Those are concrete recommendations that I could offer.

Senator MURKOWSKI. Those are good.

Peggy or Chris?

Ms. COWAN. Thank you. Actually, you have a legacy on the North Slope, so thank you for that. It shows that we are one State and appreciate it.

The first goal of the board's strategic plan is curriculum and teaching through the Iñupiat language, history, and culture. The second goal of the board's strategic plan is teacher retention and professional development. And so everything that is said here is very important to the Slope.

But I would like to do a little bit of a segue to your allusion to the community and partnerships and parents and those things. I think one thing that I haven't mentioned but was introduced really with Dr. Worl's and Carl's introductions when they talked about identity. Student identity is really what a lot of this is all about. And identity is just critical in the system, and one of the big issues is that students don't see themselves in the system. But, anyway, it's student identity at so many levels.

It will help teachers, hopefully, when they become, hopefully, Native teachers for the future. But the white teachers there now—if the community contributes to the education of the youth through helping with that identity. It is just so basic and so core to the work. And as the students get a sense of their identity, then they thrive in the school system, and then the teachers can better understand them and their identity and work it into the culture. So just the community partnership identity I see as really crucial.

Senator MURKOWSKI. I think Rosita said the essence of being Native is not being taught in the schools, and that's critical.

Chris, did you want to add anything to this conversation?

Mr. SIMON. Sure. Thank you very much. We're talking about teacher retention, and when I was a superintendent, there was a problem in the district where I was the superintendent also. So I did an exit interview with every teacher or every district office person that was leaving. And there were a couple of things that came out of it.

One was the new teacher orientation, where the new teachers to the villages showed up at the district office 3 days early. And we brought them out to the village ourselves and showed them the post office, showed them the stores, and showed them the tribal offices so they could get a sense of what it's like in the village before we just put them out there and say, "Start teaching." The only problem with that is we ran out of funding. So that's what I would have to put in a plug for the Federal Government, a little bit of funding for new teacher orientations across the State.

And also housing—a lot of our teachers were leaving after 2 or 3 years as they started a family and their families were expanding. They wanted nice housing for their kids. So I'm happy to say Alaska Housing Finance Corporation stepped up and is providing help with housing. But if the Federal Government could help with that, that would be great also.

Senator MURKOWSKI. All absolutely key. I'll never forget when I took Secretary Paige out to Savoonga, and we were talking with the principal there. And the principal mentioned that he slept in the broom closet, and that they had cleaned out all the mops and buckets and that was where his mattress was. And Secretary Paige was horrified, just horrified. He couldn't believe that.

And the principal was pretty nonplussed about it. He said, "Well, it's better than the elementary second grade teacher who slept in her classroom and she took one of the gym mats out." And it was from that conversation with the Secretary that we actually had a meeting of five cabinet members of that administration to look at the issues and the barriers that surrounded delivery of education in parts of rural Alaska.

And we've made some good headway with the teacher housing. But I think we all recognize that this is an area of great need. And, again, you don't see this in the discussions back in Washington, DC. Why would you possibly need to provide for things like teacher housing?

We could go on all afternoon. I think the sun is setting out there. Sonia is not really like Vanna White in the back holding a card up. I think she's trying to block the sun for everybody, and she has moved down the aisle here.

But this has been a good discussion. We clearly need more of it. We need it at different levels. We need it in different areas. But I'm glad that we have put some of this on the record as part of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee to understand some of the challenges, some of the barriers that we face, but, clearly, some of the opportunities that we have and how we embrace them.

I'll just let those of you who have been on the panel and those who are still with us know that we are going to try to put a little focus on what is going on within Alaska education, particularly the rural piece. We are putting together what we're calling the Alaska Education Library. And what I'm asking folks to do is to share.

You said you were a borrower, and you're jotting down your ideas. What I'd like folks to do is to compare notes, share your stories, put your ideas out there, email me with your innovative methods. Let's put them all together online. Any Alaskan, any Alaskan out there at all who has either a success story or a story that kind of talks about just some of the matter of fact things that we're dealing with and how we're dealing with them on a daily basis—let's share how these innovations have improved student success. You can email them to me at alaskaedsuccess@murkowski.senate.gov.

And so this is for tribes, this is for schools, this is for Native organizations, this is for teachers—anybody who's got an innovative and successful idea to share. And then once we get these entries received, what we'll do is we will post them on our Web site. I've got a new page that we've created, and this is called the Alaskan Education Library. If you go to my main Web site, www.murkowski.senate.gov, it's located under the students tab at the top of the homepage.

So, hopefully, this can kind of be a portal to collect great ideas, because I think we do recognize we are challenged. But as Carl has reminded us, let's not be limited by the problems that we had yesterday or last year. Let's figure out how we advance and move forward. So share some of these things with us. We've got a lot to work on.

Rosita, I appreciate your comments and the suggestions that you have given me, as well as Gloria O'Neill, on how we can really look to the Alaska Native Education Equity Program in terms of making sure that that opportunity for grant funding remains solid, remains viable, and really rooted to its initial purpose. So we've got some work to do on that. We will do that.

Clearly, the conversation hasn't stopped here. We've got a lot more to work on. But I thank those of you that have given me the time here this afternoon.

Chris, Peggy, Rosita, Doreen, Carl, Sonta, thank you for your leadership in these areas. I've also asked Gloria O'Neill to—Gloria, as I'm sure everybody in the room knows, is president and CEO of Cook Inlet Tribal and very involved with CITC and the work with the Anchorage School District. So I've asked her to submit testimony as well.

[The prepared statement of Ms. O'Neill follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF GLORIA O'NEILL, PRESIDENT AND CEO,
COOK INLET TRIBAL COUNCIL

Senator Murkowski, thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony for the record.

My name is Gloria O'Neill and I am the president and CEO of Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC), an Alaska Native tribal non-profit organization which serves as the primary education and workforce development center for Native people in Anchorage. CITC has been designated tribal authority through Cook Inlet Region Inc., organized through the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act and recognized under section 4(b) of the Indian Self-Determination Act and Education Assistance Act, P.L. 93-638. CITC builds human capacity by partnering with individuals to establish and achieve both educational and employment goals that result in lasting, positive change for themselves, their families, and their communities.

CITC's programs serve Alaska Native and American Indian people in the Cook Inlet Region, which includes Alaska's most urbanized and populated communities, and is home to an Alaska Native/American Indian population of more than 40,000, approximately 40 percent of the Native population of the State of Alaska. In Anchorage alone, the Native population is approximately 22,000, about 20 percent of the total Native population in the State. Anchorage is the fourth largest Native community in the Nation. CITC's programs address many of the social, economic, and educational challenges faced by Alaska Native people.

Our mission is to work in partnership with Our People to develop opportunities that fulfill Our endless potential. All of CITC's programs are rooted in the understanding that true self-determination is based in self-sufficiency and the ability to take responsibility for one's own success. CITC has a 25-year history of providing programs that effectively meet the challenges of inadequate education, unemployment, poverty and addiction.

Alaska Native education is in a deepening crisis. Alaska Native students have historically been subject to significant risk factors including under-performance and under-engagement in school, low post-scholastic employment and income, over-representation in the justice system, and increased rates of alcohol and drug use, as well as suicide. Alaska Native educational achievement continues to fall far below national norms, as reflected in the fact that performance on standardized tests is low and Alaska Native students are twice as likely to drop out as their non-Native peers—this, in a State with a school dropout rate that is already one of the highest in the Nation.

Since 2003, CITC has been the recipient of directed funding authorized in the Alaska Native Educational Equity, Support and Assistance Act, now known as the Alaska Native Education Program (ANEP). This funding provided CITC, as a Tribal Organization, a critical resource and unique opportunity to develop creative solutions to the problems that plague the school districts. When ANEP funding is granted to Alaska Native organizations (ANOs), it creates opportunity for systemic change. For example, CITC created Partners for Success (Partners) with our ANEP funds. Partners is a strength-based, culturally focused educational support service implemented in partnership with the Anchorage School District. The program, which functions as a school-within-a-school, is an innovative and comprehensive program dedicated to growing college and career-ready graduates from kindergarten through 12th grade. This unique tribal-district collaborative relationship allowed CITC to hire our own educational teams, including highly qualified certificated teachers, to provide core content academic classes to Native students within the public schools. CITC's programs recognize the need for a continuum of educational services from elementary school through high school. CITC classes follow required school district curricula while also interweaving cultural content and methodology, and meet or exceed district and State standards in a variety of content areas such as language arts, math, science, and physical education. Our program served approximately 700 K-12 Native students and their families annually. Our programs focused on increasing literacy and math skills as well as offering supplemental pro-

grams in high-level mathematics and science classes, health and wellness. Our bold vision was designed to improve overall academic achievement while decreasing the Native student dropout rates. Accountability by demonstrating outcomes and constantly retooling programs to achieve our goals are key components for CITC's strategy.

CITC has been involved in educating Alaska Native students in our service area for over 10 years. From the start, CITC faced an uphill battle. The disparities were and remain extremely daunting. After nearly a decade, the partnership provided a number of critical, if perhaps not surprising, findings:

- **CITC students had better outcomes on the High School Graduation Qualifying exam than other Native students.**

- **In schools where CITC taught Language Arts at the Middle School level, our students did better on the Standardized Basic Assessment tests than their peers in the same subjects.**

- **Students enrolled as seniors in CITC's high school program at Bartlett High School had a 100 percent graduation rate for the last 2 years.**

- **CITC students performed better on Standard Based Achievement Tests at all grade levels.**

- **Small class sizes really do make a positive impact on our population.** Students enter our classes at very different proficiency levels. To make our students successful, teachers and teaching assistants need to be able to meet students where they are and advance them from that point.

- The "achievement gap" starts early. The outcomes for Alaska Native education are dramatically worse than they are for non-Natives. The learning and knowledge disparities begin to be institutionalized as soon as Alaska Native students enter mainstream education as kindergartners.

- **CITC elementary school students reach reading proficiency in kindergarten and first grade if they are working with our teachers.**

- Creating school-to-jobs pipelines, through programs that increase student engagement, academic performance, and career-readiness is a key to changing outcomes.

The ANEP funding that CITC received was the essential catalyst that allowed us to create such a unique and effective partnership with the Anchorage School District; without it, the partnership would likely never have happened.

The late Senator Ted Stevens originally authored the Alaska Native Education Equity, Support and Assistance Act to create equity in education for Alaska Native people. With the exception of a small amount of Johnson O'Malley funding, Alaska receives no Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) funding. In other States, BIE funding is available only to Tribes so that they can create their own education programs for their students or their own schools. In Alaska, the State is responsible for educating all Alaskans, including Alaska Natives. Historically, the State's and school districts' track records on educating Alaska Native students are poor.

In response, the Act sought to ensure that Alaska Native people were maximally involved in the planning and management of Alaska Native Education Program. We appreciate your keen understanding of how important this program is for the success of Alaska Native students. We are especially grateful for your support for the program over the years when it has been attacked as an earmark and/or as duplicative of other programs.

We are increasingly concerned that the Alaska Native Educational Equity, Support and Assistance Act is being implemented in a way that paying inadequate attention to the most important principle of the authorizing legislation: Equity. We hope to be able to rely on your assistance to address our growing concerns. Over time the program has come to be known as the Alaska Native Education Program (ANEP). We would like to put the equity back in the Alaska Native Equity Program and to ensure that implementation and reauthorization of this Act are realigned with the original intent of the law.

The statute provides a clear priority to Alaska Native regional nonprofits or consortia that include these organizations. However, this priority has been increasingly undermined in the RFA's by other priorities identified by the Department. Programmatic priorities and novice applicants have been given greater priority than the legislated priority for Alaska Native regional nonprofits (ANRO). While the ANEP statute allows the Secretary to make grants and enter into contracts with non-Native organizations, it requires that Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) and State Educational Agencies (SEAs) can only do so in consortia with Native organizations. Furthermore, each grantee is required to provide for "ongoing advice from and consultation with representatives of the Alaska Native community." Regardless, ANOs are often enlisted for the value of their imprimaturs, but not considered or

involved as full partners in the consortia. Equal and quality partnerships and respectful consultation create a sound foundation for systems change and lead to the development of programs that can make a profound difference for Alaska Native students.

We know from our own experience that our students benefit when Alaska Native organizations' (ANOs) involvement in their education is maximized. ANOs are ready, willing and able to be the lead grantees and contractors for ANEP funding. It is time that programs are designed and implemented with and by Alaska Natives, and that Alaska Natives are the experts consulted, employed, and nurtured throughout the process. If we had BIE funding in Alaska, we would have Alaska Native-controlled schools and programs. It would never enter anyone's mind to give BIE funding to a non-Native school district or program. Instead, we have ANEP. Please ensure that ANEP, or better yet, ANEEP, funding is used as it was intended to provide equity in education.

The Alaska Federation of Natives passed a resolution in February 2012 urging Congress to ensure that ANEP funding be administered through Alaska Native organizations. In addition, AFN wrote to the Alaska Delegation in April 2012 detailing their concerns with the current implementation of the program. I have included both documents and submit both for the record.

Thank you for your longstanding support for this program, and we look forward to working with you on this issue in the future.

Senator MURKOWSKI. We will leave the record of hearing open until November 5th for any additional comments or materials that the witnesses may have. I mentioned the essays. I'd love to hear from the students and would certainly welcome all their comments.

And, again, for those of you who are here, thank you for your interest in learning more about what we can do to celebrate our education successes and do right by our young people. And with that, the field hearing is adjourned with great thanks and appreciation.

[Additional material follows.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

ESSAY OF NICOLE GEORGE, JUNEAU, AK

HIGH SCHOOL ROLLER COASTER

On my first day entering high school, I felt like a little fish entering a big pond. I was very inhibited, close-minded, and lacking diligence. It was very intimidating starting high school because I had to find a way to adjust to the classroom conversation. I was also hesitant in the aspect of presentations, speeches, and tutoring positions that were offered by teachers. Little did I know that my participation in the school would help me grow as an individual, help with the understanding of my peers, and my community as a whole.

As the years went by, my high school experience was a roller coaster ride. My freshman year was the year that I had to find myself. Growing up as a native child in the village of Angoon, AK I was never the type of person to raise my hand to answer a question. This was the case for all my classes even the one I enjoyed the most. I was used to people assuming that I knew nothing when in reality I knew a great deal of information that was just waiting to come out. Like most I took part in extra-curricular activities such as basketball and volleyball. Along with those I took part in academic decathlon, Future Educators of Alaska (FEA), and Early Scholars. Freshman year my grades were decent but they could have been a lot better. I was a distracted student trying to find her spot in the world of high school.

Sophomore year was the year that my shell started to crack. I was an emerging leader in the Early Scholars' community. I volunteered for every fundraising event and was the one Mrs. Reyes could go to for anything. My grades started to excel and I wanted my peers to be right by my side. I was becoming well-known and well-versed with the school faculty. I became an advocate for my peers who were just like me. I was giving them a voice when no one else would.

Junior year was the time I wanted to take the school by the horns. My grades kept excelling and my shell was completely gone. I was comfortable talking in the public as it became more natural and eloquent. I became an avid reader and my writing comprehension and skills improved tremendously. I excelled in every activity that I did. I became a top competitor for the regional speech competitions for academic decathlon and I became a force to reckon with on the court. With some time and observation I mastered the ability to adapt and to appeal to all array of groups within the school. I was welcomed and valued in each group that I had the pleasure to join. Behind all the acquired skills and success I need to re-evaluate my focus. I was determined to do the work that was necessary to get into a good university but I also wanted to have time to self-indulge in activities that I enjoyed.

My senior year had finally come and I was now using everything I had learned and built on based on my high school experience. I had become a critical thinker and my points of views on things had changed drastically. My maturity level had increased and I had become well-rounded and better in the way I managed my time. I was an AVID tutor, a mentor for Early Scholars', a leader on the court, and a role model in the classroom. I had received the Gates Millennium Scholarship, the Denny Wilcher Award for young Environmental Activist, the Literature Award as well as the Self-Less Senior award at my high school.

I contribute all my success to the community as well as the school faculty. I know every teacher and administrator at the high school and I have formed some type of relationship with them. In the community organizations such as Sealaska Corporation and Tlingit and Haida had helped me become well-versed and emerged in community issues facing Juneau. I was well aware of our young native students not graduating, the environmental issues that were arising, and the potential loss of our culture. I had obtained real world skills based on the experiences given to me by the community. If the State could fund and start programs like AVID and Early Scholars it would do the community some good. You would have students that were well-rounded and successful with the skills needed for the real world such as effective communication, team work, flexibility, and organization. Also if the school could cut down on the meetings faculty members had to partake in. I remember needing a teacher and they were never available because they had to run off to some meeting. Another word of advice is the mandatory advisory times. They really aren't necessary. If they could use that time for enrichment period, where it was optional for students to meet with teachers they needed to talk to, the teachers time and the students time would be used more effectively. The last thing I have to say is informing teachers and staff about the Alaska Native students. Not all but most students are shy and won't be the first to answer questions. I really liked what Sealaska did when they had the school district conference during the summer. If more events like

that occurred to inform teachers it would break the barrier that they all face when trying to teach. Thank you for listening to my narrative.

ALASKA FEDERATION OF NATIVES,
ANCHORAGE, AK,
April 25, 2012.

Hon. DANIEL K. INOUE, *Chair,*
Committee on Appropriations,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC 20510.

Via e-mail: haue_mossman@inouye.senate.gov.

DEAR SENATOR INOUE: As you know, our friend, the late Senator Ted Stevens originally authored the Alaska Native Education Equity, Support and Assistance Act in 1993 to create equity in education for Alaska Native people. The authorized funding was to address the following inequities: (1) Alaska receives no Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) funding, and the State is responsible for educating all Alaskans, including Alaska Natives, and (2) the State's and districts' track records on educating Alaska Native students are poor. In response, the Act sought to ensure that Alaska Native people were maximally involved in the planning and management of the Alaska Native Education program. Over time, the program has become known as the Alaska Native Education Program (ANEP). ANEP is designed to address Alaska Native students' needs in a threefold way by:

1. focusing attention on the educational needs of Alaska Native students,
2. investing substantial funding in the creation and operation of supplemental educational programs for Alaska Native students, and
3. maximizing participation of Alaska Native people in the planning and management of Alaska Native education programs.

I am attaching copies of the letters that I sent to the Honorable Lisa Murkowski who sits on the U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations with you and the Honorable Mark Begich regarding the Alaska Native Education Program; these letters address ANEP comprehensively but in the interest of your time, my letter to you is very brief. It is my sincere hope that you would consider supporting appropriations by your committee that would lead to improving the quality of education for the Alaska Native students; and in particular, the implementation of ANEP.

Thank you for your consideration. Your interests of improving the quality of life for the Alaska Natives have always been fully appreciated.

Sincerely,

JULIE KITKA,
President.

ALASKA FEDERATION OF NATIVES,
ANCHORAGE, AK,
April 24, 2012.

Hon. LISA MURKOWSKI,
709 Hart Senate Office Building,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC 20510.

Via e-mail: Kristi_Williams@murkowski.senate.gov,
Fax: (202) 224-5301.

Hon. MARK BEGICH,
144 Russell Senate Office Building,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC 20510.

Via e-mail: Andrea_Sanders@begich.senate.gov,
Fax: (202) 224-2354.

Hon. DON YOUNG,
 2314 Russell House Office Building,
 U.S. House of Representatives,
 Washington, DC 20515.

Via e-mail: Mary.Hiratsuka@mail.house.gov,
 Fax: (202) 225-0425.

DEAR SENATOR MURKOWSKI, SENATOR BEGICH, AND CONGRESSMAN YOUNG: The late Senator Stevens originally authored the Alaska Native Education Equity, Support and Assistance Act in 1993 to create equity in education for Alaska Native people. The authorized funding was to address the following inequities: (1) Alaska receives no Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) funding, and the State is responsible for educating all Alaskans, including Alaska Natives, and (2) the State's and districts' track records on educating Alaska Native students are poor. In response, the Act sought to ensure that Alaska Native people were maximally involved in the planning and management of the Alaska Native Education program. Over time, the program has become known as the Alaska Native Education Program (ANEP).

We appreciate your keen understanding of how important this program is for the success of Alaska Native students. We are especially grateful for your unquestionable support for the program over the years when it has been attacked as an earmark and/or as duplicative of other programs. We are increasingly concerned that the manner in which the Department of Education is implementing the Alaska Native Educational Equity, Support and Assistance Act is paying inadequate attention to the most important principle of the authorizing legislation: Equity. We hope to be able to rely on your assistance to address our growing concerns.

ANEP is designed to address Alaska Native students' needs in a threefold way by:

1. focusing attention on the educational needs of Alaska Native students,
2. investing substantial funding in the creation and operation of supplemental educational programs for Alaska Native students, and
3. maximizing participation of Alaska Native people in the planning and management of Alaska Native education programs.

First, we are concerned that the program is not being adequately implemented, particularly in relation to the purpose of maximizing Alaska Native participation. Information on awards made prior to 2005 is unavailable; however, the available information regarding previous ANEP awards clearly indicates that the majority of the funding over the last decade was awarded to non-Alaska Native organizations and entities (including school districts and universities), even though the law requires that the Department of Education (the Department) prioritize funding to Alaska Native organizations. The question has been raised as to whether Alaska Native organizations have the capacity to manage such grants. These suggestions are not consistent with the fact that Alaska Native organizations contract with and receive grants from the State and Federal Governments regularly. In fact, Alaska Native organizations working in the education arena have demonstrated not only capacity and competency, but positive outcomes for Alaska Native students.

Alaska Native Education Equity Act—Award/Funding Analysis 2005–11

Organization type			Percent of grants	Percent of funds
Alaska Native Organizations:	31 grants	\$39.3 million	23.3	21.70
ANO competitive awards only	23 grants	\$27.3 million	17.29	17.72
Other Organizations:	102 grants	\$114.7 million	76.70	78.30
School districts	50 grants	\$75.7 million	37.5	41.9
Non-profits	30 grants	\$37.2 million	22.5	20.60
Universities	22 grants	\$28.3 million	16.50	15.60

Sec. 7302(2) It is the policy of the Federal Government to encourage the maximum participation by Alaska Natives in the planning and the management of Alaska Native Education programs.

Sec. 7302(7) The Federal Government should lend support to efforts developed by and undertaken within the Alaska Native community to improve educational opportunity for all students.

This trend is of particular concern, given that appropriators overrode the statute last year and directed the Department to implement all ANEP funding as competitive grants. This change puts all discretion regarding how ANEP money will be used in Alaska in the hands of the Department.

Second, the statute provides a clear priority to Alaska Native regional nonprofits or consortia that include these organizations. However, this priority is being increas-

ingly undermined by other priorities as identified by the Department. In the last 2 years, RFAs for the ANEP program gave only two points to applications from Alaska Native regional nonprofits (ANRO), and two points for each programmatic priority identified by the Department. The programmatic priorities seemed to parallel “Race to the Top” priorities, and were neither targeted to Alaska Native needs, nor relevant goals for supplemental education programs focused on outcomes for Alaska Native students. In fact, the priorities in the RFA were not even reflective of the priorities listed in the statute. In addition to last year’s programmatic priorities, this year, novice applicants, including non-Native organizations, were given a five-point priority. Again, ANROs were given only two points. As a result, the statutory priority given to ANROs was subordinated to a category created at the sole discretion of the Department. This action further undermines the equity provided by the original statutory priority. We urge you to address this directly with the Department. Furthermore, we look forward to working with you to explore legislative vehicles, such as appropriations report language and the reauthorization process as additional opportunities.

Third, current statute allows the Secretary to make grants and enter into contracts with non-Native organizations, and also requires that LEAs and SEAs can only do so in consortia with Native organizations. Each grantee is required to provide for “ongoing advice from and consultation with representatives of the Alaska Native community.” The RFA does not require any evidence of plans for such consultation, but should. Anecdotally, we know that ANOs are often enlisted for the value of their imprimaturs, but not considered or involved as full partners in the consortia. AFN is currently surveying present and past ANEP grantees to more fully evaluate the breadth of this problem. We urge the delegation to address this issue of consultation and quality partnerships with the Department.

Additionally, the Alaska Native Educational Equity, Support and Assistance Act was designed to solve current problems for students in Alaska, specifically Alaska Native students. The current measures of success written into the RFA reduce ANEP to a duplicative funding stream for advancing testing and school performance goals. Positioning ANEP in this way leaves it more vulnerable to opponents’ claims that this program is duplicative. The intent of the program is not duplicative. In fact, it is essential, and the implementation of the program needs to be realigned with the original goals of the legislation. Priorities for this funding identified by the Department must be done in accordance with the statute, and in consultation with Alaska Native people. Furthermore, the measures of success for grant awards should not only include—but prioritize—measures that incorporate Alaska Native views of student success. Finally, efforts of data collection by Alaska Native organizations have been complicated by the provisions within the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and for ANEP partnerships between Alaska Native organizations and school districts to be fully realized, all parties must have equal access to the data on the students involved.

We respectfully request your assistance to ensure maximum involvement of Alaska Natives in the success of Alaska Native students. Specifically, we urge the members of the Alaska congressional delegation to work together to address our concerns with the U.S. Department of Education by sending the Department a joint letter outlining the situation.

Furthermore, we request your collaboration to leverage the reauthorization process to address these issues. Fundamentally, we believe that only Alaska Native organizations should be the lead eligible grantees and contractors for ANEP funding, and that LEAs, SEAs, universities and non-Native organizations should be required to apply as secondary grantees and contractors in consortia with Alaska Native organizations. We are convinced that such a change is required to maximize Alaska Native involvement in all levels of programming and is vital to the success of Alaska Native students and to the success of the program. It is time to ensure that programs are designed and implemented with and by Alaska Natives, and that Alaska Natives are the experts consulted, employed, and nurtured throughout the process. For that reason, we request that legislative language reflecting this change be incorporated into the reauthorization of ESEA, and to the furthest extent possible, be included in the appropriations process.

We recognize that this request may require legislating on an appropriations bill, which is an unpopular tactic. However, ANEP was fundamentally altered last year in an appropriations bill by the inclusion of a rider that overrode the directed grants authorized in the statute. We look forward to open and thorough discussions with your offices on all options available to address these issues.

In summary, we respectfully request your assistance in ensuring maximum involvement of Alaska Natives in the success of Alaska Native students. Specifically, we request that the delegation members: (1) Send a joint delegation letter to the

U.S. Department of Education sharing our concerns, and work with the Department to improve implementation of ANEP; (2) Hold joint delegation field hearings around the State this summer to learn more about the needs of Alaska Native students and Alaska Native communities' expectations and standards as they relate to educational outcomes; (3) Work with each other and AFN, Sealaska, and CITC to identify what can be achieved during the appropriations process; and finally, (4) Work closely with each other, and us to prepare for the reauthorization process, whether the opportunity arises in the short-term or the long-term.

We recognize that a number of our concerns require congressional action, and that vehicles are limited, and move quickly when available. For that reason, we are bringing all of our concerns to your immediate attention. It is our hope that we can collaborate to identify the best solutions and the appropriate vehicles as they become available. Thank you for your consideration.

We look forward to working with you to improve education for Alaska Natives.
Sincerely,

JULIE KITKA,
President.

[Whereupon, at 5:57 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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