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April 9 School Board Recap

April 9, 2024

On Tuesday, April 9, the Anchorage School Board held both a [work session](#) and [Board meeting](#). As normal, work sessions are held at 4 p.m. on Tuesdays prior to regular Board meetings, which usually take place the first and third Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m. Work sessions, committee meetings, and Board meetings are open to the public and can be watched live on the [Anchorage School District's YouTube](#) channel.

Work Session Review - Science curriculum discussion

The focus of the Board's work session yesterday centered on new science curriculum. The whole work session can be watched [here](#).

Coordinator of Curriculum Jen Pickering walked the Board through the [timeline and context](#) and provided insight into the extensive [curriculum revision process](#).

The new science standards from the State of Alaska that were adopted in 2019, combined with community input, influenced the science curriculum revision and review, which leads us to where we are at now—recommendation of adoption. The new standards place an emphasis on learning science by *doing* science.

Pickering explained that part of the curriculum revision team's work included taking a look at the current ASD science pathways with an equity lens, wanting to address the unequal demographics of 9th graders who take biology verses an integrated science course, as data shows students who take biology in their freshman track were more likely to take college preparatory courses including AP and college level courses.

Dr. Kersten Johnson-Struempler, Senior Director, Teaching and Learning, added the new science pathway begins preparing students in 6th grade to be ready for 9th grade biology. Dr. Johnson-Struempler also noted this pathway revision allows for greater student "teaming" which aligns with the concepts being developed for the Academies of Anchorage launch. She said all these efforts will create a better, more holistic approach to freshman year scheduling.

Pickering shared the new curriculum considers best practices for making science accessible to diverse learners, ensuring that educational opportunity is equitable for all students. Key strategies included connecting to students' sense of place and identity, problem-based learning, community involvement and relevance, and student-centered learning.

Indigenous Education Supervisor Jaime Galvan presented it to the Board as well, adding that the new curriculum incorporates storytelling and connects to Native culture. Galvan said it drew the Indigenous Education Department in, and they were able to relate to that. Galvan also noted her team contributed to the curriculum and gave an example of incorporating culturally sustaining practices into the teacher's guide.

Some of the questions from the Board touched on how the shift in pathways for all students to biology would be successful, questions around creating a curriculum in-house compared to purchasing, and professional development plans.

Dr. Johnson-Struempler confirmed to the Board the curriculum has been created, teachers have been field-testing during the current school year, and science teachers across the District are interested in the curriculum pilot next school year.

A College, Career, Life-Readiness update was part of the agenda, but the Board did not get to that item. Board President Bellamy noted that the item is recurring and will be on the April 23 agenda.

Board Meeting Review

During the regular School Board meeting, the Board heard reports from a variety of ASD and Anchorage community leaders, reviewed a technical goal monitoring report, heard public comment, viewed a variety of consent, action, and non-action items, heard an update from the Superintendent, and ended with School Board member comments. You can find a full breakdown of the agenda [here](#). The entire Board session can be watched [here](#).

Reports

Student Representative Report

The Board meeting began with Student Advisory Board President Joshua Pak discussing SAB agenda items, which include considering bylaw amendments on how the Move to Middle School will impact their body, recognizing outgoing SAB seniors this year, and discussions about the resolution changes that have been brought about. Pak thanked Member Kelly Lessens for notifying the SAB Executive Board about the Administrative Regulations that had changed. Pak recognized the April 4 statewide student walk-out and thanked students for their safe, civil conduct. He ended by noting the Alaska Association of Student Governments spring conference will be in Utqiagvik at Barrow High School on April 18.

Agnew: Beck - Alcohol Tax Strategic Planning

Tanya Iden from Agnew: Beck shared information about the Municipality of Anchorage's alcohol tax and strategic planning. They are assisting with developing a plan for the alcohol tax, which will raise about \$14-15 million per year. The Anchorage Assembly distributes the funds to three designated uses:

- Public safety
- Preventing child abuse, sexual assault, and domestic violence
- Substance abuse and homelessness

Iden said they are asking for more guidance on how the funds can be more transparently spent and distributed in a way that supports the three areas. You can learn more about the alcohol tax [here](#) and

take the survey [here](#).

English Language Learner (ELL) Update

ELL Director Bobbi Lafferty provided an update on the ELL Department's services and priorities. Lafferty noted ELL students make up about 15% of the ASD student population and there are about 100 different languages spoken by families in ASD. ELL Services include partnering with organizations such as Catholic Social Services to welcome families new to the community and help students acclimate in their schools. Lafferty reported one of their top priorities is to raise the level of family engagement and increase the number of students who successfully pass the federal test that determines if students may successfully exit from the ELL program. Students are monitored for four years after their exit to determine if continued ELL services may be necessary. You can watch that [update here](#).

Goal Monitoring

Superintendent Dr. Jharrett Bryantt presented a College, Career, Life Ready - Cumulative Grade Point Average (Grades 9-12) - Technical Report. You can view the full report [here](#). The report focused on the interim goal 3.3 which is grade point average. The interim goal is to increase the number of students with a 2.7 gpa from 55.94% in June 2023 to 70% by June 2028. This goal takes into consideration research-based metrics indicating academic readiness for post-secondary outcomes. There will be a conversation on this topic during the April 23rd Board meeting and the Administration will be prepared to answer questions.

Public Comment Period

After the goal monitoring report, the Board moved into the public comment period. You can begin watching that portion of the meeting [here](#). The Board heard testimony from members of the public, specifically about student safety, bullying, and school start times. Written public comments submitted to the Board can be viewed [here](#).

Consent Agenda Highlights

The Board reviewed and approved a variety of items on the Consent Agenda such as:

- An award of [contract for digital copiers and services](#)
- A [personnel report](#)
- A transfer of funds for the Raptor [Visitor Management System](#), which the District is implementing to comply with [Board Policy 3515.5](#)
- Regular meeting minutes from seven previous Board meetings

Key Action Items

- The Board voted and approved ASD Memorandum #131 Proposed BP 5041 - Health Education (Second Reading). You can review the new health education policy [here](#).
- A motion by Board Member Dave Donley and second by Member Carl Jacobs was passed to table the Feb. 6 regular [meeting minutes](#) to the next Board meeting.

Key Non-Action Items

- The seven non-action items included a variety of items including:
 - The monthly Contract Modification [Report](#) for February 2024
 - An award of [contract for safety improvements](#) in Bettye Davis East Anchorage High School
 - An updated Board [goal monitoring calendar](#) that runs through 2028
 - The [Portrait of A Graduate](#) that was created with feedback from 1,000+ community members
 - Approval of funding allocations of [FEMA capital improvement project funds](#)
 - Sale of surplus [relocatable buildings](#)
 - Science materials adoption for [Biology](#)
 - Award of contract for [Chromebooks](#)

Superintendent Update

Superintendent Dr. Jharrett Bryantt noted during his update that the CCL report in the work session was cut off due to the science curriculum discussion, and that he is committed to reporting out the information at a future date. You can watch the full update from the Superintendent [here](#).

Dr. Bryantt also discussed the Administration's plan to launch a public engagement initiative looking at rightsizing ASD. Dr. Bryantt said there will be an initial survey to gauge general feelings and perception. He noted his intent is to improve how the District approached the topic in 2022, indicating discussions with the community are starting earlier. He desires to gather initial data at a high level before identifying specific schools or buildings for closure. Dr. Bryantt noted that ASD first wants to understand if the community supports the idea, and second, stakeholders' key considerations and non-negotiables. Dr. Bryantt acknowledged the topic of closing buildings is an emotional process for all involved. Dr. Bryantt ended by saying he humbly awaits community feedback.

We hope that you find these updates valuable. As always, we welcome your feedback and thoughts at TeamASD@asdk12.org.