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NEWS RELEASE

State Board proposes change to accountability plan

The State Board of Education & Early Development, meeting March 27, opened a period of public comment on a proposed change to the minimum size of student subgroups in the state's accountability plan.

Public comments on this issue are due by 4 p.m. May 1. The State Board has scheduled a special meeting for May 8 to take up the topic.

The amendment would set a uniform minimum number of students for the subgroups that schools are held accountable for in making adequate yearly progress toward proficiency targets. The state's accountability plan, set by regulation, is required by the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

In Alaska currently, schools are held accountable for the subgroups of students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency if there are at least 41 students, and for all other subgroups if there are at least 21 students. The State Board is proposing to adopt a uniform minimum number of 31 students for all subgroups.

Under No Child Left Behind, the progress of schools is measured not only by the student body as a whole but in subgroups of students. The nine subgroups for Alaska are: African-American, Alaska Native/American Indian, Asian, Caucasian, Hispanic, Multi-Ethnic, Economically Disadvantaged, Students with Disabilities, and Limited English Proficient Students.

A key point in the law is that schools cannot be declared proficient while ignoring minorities. However, if a school has too few students in a subgroup to generate statistical significance, the school will not be held accountable for that subgroup separately. The students in the subgroup still will be assessed and their scores reported with the school as a whole.

The U.S. Department of Education is requiring a uniform minimum of students in each subgroup for those states, such as Alaska, that have applied to pilot a growth model for determining schools' and districts' adequate yearly progress. The federal agency also has said it soon will require all states to use a uniform minimum subgroup size.

The public may submit written comments to the Commissioner's Office, Department of Education & Early Development, Attn: Regulations Review, 801 West Tenth Street, Suite 200, P.O. Box 110500, Juneau AK 99811-0500.

Comments also may be submitted by fax at 907-465-4156 or at <http://www.eed.state.ak.us/regs/>.

Comments must be received no later than 4 p.m. May 1, 2006.

Oral comments may be submitted at a hearing on May 8, 2006, at a teleconference to originate in the Commissioner's conference room, 801 West Tenth Street, Second Floor, in Juneau. The hearing will start at noon.

Persons also may comment at the oral hearing through the following Legislative Information Offices: Anchorage, Barrow, Bethel, Cordova, Delta Junction, Dillingham, Fairbanks, Glennallen, Homer, Juneau, Kenai, Ketchikan, Kodiak, Kotzebue, Mat-Su, Nome, Petersburg, Seward, Sitka, Tok, Valdez, and Wrangell.

For a copy of the proposed regulation changes, see <http://www.eed.state.ak.us/regs/> or write the Commissioner's Office at the Department of Education & Early Development, 801 West Tenth Street, Suite 200, P.O. Box 110500, Juneau AK 99811-0500, e-mail Dorothy_Knuth@eed.state.ak.us, or call 907-465-2802.

The Department of Education & Early Development's news release about the pilot growth model is available at: <http://www.eed.state.ak.us/news/releases>.

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