

**GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL  
EDUCATION**

**EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE  
MINUTES**

**Videoconference Host:**

Governor's Council  
550 W. 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 1220  
Anchorage, Alaska

**Meeting Date**

November 12, 2024  
1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

**Committee Members:**

Anna Attla  
Jena Crafton  
Margaret Evans  
Lisa McDonald

**Council Members and Guests:**

Angie Santa Ana  
Rita Gray  
Devon Roberts  
Don Clack  
Sabrina Richmond  
CB Brady  
Scott Lindbloom  
Larrisa Cummings

**Council Staff:**

Rich Saville  
Patrick Reinhart  
Samantha Vetter

**Prepared by:** Sheila Garrant, Peninsula Reporting

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

**WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR**

**Introductions, Announcements, or Good News**

Anna Attla welcomed attendees to the meeting.

Jena Crafton shared that she attended the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) Conference for the first time.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATIONS**

No conflicts of interest were declared.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA and MINUTES**

Jena Crafton **MOVED** to approve the agenda as presented, **SECONDED** by Lisa McDonald. Hearing no opposition, the motion **PASSED**.

Lisa McDonald **MOVED** to approve the October 8, 2024 meeting minutes as presented, **SECONDED** by CB Brady. Hearing no opposition, the motion **PASSED**.

**REPORTS**

**Chair Report**

Anna Attla reported that she attended the Employment First Conference. She thought it was a good conference and a great networking opportunity. She opened the floor for comments about the Employment First Conference.

Angie Santa Ana from the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association attended the Employment First Conference and remarked that a lot of good information was presented. She requested copies of the presentations. Samantha Vetter noted that the Council will receive and distribute the presentations next week.

Patrick Reinhart added that the 2023 Employment First Conference included a job fair, and he preferred last year's format where people with disabilities could meet employers and get jobs and have the resource information available to them.

Lisa McDonald attended the Employment First Conference and remarked that the Microsoft presentation was very good. She indicated that what Microsoft is doing in the field of disabilities is absolutely incredible. She agreed with Patrick Reinhart's comments regarding including a job fair.

## **GCDSE Staff Report**

Samantha Vetter reported the following information:

- The preliminary data for the Employment First Conference showed over 125 attendees and 16 agency resource booths. The surveys indicated that the conference was informative and the presentations engaging. Some feedback included a desire for an employment job fair opportunity at future events.
- Project SEARCH is creating an alumni association and is seeking information on past interns. Anyone with information can contact Samantha at the Council.
- The Microenterprise Grant review occurred at the end of October. Nine applications were reviewed, and eight were awarded. Two of the applications were from DD members/beneficiaries. Samantha noted that \$38,086.95 in grant funding was awarded.

Larissa Cummings shared that there will be a Disability Benefits 101 (DB 101) training on November 12, 2024, and 78 people are registered. The training will include the newly added youth package that highlights articles and information available for youth in transition and their families, as well as a youth estimator, which shows youth receiving SSI and still in school how their finances would be impacted by employment.

Rich Saville reported that registration is open for the Alaska Statewide Special Education Conference (ASSEC). The Council will be presenting the Inclusive Practice Awards at the ASSEC Conference, and nomination forms are available on the Council's website. Nominations close on December 20, 2024. The Council awards include Paraeducator of the Year and Inclusive Practice Awards for individuals and teams. He noted that the ASSEC Conference is scheduled for February 3 – 5, 2025.

Patrick Reinhart added that the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority meeting is scheduled for November 13 – 14, 2024. There will be a public comment opportunity from 12:15 pm to 1:00 pm on Wednesday, November 13, 2024. Patrick noted that he, Chelsea Burke, and Jena Crafton will present on Thursday, November 14, 2024.

### **BUSINESS**

#### **Presentation: Academies of Anchorage**

Don Clack and Devon Roberts from the Anchorage School District joined the meeting to share an overview of the Academies of Anchorage. They highlighted the following information:

The Academies:

- The Academies include a series of elective pathways high school students will take to help prepare them for college, career, and life. A pathway is a sequence of courses within a chosen academy designed to help students prepare for a specific career area while meeting the mandatory requirements for high school graduation.

Mission:

- *Graduating our students college, career, and life ready. More than a diploma, a launchpad for life.*

Graduation requirements:

- Career pathway to engage
- Community connections
- Strong workplace skills

Why:

- Raise graduation rates
  - Seeing stagnant graduation rates in the ASD, 82% last year.
- Workforce development
  - Prepare students for the changing workforce
  - Keep students in Alaska for work
  - Address workforce shortages
- Equitable opportunities:
  - Provide CTE and career exploration opportunities to all students
  - Embed college prep opportunities for all students
- Increase student engagement:
  - Schoolwork becomes relevant through a career lens, increasing attendance and on-track learning.

Devon Roberts shared the master plan for the process of creating the academies. There were community convenings where statements, implementation timelines, academy designs, metrics, and evaluation plans were developed that involved hundreds of community members, students, and business and non-profit representatives.

The Why Statement:

- *The Anchorage Community believes in the power of education to change lives and shape communities. Our commitment to this transformation is rooted in our dedication to providing our students with an education that equips them with essential academic knowledge and nurtures their individual interests, passions, and aspirations. By adopting a community-connected approach to career academies, we aim to make education more relevant, engaging, and impactful.*

The Portrait of a Graduate:

- The portrait of a graduate emphasizes these areas for students: Communication, fully engaged learner, career and life skills, and a positive sense of self and purpose.

Timeline:

- 2018, initial site visit
- 2021, ASD board passes CCL goal
- 2022 Akron site visit, Ford Next Generation Learning (NGL) explore visit

- 2023, Nashville site visit, portrait of a graduate and why statements drafted, steering committee formed, tactic team planning
- 2023 – 2024, Master plan approved by ASD school board
- 2024, Ford NGL designation
- 2024 – 2025, Freshman Academy
- 2025 – 2026, Pathways for 10<sup>th</sup> graders

Academy team structure:

- Common planning time for teachers
- Students are cohort-scheduled
- Scheduling in intentional
- Business and civic engagement

Freshman Academy:

- Create a smaller learning community
- Transition support
  - Freshman first day orientation
  - Academy selection (spring 2025)
- Intentional career exploration opportunities
  - Career expo (Fall 2024)
  - College Visit (Spring 2025)
  - Career exploration class
- Community and business partnerships

Devon highlighted the partners involved in the process include United Way, UAA, Anchorage Chamber of Commerce, Anchorage Economic Development Corporation, the Municipality of Anchorage, various industry councils, advisory boards, curriculum industry credentialing advisors, and community members. He shared the statistics for community engagement as follows:

- |                                   |         |
|-----------------------------------|---------|
| • Presentations                   | 82+     |
| • Conversations and meetings      | 130+    |
| • Community convenings            | 2,732   |
| • Tactic team hours               | 5,998+  |
| • Parent/student survey responses | 10,000+ |

Tactic teams overview: (teams that feed the three-year master plan)

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|--|---|
| • Student voice                              | • Transitions                                   |
| • Mental health and student support          | • Resource management                           |
| • Data analysis and reporting                | • Credit and credentials                        |
| • Alternative school career academy planning | • Parent and family engagement                  |
| • Work-based learning                        | • Business and community partnership engagement |
| • Communications                             | • College and career exploration                |

Don Clack and Devon Roberts fielded clarifying questions from attendees.

Samantha Vetter asked what the academy model does for students with disabilities. Don Clack responded that the transition tactic team is looking at the model and what it means for special education. The model focuses on improving post-secondary outcomes for all students, allowing the district to work with community partners to determine what that is for students with disabilities. The model also focuses on access and equity, so it is important to develop programs within the high school that fill the gaps they have had for years to support successful transitions for students with disabilities.

Patrick Reinhart expressed the Council's appreciation for the partnership with the Anchorage School District on many projects.

### **DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The next Employment Committee meeting is scheduled for January 7, 2025, 12:00 – 1:30 p.m.

### **GOOD OF THE ORDER AND ADJOURNMENT**

Anna Attla **MOVED** to adjourn, **SECONDED** by Lisa McDonald. Hearing no opposition, the motion **PASSED**, and the meeting adjourned at 2:40 p.m.