



THE STATE  
of **ALASKA**  
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

Department of Education &  
Early Development

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March 26, 2019

Dear Alaska Superintendent Colleagues:

Current state regulations allow school districts with the flexibility to utilize computer science courses to meet high school graduation requirements. Access to computer science for students develops students' computational and critical thinking skills and shows them how to create, not merely use, new technologies.

National studies indicate that when computer science is not treated as an academic subject, students may not perceive advanced computer science as relevant to their future academic or career success, even as information technology job vacancies exist at all levels of training and education and across all industries that are critical to Alaska's economy. According to the Conference Board, there are over 650 computing jobs currently open in Alaska with an average salary for a computing occupation over \$84,000, significantly higher than the average salary in the state. Existing jobs alone represent a \$47 million opportunity in terms of annual salaries.

Computer science should be recognized as a distinct credit that can satisfy a graduation requirement in a core subject such as mathematics or science, or, increasingly, in computer science as a graduation requirement of its own. States that count computer science towards a core graduation requirement see 50% more enrollment in their AP Computer Science courses and increased participation from underrepresented minority students<sup>1</sup>.

Alaska regulation requires<sup>2</sup> local administrators to submit to their district boards for approval a plan for district high school graduation requirements that includes at least 21 units of credit, including 13 credits in English, math, science, social studies, health and physical education. **As such, districts may choose to allow a computer science course (including AP) to fulfill:**

1. A credit requirement in mathematics
2. A credit requirement in science
3. A local elective requirement
4. A local CTE or technology requirement

If a high school or district chooses to allow a computer science course to fulfill a mathematics or science credit, the school or district should denote on a student's transcript that computer science qualifies as a math or science course for students who successfully complete the course.

For additional questions about computer science initiatives and opportunities in Alaska, please contact our CTE team at (907) 465-2892. Thank you for your continued support of this important and challenging work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Johnson".

Dr. Michael Johnson  
Commissioner of Education & Early Development

<sup>1</sup> <http://blog.code.org/post/143007230537/computer-science-the-impactof-k-12-on-university>.

<sup>2</sup> [https://education.alaska.gov/regis/filed/4AAC\\_06.075.pdf](https://education.alaska.gov/regis/filed/4AAC_06.075.pdf)