

State Board of Education and Early Development

Annual Report to the Alaska Legislature

November 3, 2021



State Board of Education and Early Development

James Fields, Chair

Dr. Keith Hamilton, First Vice-Chair

Sandra Kowalski, Second Vice-Chair

Lorri Van Diest

Bob Griffin

Sally Stockhausen

Jeffrey Erickson

Vacant, Student Advisor

Vacant, Military Advisor

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Alaska State Constitution education clause	1
AS 14.07.168 Report to the legislature	1
DEED Mission and Vision	1
DEED Purpose and Shared Commitments.....	2
Alaska’s Education Challenge Goals	3
Regulations and Other Board Actions	4
Significant Steps	5
COVID-19 Response Efforts.....	5
Assessments	7
School Health and Safety	8
Advancing Tribal Compacting and Culturally Relevant Education	10
Improving Teacher Retention and Recruitment.....	11
School Data Portal for Alaska’s Families	12
Other Department Functions	13
Mt. Edgecumbe High School	13
Alaska State Council on the Arts	13
The Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums.....	13
Professional Teaching Practices Commission	14
School and Student Data	15
Graduation and Dropout Rates	15
National Assessment of Educational Progress	15

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Alaska State Constitution Education Clause

Section 7.1 - Public Education.

The legislature shall by general law establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all children of the State, and may provide for other public educational institutions. Schools and institutions so established shall be free from sectarian control. No money shall be paid from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or other private educational institution.

AS 14.07.168. Report to the legislature

Not later than the 30th legislative day of each regular session of the legislature, the board shall prepare and present in person to the legislative committees having jurisdiction over education an annual report that describes the efforts of the board to develop, maintain, and continuously improve a comprehensive quality public education system, as provided for under the bylaws of the board. The report must include: (1) a summary of the resolves and rationales provided in support of policy decisions made under AS 14.03.015; (2) program and curriculum changes made, discussed, or recommended in meetings held under AS 14.07.125; (3) additional information relevant to efforts made to improve and maintain the public education system.

OUR MISSION

**An excellent education
for every student
every day.**

OUR VISION

**All students will succeed in their
education and work, shape
worthwhile and satisfying lives
for themselves, exemplify the best
values of society, and be effective
in improving the character and
quality of the world about them.**

Alaska Statute 14.03.015

Photo courtesy of Anchorage School District. Used with permission.

Purpose Statement

The Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) provides *information, resources, and leadership* to support an excellent education for every student every day.



Alaska's Education Challenge

Over the last five years, parents, students, educators, policymakers, tribal leaders, partner organizations, and local school boards have stepped forward to answer Alaska's call to action to create a shared vision for improving our public education system – the result is Alaska's Education Challenge.

"Alaska's Education Challenge is a question to all Alaskans – 'How will we meet the educational challenges in our state?'" – Alaska Education Commissioner Dr. Michael Johnson

That vision starts with three shared commitments: (1) Increase Student Success, (2) Cultivate Safety and Well-Being, and (3) Support Responsible and Reflective Learners.

In order to meet Alaska's education challenges, we are addressing our public education system through three components:

1. A call to action: Shared Commitments
2. A focus of efforts: Measurable Goals
3. A prioritization of change: Targeted Strategies



Under the board’s leadership, DEED has been collaborating with partner organizations to create and implement a strategic plan focused on five specific, measurable goals that are most likely to improve student outcomes from the dialogue and recommendations brought forward through the Alaska’s Education Challenge.

They are:

1. Support all students to read at grade level by the end of third grade
2. Increase career, technical, and culturally relevant education to meet student and workforce needs
3. Close the achievement gap by ensuring equitable educational rigor and resources
4. Prepare, attract, and retain effective education professionals
5. Improve the safety and well-being of students through school partnerships with families, communities, and tribes

To learn more about the Alaska’s Education Challenge and view the strategic plan, visit <https://education.alaska.gov/akedchallenge>.

Alaska Department of Education & Early Development Strategic Plan

**Meeting
Alaska's
Education
Challenge
Together**

Together, we will meet Alaska's education challenge by honoring our heritage, innovating for the future, and prioritizing for today's fiscal challenges

EDUCATION
& EARLY DEVELOPMENT

REGULATIONS AND OTHER BOARD ACTIONS

In January, the board swore in members Jeffrey Erickson and Sally Stockhausen, adopted regulation changes updating Alaska's Early Literacy Guidelines, and approved its annual report to the legislature. Governor Mike Dunleavy appointed to the board Mr. Erickson of Unalakleet and reappointed Ms. Stockhausen of Ketchikan. Mr. Erickson was appointed January 12, 2021 to fill the seat for the Second Judicial District. Mr. Erickson's term expires March 1, 2024. Ms. Stockhausen was reappointed to fill the seat for the First Judicial District. Ms. Stockhausen's term expires March 1, 2026. The State of Alaska Early Learning Guidelines define the domains for pre-elementary children and are part of the program requirements for pre-elementary schools. The guidelines were updated following a robust Alaska stakeholder engagement process and a formal public comment period. The guidelines are aligned to the Alaska English Language Arts and Mathematics Standards, the Head Start framework, Centers for Disease Control milestones, and the Alaska Developmental Profile goals. The guidelines were last updated in December 2007.

In March, the board approved a ten-year renewal for Chinook Montessori Charter School in the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District and Tongass School of Arts and Sciences in the Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District. The board also approved the final annual priority list of capital projects eligible for funding under the school construction and major maintenance grant funds, subject to appropriation. Additionally, the board granted authority to the Commissioner to pursue options for land conveyance currently owned by the Department on Japonski Island in Sitka to the Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium.

In June, following a public comment period, the board adopted updated regulations regarding the assessment of English language learners, exit criteria for English learners, and updated English language proficiency standards. The previous standards were published in 2007.

The board also voted to approve Dorothy Chase, Lydia Agnus and Marry Suzzuk Huntington to the Mt. Edgecumbe High School Advisory Board and adopted changes to Mt. Edgecumbe High School credit requirements.

In August the board approved the department's FY2022 operating budget. The board also authorized the Commissioner to enter into an agreement to sell property associated with Mt. Edgecumbe High School to the City and Borough of Sitka for development of a new seaplane base.

The board approved an amended charter for Eagle Academy Charter School in the Anchorage School District allowing the school to add 7th and 8th grade beginning with the 2022-2023 school year.

The board also approved the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) Teacher Preparation Program. The approval of the program is a continuation of approval and follows the program

receiving Council of Accreditation of Educator Program (CAEP) accreditation for initial licensure level and advanced level programs in Spring of 2020. The board's approval of the UAS program is valid through June 30, 2025.

New Officers, Members, and Staff

In June, the board re-elected James Fields as Chair and Dr. Keith Hamilton as First Vice-Chair. Sandy Kowalski was elected as Second Vice-Chair. The positions are valid from July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022.

In August, the board created five subcommittees aligned with the strategic priorities of Alaska's Education Challenge: Reading, CTE and Cultural Education, Safety and Wellbeing, Tribal Compacting, and Effective Educators.

SIGNIFICANT STEPS

COVID-19 Response Efforts

During these challenging times, DEED remains committed to providing an excellent education for every student every day. Thanks to the innovation and perseverance of teachers, school administrators, parents and education advocates throughout the state, schools were able to return to in-person instruction for to begin the 2021-2022 school year. Although districts offered remote learning options for families, none of Alaska's 54 district began the year without offering in-person instruction.

Virtual informational meetings with school district superintendents and other educational leaders took place on a regular basis with DEED and Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) staff. In May, DEED and DHSS jointly launched the Start Strong campaign for COVID-19 back-to-school information. To receive funds from the American Rescue Plan Act, school districts were required to develop a "Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services Plan" (mitigation plan). Through the Start Strong campaign, DEED and DHSS provided guidance and resources for districts developing mitigation plans and made all mitigation plans available to the public online in the form of a Smartsheet webpage.

The Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021 (CRRSA), was signed into law on December 27, 2020 and provides an additional \$54.3 billion for the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER II Fund). On January 5, 2021, Secretary DeVos announced the release to State Education Agencies (SEAs). Alaska received \$159,719,422.

The American Rescue Plan Act, 2021 (ARP), was signed into law on March 11, 2021. The ARP Act provides an additional \$122 billion for the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER III Fund) to help meet a wide range of needs arising from the Coronavirus pandemic, including reopening schools safely, sustaining their safe operation, and addressing

students' social, emotional, mental health, and academic needs resulting from the pandemic. The ARP Act provides an additional \$2.75 billion in assistance to Non-Public Schools (EANS), \$3 billion for Special Education, and additional funding for homeless children & youth, Tribal Educational Agencies, Native Hawaiians, and Alaska Natives. Alaska's total ARP ESSER allocation is approximately \$358 million.

Combined with the CARES Act funds distributed in 2020, the CRRSA and ARP Act provided approximately \$504 million for distribution to Alaska's school districts for allocation by local school boards to their schools. DEED provided resources and guidance to districts to help ensure their plans contained eligible uses with the maximum benefit. These resources and other information including district allocations, grant award lists and FAQs are available on the Department's COVID-19 Information page of its website.

To form Alaska's ARP State Plan, DEED solicited stakeholder feedback through webinars for both all stakeholders and stakeholders advocating for underserved populations. In partnership with the Region 16 Comprehensive Center, DEED used the online collaboration platform ThoughtExchange to gather feedback on priorities for ARP funded interventions through an essential question soliciting responses that were unique and authentic. ThoughtExchange makes it possible for large, diverse groups to contribute ideas and surface priorities among those ideas to help inform and improve the decisions made by an organization. Responders had the option of selection which school district they were associated with, allowing DEED to provide districts with input pertinent to their communities. More than 2,100 people, including the State Board, provided input on the Alaska's ARP State Plan before it was submitted. The U.S. Department of Education approved Alaska's ARP State Plan in August.

In August 2020, CARES Acts funds were used to purchase the licensing necessary to provide an Instructure Canvas account for every teacher and student in the state. Canvas is a web-based learning management system and is used by schools to manage digital learning, by educators to create and present online learning materials and assess student learning, and by students to engage in courses and receive feedback about skill development and learning achievement. DEED provided account access as an additional tool and asset at no cost to districts, teachers, and students. In August and September of 2021, DEED offered 15 training sessions for both teachers and administrators. Additional free training opportunities continued to be offered in October, November, and December as part of the "Beyond the Bell" professional development series offered in partnership with SERRC. DEED is partnering with NEA-Alaska and Alaska teachers to provide access to the AK Commons, a statewide shared warehouse full of K-12 course content for all educators to access on Canvas, including courses uploaded and reviewed by Alaska educators.

Throughout the pandemic, efforts have been made to ensure that students receive mental health support. In partnership with the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB), DEED has continued to release new resources and trainings as part of the Transforming Schools: A

Framework for Trauma Engaged Schools. In fall of 2021, DEED and DHSS Division of Public Health partnered to launch the Alaska Healthy Schools Learning Collaborative, a free professional development series available for anyone who works in education. The program includes sessions in the following categories: School Climate/Relationships, Trauma-Engaged Schools, School Health, Staff Wellness, Transitions, and Youth Engagement.

The Federal Programs team secured a number of waivers from the federal government to provide flexibility in federal requirements under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) for the 2020-2021 school year.

The Child Nutrition team secured a number of waivers from the federal government to continue the distribution of meals in non-congregate settings and allow for parent/guardian pick-up of meals and meals that do not meet normal meal pattern requirements. This has enabled districts to continue food distribution to students in need.

The Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE) continued a disaster forbearance available to borrowers impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, effectively reducing interest rates to 0% for qualifying Alaska Student Loan Corporation borrowers requesting forbearance as economic hardship assistance for reasons related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

For the 2020-2021 school year, certain coursework and testing requirements for teachers and student teacher licenses and the prescribed length of student teaching were also suspended. These suspensions allow districts to focus their efforts on restart efforts and continuing instruction for students.

Assessments

Performance Evaluation for Alaska's Schools (PEAKS) and the Alaska Science Assessment are statewide summative assessments designed to provide important data for parents, educators, policy makers, communities, and businesses about how Alaska's schools and districts are performing. This information informs school improvement efforts at the state and local levels and helps ensure there is equity in education for all students. Assessments are one piece of the larger education system, and Alaska's statewide summative assessments are one part of a balanced assessment system.

PEAKS assesses students in grades 3-9 on the state's current English language arts and mathematics standards. Adopted in 2012, PEAKS was first administered in spring 2017. The Alaska Science Assessment assesses students in grades 4, 8, and 10 on the state's science standards. The spring 2019 administration assessed students on the now-former science standards, adopted in 2006. Starting in 2022, students will be assessed on Alaska's revised science standards that were adopted in June 2019.

Unlike the previous school year, the U.S. Department of Education did not grant blanket waivers of certain requirements which had resulted in the cancellation of the PEAKS content

area assessments in Mathematics, English Language Arts, and the Alaska Science Assessment, Dynamic Learning Maps alternate assessment, and WIDA ACCESS for ELLs and Alternate ACCESS.

While assessments were required for the 2020-2021 schools year, DEED extended flexibilities to school districts such as extending the testing window and other measures the ensure districts were able to assess as many students as possible given the mitigation requirements in place for each community. Approximately 64% of enrolled students participated in the Spring 2021 administration of the PEAKS assessment. In addition to the low overall participation rate, participation rates were highly variable from district to district. Therefore, DEED urged caution when comparing statewide results to previous years. However, the results are still useful for showing the progress of individual students.

For the graduating class of 2021, the testing requirement (ACT, SAT, and WorkKeys) was waived for Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS) eligibility. APS award level was determined by the student's GPA. The testing requirement was waived due to the nationwide cancellation of test administrations in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic. This waiver was the same as what was in place for the graduating class of 2020. Details of this waiver and any other changes to APS policies are available on the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education's APS website.

In January DEED solicited through a Request for Informal Proposal process for the development of an Innovative Assessment System to replace the Performance Evaluation for Alaska's Schools. In June, DEED announced it selected NWEA as the vendor to develop the assessment system, called the Alaska System of Academic Readiness, or AK STAR. DEED worked closely with NWEA and the Region 16 Comprehensive Center to ensure a smooth rollout. For the 2021-2022 school year, AK STAR is comprised of three interim assessments and one summative assessment. Beginning with the 2022-2023 school year, the third interim assessment and summative assessment will be combined into one test.

School Health and Safety Program

DEED's 2021 School Health and Safety Program focus was divided between its ongoing efforts to advance the Alaska Education Challenge's "Nurturing Safety and Well-Being" commitment and its more immediate need to provide districts with COVID-19 preparedness and response support.

Highlights of the Health and Safety Program's Education Challenge Implementation Efforts

- **Transforming Schools Framework**

DEED, in collaboration with the Association of Alaska Schools Boards (AASB), has updated and expanded resources and trainings which complement the Transforming Schools Trauma Framework completed in 2019. More than 2,500 copies of a toolkit complementing the framework were requested and distributed in 2021, bringing the

total distribution of the toolkit to more than 8,500. The toolkit is a supplemental and highly practical online resource to assist Alaska schools becoming fully trauma engaged and practicing. The toolkit is intended for districts to use with staff. It contains training, professional learning, tools, activities and resources that illustrate, expand on, and can be used to implement the content for each of the framework's chapters. DEED and AASB are conducting statewide trainings on the framework this winter and have updated the toolkit with additional resources.

- **eLearning Courses**

DEED's eLearning Program provided more than 60 trainings to districts at no cost and now serves more than 27,000 school district employees. While the eLearning Program provided training on a broad spectrum of educational topics the most heavily trafficked courses DEED offers continued to be those focusing on school health and safety topics. DEED continued its multi-year development of distance-delivered trainings to assist districts with becoming trauma-engaged in 2020 and constructed an additional collection of courses with an emphasis on content that would be most helpful during a pandemic. DEED's 2021 trauma-engaged schools course offerings included:

- *Overcoming Anxiety and Stress in Alaskan Schools*
- *E-cigarette Use Among Alaska Teens*

COVID-19 Preparedness and Response

- In partnership with the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, secured funding and hired a Long Term Non-Perm Mental Health Education Specialist II position at DEED to better support districts during the pandemic. The new COVID-19 Response and Recovery Mental Health Education Specialist II Position has now onboarded 10 rural and remote school districts that do not otherwise have in-school access to mental health supports. The team has delivered presentations and social-emotional learning (SEL) coaching directly via zoom to elementary students and high schoolers across the state, as well as working with districts individually to identify SEL curricula specific to their needs. Through the position there have also been direct, one on one services available to staff and students. While school is not in session there has been focus on creating and expanding milestone guides for the Transforming Schools Trauma Engaged Framework and Toolkit as well as building mental health related resource guides for FY2022.
- DEED, in partnership with DHSS has continued to delivery School Health ECHO trainings to districts every Monday at 3:30pm. These popular statewide virtual trainings provide weekly updates on COVID-19 mitigation strategies and allows districts to both seek clarification on COVID related issues and share successes and challenges.
- The Health and Safety Team, in partnership with Public Health, conducted more than 40 presentations entitled "*Supporting Staff, Students, and Families through COVID,*" to more than 1,800 educators, parents, and community members on how to mitigate and recover from the school-based stress, grief, and anxiety COVID-19 has generated.

- The Health and Safety Team partnered with DHSS to co-sponsor the 15th Annual School Health and Wellness Institute (SHWI) in February. The event provided training for Alaska school staff members across the state adapted to the many stressors related to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as Mental Health / Suicide Prevention and Trauma-Engaged Schools; Self-Care for Educators; School and Family Partnerships; Health Education Support; Physical Health Activities and Nutrition; Relationships and Violence Prevention; and Substance Misuse Prevention.

Advancing Tribal Compacting and Culturally Relevant Education

Alaska’s Education Challenge identified increasing career, technical, and culturally relevant education to meet student and workforce needs and improving the safety and wellbeing of students through school partnerships with families, communities and tribes as two of five strategic priorities. In 2021, DEED partnered with two tribal entities for projects that advance these goals.

In July, DEED announced a grant to the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) to scope tribal compacting of education in Alaska. Under the agreement, AFN will:

- Identify relevant federal and state laws and regulations
- Compile relevant material related to education Alaska Native students
- Engage with Alaska Native leaders and subject matter experts on educational compacting operations
- Design a comprehensive path forward
- Design seminars for educators and administrators on the ‘why’ and ‘what’ of compacting
- Participate in discussions with the State of Alaska and various committees of the Alaska State Legislature to respond to questions on the final pathway report

AFN has been approved for a \$1 million grant for the Education Compacting Project. The project is funded by the Federal CARES Act, Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund. The grand award period runs through June 30, 2022.

In October, DEED announced a grant to Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC) to conduct an analysis and identify strategies for developing culturally relevant curriculum, programs and school partnerships for Alaska Native and American Indian students.

CITC will conduct four primary activities during the project. Working with its partners, CITC will organize approximately 15 community work sessions throughout Alaska. Parental input and student voices will be prominent in these community work sessions. CITC will also conduct other activities with many different stakeholders to help create a vision of education for

Alaska's future. Following the community sessions, CITC staff and an Advisory Group will synthesize the input gathered through the project's various methods. CITC will deliver a report to DEED that includes strategic priorities and recommended education models for values-based K-12 public education in Alaska that can be shared with tribes throughout the state.

DEED awarded CITC a \$1 million grant for the 18-month project with funding from the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act.

Improving Teacher Retention and Recruitment

In his 2020 State of the State Address, Governor Mike Dunleavy directed the Commissioner to assemble a working group made up of teachers, administrators, and others to review the root causes of Alaska's teacher retention and recruitment issues, including reviewing working conditions and benefits in order to retain great teachers. A working group was formed and met 10 times from May 2020 through March 2021. The working group reviewed existing literature on the topic, conducted surveys and interviews, and synthesized data.

In April, the Governor's Teacher Retention and Recruitment Working Group released the survey results, along with a TRR Action Plan. The TRR Action Plan provides the information necessary to address the root causes of Alaska's educator recruitment and retention challenges. The recommendations and framework propose six essential areas for practical, professional, and policy recommendations. Those essential areas were identified as enhancing recruiting efforts, strengthening working conditions, restructuring retirement options, developing leadership, creating paraprofessional pathways, and streamlining certification.

The Working Group's TRR Action Plan said that although salary topped the survey results, the working group recognizes that Alaska must first address its current fiscal situation. The TRR Action Plan provides recommendations that aim to address and improve upon other important factors to education. The working group's report stated that once the state addresses its current fiscal situation, a discussion around teacher salaries may be considered by education stakeholders, policymakers, and local communities.

In September, DEED issued a Request for Proposals for Teacher Retention and Recruitment Working Group Action Plan – Implementation and Management Services. In October, DEED awarded a contract to Adams Analytic Solution LCC. Throughout Winter 2021-2022, the contractor will implement work outlined in the TRR Action Plan. DEED expects a finalized Implementation Timeline in September 2022.

Implementing the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

COVID-19 Waivers

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, DEED applied for and received several waivers to requirements under ESSA. These include the following:

- DEED received a waiver from producing accountability designations for schools using data from the 2020-2021 school year. One assurance of the waiver was that schools identified for comprehensive, targeted, or additional targeted support and improvement in the 2019-2020 school year must maintain their designation for the 2020-2021 school year and receive supports and interventions consistent with their improvement plan. This means that accountability designations will be carried forward in the 2021-2022 school year and will remain the same as in the 2019-2020 school year. Detailed information about school designations is available on the System for School Success webpage. DEED will identify comprehensive, targeted, and additional targeted schools using data from the 2021-2022 school year in the fall of 2022.
- DEED received a waiver of the requirement in section 4201(b)(1)(A) of the ESEA for the 2020-2021 school year. This waiver enables DEED to approve a 21st CCLC subgrantee in the State to provide supplemental activities when school is in session, but students are not receiving in-person instruction, such as by permitting a teacher to provide additional academic supports during remote learning.

DEED continues to provide support to districts in responding to COVID-19 by helping them adapt ESSA programs and spending to new and evolving needs. DEED will continue to seek waivers to provide flexibility to subgrantees to address challenges this school year due to the impact of COVID-19.

School Data Portal Updated to Provide COVID-19 Mitigation Plans for Alaska’s Families

In September 2019, DEED launched an online data portal for Alaska’s families entitled The Compass: A Guide to Alaska’s Public Schools. The purpose of the online portal is to provide Alaska’s families with important information about their child’s school so they can make the best decisions for their child’s educational experience.



“*The Compass* can be a vehicle for transformation, not just information,” noted Commissioner Johnson. “The data displayed should drive school improvement discussions on behalf of our students.”

The Compass presents school-level data reported to DEED in an easily accessible and understandable online format. Visitors can view a profile of their school, compare their school’s data over multiple years, compare two schools, and explore educational options in their local school district and across the state. In 2020, DEED expanded the information available to include data relating to per-pupil expenditures of federal, state, and local funds per the new federal education requirements in ESSA.

Prior to the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year, DEED added a feature to *The Compass* allowing visitors to view the district’s COVID-19 Mitigation Plan when on a school’s page.

OTHER DEPARTMENT FUNCTIONS

Mt. Edgecumbe High School (MEHS)

Mt. Edgecumbe is the state-operated residential school in Sitka. The board serves as the MEHS board. Parents and others participate on an advisory board. MEHS started the 2020-21 school year with 421 students enrolled. Over 300 applications were reviewed for about 150 openings with an acceptance rate of 48%. About 20 beds were left unfilled to allow for quarantine needs.

Alaska State Council on the Arts

The Alaska State Council on the Arts supports educators, artists, community-based organizations, and statewide partners in delivery of arts education in schools and communities. The council awards funding to Alaskan schools, districts, educators, and organizations in several categories. Other grants to communities also serve students through school outreach and education programs provided by Alaskan arts and culture organizations.

The Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums (LAM)

The Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums offers library and information services to state agencies and the Legislature; employs consultants who assist local libraries, archives, and museums to develop their own services and programs; operates the state museums as a service to Alaskans and the tourist industry; provides for the orderly management of current state records; and preserves state government’s public records of permanent value for study and research.

Additionally, LAM provides a range of services that benefit lifelong learners and K-12 and postsecondary students, even during the COVID-19 months of remote learning. Examples are:

- The School Broadband Assistance Grant program provides funds to help schools get up to 25 mbps. During FY2022, 152 schools in 28 school districts received more than \$5.8M to get their students high speed broadband.
- Through OWL (Online with Libraries), rural public libraries have high-speed internet access, so students can access the internet after school hours. OWL also hosts a ZOOM network so libraries can provide public access to Zoom for meetings and events. In FY2021, the OWL Zoom network hosted 1,416 meetings for 7,700 attendees.
- The Alaska Digital Library and the Alaska Digital School Library provide Alaskans of all ages and students whose libraries have joined one of these digital library consortia to download thousands of audiobooks and eBooks. Usage of both services surged during FY2021 as readers turned to online ebooks and audiobooks.
- Live Homework Help provides live tutoring for students in grades four to early college, seven days a week, from 8 a.m. to 2 a.m. An advertising campaign in fall 2020 resulted in nearly 13,000 students using these live tutors to complete their homework, an increase of 25% over the previous year.
- Alaska’s Digital Archives shares digitized versions of more than 102,000 historical Alaskan videos, photographs, and documents with students and researchers.
- Alaska’s Statewide Library Electronic Doorway (SLED) Databases contain hundreds of full-text online books, magazines, newspapers, and other research resources targeted to elementary, middle school, high school, and college students’ academic needs.
- Other Divisions in the Department enhance the value of SLED by using their funds for statewide subscriptions to Tumblebooks (access to ebooks for children) and Teen Health and Wellness (a resource covering topics such as bullying, vaping, suicide, and school safety for teenagers).

Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC)

The Alaska Professional Teaching Practices Commission governs educators’ ethical and professional standards and their compliance with state law and contractual obligations. Certificate holders fund the Commission. The Commission reports by fiscal year. In FY2021, it accepted 29 cases and sanctioned 15 educators. Sanctions may vary from warnings to suspensions and revocations of certificates. View the FY2020 Annual Report at 2021 PTPC Annual Report.

SCHOOL AND STUDENT DATA

Graduation and Dropout Rates

All states report a four-year graduation rate for cohorts of students. Alaska has reported this data since the 2010-2011 school year. A student who entered 9th grade in the 2017-2018 school year would be a member of the 2021 cohort. Cohort groups include students who transfer into an Alaska public school.

The graduation rate is calculated as the number of graduates in the cohort who receive a regular diploma by June 30, divided by the number of all students assigned to the cohort.

Year	4-yr. graduation rate	Graduate count*
2011	68.0%	8,064
2012	69.4%	7,987
2013	71.8%	7,795
2014	71.2%	7,672
2015	75.6%	8,251
2016	76.1%	8,108
2017	78.2%	8,385
2018	78.5%	8,454
2019	79.8%	8,419
2020	78.9%	8,010
2021	78.09	7,963

*Graduate count is the number of students who graduated with a regular diploma during the school year (July 1-June 30). This count includes all students who graduate during the school year, regardless of cohort year.

In 2021, the five-year graduation rate was 84.09%. This refers to a cohort of students who were 9th-graders five school years previously. Many of the students graduated in four years, but others needed all or part of a fifth year.

Dropout rates are calculated by taking the total number of students in grades 7-12 who drop out of public school during the school year and dividing by the October 1 enrollment count for all students in grades 7-12.

Information for the 2020-2021 school year shows a grade 7-12 dropout rate of 3.12% compared to 2.7% in 2019-2022. Overall, the dropout rate has gradually declined from 6.0% in 2004-2005 to its current level.

Additional student and school data is available on DEED's Data Center website and on The Compass: A Guide to Alaska's Public Schools.

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

Every two years the U.S. Department of Education, through the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), tests large samples of 4th-graders and 8th-graders in each state (plus the District of Columbia and Department of Defense schools) in reading and mathematics. The most recent NAEP results were released in 2019. The next assessment will take place from January through March 2022, results should be released the following fall.

NAEP's state and nationwide results are presented as average scores on a scale of 000 to 500. The scale scores fall into four categories of achievement as defined by NAEP: advanced, proficient, basic, and below basic. Thus, NAEP also reports the percentage of students who fall within those achievement categories.

NAEP's definition of proficiency is rigorous. In NAEP, *basic* refers to partial mastery of the subject. *Proficient* refers to competency in challenging material, including knowledge, application, and analytical skills. *Advanced* is superior performance.

- In the highest-scoring state, 49% of its students scored proficient or advanced in 4th-grade reading;
- In the highest-scoring state, 52% of its students scored proficient or advanced in 8th-grade reading;
- In the highest-scoring state, 54% of its students scored proficient or advanced in 4th-grade math; and
- In the highest-scoring state, 47% of its students scored proficient or advanced in 8th-grade math.

NAEP summarizes a state's results by the number of states (plus D.C. and Department of Defense schools) it has scored *lower than*, *statistically the same as*, and *higher than*.

- In 4th grade math, Alaska scored lower than 46 states, statistically the same as 4 states, and higher than 1 state.
- In 8th grade math, Alaska scored lower than 37 states, statistically the same as 11 states, and higher than 3 states.
- In 4th grade reading, Alaska scored lower than 50 states and statistically the same as 1 state.
- In 8th grade reading, Alaska scored lower than 47 states and statistically the same as 4 states.

The following data, comparing Alaska results to the national average, are from results released in 2019. Alaska's performance on the NAEP is poor. It is similar to the national average because that also is poor. Some states perform notably better than Alaska and the national average. The department has cited Alaska's performance on NAEP as one indication of the need to implement higher standards in English language arts and math.

Math

Alaska 4th grade: 73% basic or above; 33% proficient or above; 5% advanced.
Nation 4th grade: 80% basic or above; 40% proficient or above; 9% advanced.
Alaska's average scale score is 232. The national average is 240.

Alaska 8th grade: 63% basic or above; 29% proficient or above; 7% advanced.
Nation 8th grade: 68% basic or above; 33% proficient or above; 10% advanced.
Alaska's average scale score is 274. The national average is 281.

Reading

Alaska 4th grade: 53% basic or above; 25% proficient or above; 5% advanced.
Nation 4th grade: 66% basic or above; 35% proficient or above; 9% advanced.
Alaska's average scale score is 204. The national average is 219.

Alaska 8th grade: 63% basic or above; 23% proficient or above; 2% advanced.
Nation 8th grade: 72% basic or above; 32% proficient or above; 4% advanced.
Alaska's average scale score is 252. The national average is 262.

For more information, see:

<https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/>

Alaska 2019 NAEP Results - 4th Grade Reading

Alaska 2019 NAEP Results - 4th Grade Mathematics

Alaska 2019 NAEP Results - 8th Grade Reading

Alaska 2019 NAEP Results - 8th Grade Mathematics