

**To: Members of the State Board of
Education & Early Development**

December 3, 2025

From: Dr. Deena Bishop, Commissioner

Agenda Item: 2

ISSUE

The board will receive an update on Typhoon Halong and its impact on schools, students, families, and district operations across the affected regions.

BACKGROUND

- Typhoon Halong made landfall in Western Alaska in mid-October 2025, causing severe coastal flooding, infrastructure collapse, and large-scale displacement across multiple regions. A Major Disaster Declaration was issued on October 22, 2025, authorizing federal assistance.
- Significant impacts include widespread damage to homes and critical infrastructure in several villages within the Lower Kuskokwim School District (LKSD), Lower Yukon School District (LYSD), Northwest Arctic Borough School District (NWABSD), and additional communities across Western Alaska. Multiple schools served as emergency shelters throughout the storm. Two LKSD villages, Kipnuk and Kwigillingok, remain fully evacuated due to catastrophic damage, rendering both schools non-operational.
- Additional impacts have been reported in Nightmute, Napakiak, Kotzebue, Kivalina, and several communities within the LYSD, Yupiit School District, and Bering Strait School District. These communities experienced flooding, power outages, school building damage, and shelter operations during and immediately after the storm.
- All displaced families have now moved out of congregate shelters and into short-term housing, primarily hotels in Anchorage and Bethel, with additional placements in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District (Mat-Su), Kenai Peninsula Borough School District, Fairbanks North Star Borough School District, and in boarding schools statewide. As of November 12, the State Emergency Operations Center reports approximately 617 individuals in hotel-based temporary housing in Anchorage. The next major milestone is securing long-term temporary housing, such as apartments or rental homes, for families whose villages will require extended rebuilding before they can return.
- Education continuity remains a priority. Displaced students have already been enrolled across receiving districts, with the Anchorage School District focusing on clustering students to maintain cultural and instructional support. Elementary students are being placed at Anchorage Native Cultural Charter School and College Gate Elementary's Yup'ik immersion program, while secondary students are clustered at Wendler Middle School and East High School's Extended World of Education program. Commissioner Bishop has also coordinated with superintendents of Nenana, Galena, Mt. Edgecumbe,

and the Lower Yukon School District to make additional boarding school space available for students from Kipnuk and Kwigillingok, whose high school–age population is approximately 86 students. In addition, DEED is working with partners in the Bristol Bay region on a proposed long-term rural placement option using winter dormitory housing in King Salmon and Naknek; this option remains in the proposal phase pending further coordination and community input.

- DEED established a Disaster Recovery website to give districts, staff, and families a single location to access guidance on facilities, finance, federal assistance programs, student services, behavioral-health supports, and McKinney-Vento homeless education resources. DEED is also helping districts document site and facility damages to ensure eligibility for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Public Assistance and U.S. Department of Education Project School Emergency Response to Violence (Project SERV) funding, while coordinating with district McKinney-Vento liaisons to ensure displaced students are identified, enrolled immediately, and connected to available supports. **DEED will also continue working closely with districts and state and federal partners to provide step-by-step guidance, monitor key timelines, and ensure districts have the support they need to navigate each requirement and meet all deadlines throughout the recovery process.**
- DEED staff conducted on-site assessments in Nightmute, Chefornak, Kipnuk, and Kwigillingok to evaluate Typhoon Halong’s impact on school facilities and to support LKSD’s response efforts. During the visits, DEED reviewed damage to buildings and utilities, observed sheltering conditions, coordinated with district leadership, and provided supplies that were deeply appreciated by local staff and families. The team identified several statewide needs, including improved tracking and coordination of relief workers housed in school facilities, clearer communication protocols with state and federal partners, and the importance of ensuring school districts have a formal voice in Incident Command. These findings will help DEED strengthen emergency management planning and better support districts during future disasters.
- State and federal coordination is ongoing, including requests to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) for a bona fide separation waiver allowing the Anchorage School District to employ retired teachers as long-term substitutes, and flexibility for J-1 visa educators so they can temporarily work where displaced students are living. Additional coordination includes U.S. Department of Education support for Project SERV eligibility and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) waivers to redirect food commodities to shelters and host communities.

OPTIONS

This is a work session item for informational purposes only.