



MEMORANDUM

To: State Board of Education & Early Development

Date: November 18, 2020

Thru: Commissioner Michael Johnson

Telephone: (907) 465-2857

From: Director Tamara Van Wyhe

Subject: Division Updates

Assessments

- From October 12 through October 15, members of the assessments team met with the Technical Advisory Committee, a panel of national experts in assessment and accountability. Topics covered included the spring 2021 PEAKS administration, post equating for spring 2021, the statewide accountability system in 2021, and development of the PEAKS Science assessment, and ELP assessment proficiency results.
- Plans are moving forward with preparations for the spring 2021 PEAKS assessments. States received a [letter from US Department of Education Secretary DeVos](#) in September stating that waivers for spring 2021 assessments will not be granted. It is the expectation that states will administer summative assessments this year, consistent with requirements of the law and following the guidance of local health officials.
- Field testing for the new PEAKS Science assessment will take place during the spring 2021 PEAKS testing window.
- The Assessments team held a virtual training on October 28 for new District Test Coordinators and another webinar for all District Test Coordinators on November 3rd. The next training webinar is scheduled for December 3rd. DEED will also host, along with our test vendor DRC, a webinar for Technology Coordinators on December 1.
- After being initially postponed for one year, NAEP Long Term Trend assessment for 17-year-old students will *not* take place in 2021.
- Statutes and regulations requiring the Alaska Developmental Profile (ADP), Alaska's kindergarten entrance observation have been suspended for 2020. The ADP will not take place in 2020.
- Scheduled 2020 – 2021 Assessment windows:

- August 3 – September 25, 2021: special window for eligible students to complete WIDA ACCESS for ELLs
- January 25 – March 5: National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)
- February 1 – March 31, 2021: WIDA ACCESS for ELLs
- March 15 – April 30, 2021: Dynamic Learning Maps alternate assessment
- March 29 – April 30, 2021: Performance Evaluation for Alaska's Schools (PEAKS), Computer-based
- April 5 – April 16, 2021: Performance Evaluation for Alaska's Schools (PEAKS), Paper-based

Career and Technical Education program

- The Career & Technical Education Team recently completed the annual reallocation to districts of unused Perkins funds from last year. Funds awarded to districts last year but unused due to COVID interruptions are still available to districts. Leftover unawarded funds were distributed among 33 districts taking Perkins funds during this annual reallocation. Eligible districts were awarded an additional \$5,000 - \$56,000 depending on student count.
- Thirty-seven districts have a submitted and approved FY2021 application for Perkins CTE funds for the current school year. The team continues to assist six districts to get application for funds submitted and approved.
- The CTE Team sponsored district participation in the Alaska Association for Career & Technical Education's annual statewide Professional Development Conference held virtually on October 9-10, 2020. In lieu of travel scholarships to the normally Anchorage based in-person conference, national and state memberships were sponsored for over 80 participants representing 23 school districts, CTE classrooms, post-secondary Perkins grantees, and student service organizations.

CARES Act

- ESSERF/GEERF: The FY2021 CARES Act Application for school districts remains open. Forty-nine (49) districts have received final approval and 5 districts are still working through the approval levels. Funds are distributed once the district's application and reimbursement request is approved by DEED. A list of district allocations is posted to the DEED COVID-19 webpage: <https://education.alaska.gov/news/COVID-19/caresact/CARES%20Act%20Allocations%204.27.2020.pdf>.
- Private Schools: This October, DEED made Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) grants available to private schools in Alaska. These grants cover costs that are necessary expenditures incurred due to the public health emergency with respect to COVID-19. Grant awards will be based on student enrollment as of October 1, 2019 or October 1, 2020. The deadline for submitting the requested information to receive such grant is November 30, 2020.
- Competitive GEERF: DEED ran a competitive Request for Applications (RFA) under the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEERF) which was established in the CARES Act. 15 applicants were selected by the review committee to receive grant funding totaling approximately \$1 million. Grantees are currently working on submitting revised budgets for approval and grant awards are being issued.
- Funding was also available for districts to cover costs associated with lodging and per diem for staff who were required to quarantine before entering the community.

Data and Accountability

- Accountability System
 - The US Department of Education released an addendum for accountability for the system that will be calculated in Fall 2021. This addendum provides for some flexibility around: indicators in which we have missing data from 2019-2020, long-term goals (bumping them one year forward), and around school identification and continued school support. DEED's submission is currently being prepared with a plan to gather stakeholder input in December. The addendum is due to USED by February 1st.
- Data Collections
 - The Suspensions and Expulsions collection opened for trial submissions on 4/20/2020 and all certified submissions have been collected.
 - The Certified Staffing collection opened on 10/01/2020 and submissions were due by 10/15/2020.
 - The Classified Staffing collection opened on 10/01/2020 and submissions were due by 10/15/2020.
 - The Fall OASIS collection opened on 10/23/2020 and closed on 11/06/2020.
- EDFacts – Federal Reporting Requirements
 - The November EDFacts collection has been completed.
 - There are additional rounds of submissions coming up in December, January, and February.
- Preparations for the Report Card (due on 01/15/2021) is ongoing. As a reminder, many federal requirements related to the Report Card that uses data from the 2019-2020 school year have been waived:
 - Percentage of students assessed and not assessed.
 - Assessment results
 - Number and percentage of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities taking an alternate assessment.
 - Accountability system description
 - Other academic indicator results (academic growth)
 - School quality or student success indicator results (chronic absenteeism, Grade 3 ELA)
 - Progress toward meeting long-term goals and measurements of interim progress.

Early Learning Programs

Head Start

- DEED and the Department of Health and Social Services, a series of 5 weekly webinars were offered to Head Start programs from July 29th through August 26, featuring live discussions and presentation on health, mental health, and special education resources.
- The Federal Office of Head Start is not collecting annual Program Information Report (PIR) for the 2019-2020 school year or the 2020-2021 school year.
- Head Start programs have reported a need to reduce the number of children served in the classroom in order to meet social distancing mandates.
- ThrivAlaska started a school-aged childcare program, specifically to address the need for their staff's school-aged children.
- This year, all Head Start monitoring will take place virtually.

- The Federal Designated Renewal System (DRS) is revised to 2020 - Head Start programs receive 5-year grants, which are renewed unless conditions warrant a re-compete status.
- The Head Start Act is due for reauthorization this year (Senator Murkowski and Senator Duckworth have penned a letter expressing bipartisan support).

Early Childhood

- 17 school district Pre-Elementary grantees for FY21
- Federal Preschool Development Grant activities ended 9/30/2020.
 - Strategic Plan completed and posted at <https://earlychildhoodalaska.com/>
- Alaska Developmental Profile assessment requirement cancelled for Fall 2020 due to COVID-19
- GOLD developmental assessment requirement cancelled for Fall 2020 due to COVID-19
- Pre-Elementary Approval to Operate granted to 43 programs (per 4 AAC 60.036) in Fall 2020

ESEA/ESSA Federal Programs

- DEED continues to provide support to districts in responding to COVID-19 by helping them adapt ESEA 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.
- The Migrant Education Program team at DEED provided training on the identification and recruitment of migratory children to all school districts operating a migrant education program. Trainings were conducted virtually. Approximately 175 school district staff from 41 school districts participated in these trainings.
- This past quarter, experienced Alaska 21st CCLC grantees were invited to present to a national audience on strategies around partner engagement. Of particular note was the Anchorage School District's 21st CCLC program's partnership with Lego Education.
- As an adaptation to COVID-19, this fall the DEED 21st CCLC Director has been meeting virtually with grantees every other week in order to provide training, get feedback, and collaborate. Additionally, over the course of a month, 4 webinars highlighting best practices in afterschool have been provided for Alaska grantees virtually, utilizing national presenters.
- The 6th annual Alaska Afterschool Conference, which DEED co-hosts, will be held virtually on November 19 and 20 and will include 3 plenary sessions, twelve unique breakout sessions, and additional pre-recorded content.
- DEED applied for and 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 allow 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 21st CCLC staff to provide additional academic supports during remote learning.
- DEED continues to offer quarterly webinar updates for McKinney Vento Homeless liaisons. The webinar provides reminders of the important role of liaisons in identifying and supporting homeless students.
- To encourage collaboration between Alaska's professional development providers and Title IIA Program Coordinators, DEED coordinates quarterly collaboration webinars. Additionally, DEED has joined a national collaborative, Designing Professional Learning in a Virtual World, offered through Learning Forward to establish a statewide plan of professional learning. DEED is seeking input from all the educational organizations that provide professional development throughout the state.

Health and Safety Programs

Alaska Project AWARE

- The Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) has been awarded a five-year \$9.1 million Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education) grant from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The grant will assist the state in improving mental health by growing mental health literacy, reducing mental health stigma, strengthening early identification and intervention for student mental health conditions, as well as providing more robust services for students who are experiencing severe mental health issues.
- DEED will be partnering with the Juneau Borough School District (JBSD), Fairbanks North Star Borough School District (FNSBSD), and Bering Strait School District (BSSD).
- In JBSD, FNSBSD, and BSSD the new Project AWARE grant will expand the implementation of social emotional learning, restorative practices, and other evidence-based trauma-engaged practices as well as significantly increase capacity to meet the mental health challenges through additional staffing. Each district strategically selected schools in which to embed grant-funded professional mental health providers to deliver these essential services. The providers will deliver mental health supports to students for the entire five-year life of the grant and will actively work to grow sustainability so these vital services can continue after the grant ends.

Alaska Safe Children's Act Update

- The team has completed the state authored student training to support districts with the implementation of the Alaska Safe Children's Act in grades 7-12. DEED, in consultation with school districts across Alaska, developed the online curriculum entitled **Bree's Law Education**, to better support teachers and to create consistency in content and messaging for all students in Alaska.
- The curriculum contains three grade bands (7-8, 9-10, 11-12) which each include 5 modules on dating violence awareness and prevention and sexual assault/abuse awareness and prevention. The curriculum meets the full requirements for student training under the Alaska Safe Children's Act, including requirements for Bree's Law and Erin's Law and is designed to help prevent childhood sexual abuse and teen dating abuse.
- The curriculum is housed in the eLearning Classroom and is available to all districts.
- The team also completed a short teacher training video to accompany the curriculum to support educators in teaching the content and linking them to national, state and local resources for teen dating violence and sexual abuse.

COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) Preparedness

- The Health and Safety Team is continuing to support the delivery and content development for the School Health ECHO Series in partnership with DHSS.
- The Health and Safety Team continues to partner with Public Health to support school nurses to be trained and paid to conduct COVID-19 contact tracing in Fairbanks, Kenai, Juneau, and Mat-Su.
- As part of the Transforming Schools Trauma-Engaged Toolkit rollout the Health and Safety Team, in partnership with AASB, has provided a weekly webinar series highlighting each chapter in the Transforming Schools: A Framework for Trauma-Engaged Practice in Alaska.
- In response to district requests, the Health and Safety Team has mailed out more than 3600 copies of the Transforming Schools: A Framework for Trauma-Engaged Practice in Alaska.

eLearning

- Updated the most-frequently trafficked eLearning courses with latest state and national data and resources.
- Continuing the procurement process for the next 5-year (2020-2025) eLearning contract to ensure no interruptions in training for the program's 27,000 school district members.
- In partnership with DHSS, a new eLearning course on vaping is under development.

School Recognition and Support

Grants

CSI/TSI Grants

- School improvement (1003a) grants for schools designated as Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) and Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) are in the process of being awarded. Staff continue to work with districts to complete the required application and school improvement plan requirements.
 - Due to the cancellation of the spring administration of statewide assessments, school designations will remain the same as they were for school year 2019-2020. No schools will exit a designation category for the current year.
- Grants for this program have been moved to the Grants Management System (GMS) to speed up reimbursement requests and payments to districts.

School Improvement Grant (SIG 1003g)

- The last School Improvement 1003g grants have been distributed this year. This federal grant program is sunsetting this year.

Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant (CLSD)

- Reviewing, approving, and supporting schools awarded the CLSD Program Grant.
 - Grants provide funding to implement literacy-based strategies to improve literacy rates in K-12.
- This is a Five-Year grant and the 2nd Year allocations have been distributed to districts.
- DEED has procured an external evaluator for this project to work with districts and DEED to ensure the successful implementation of the grant.
- The CLSD Fall 2020 Convening was held on October 28, 2020 via Zoom.
 - 61 participants from 21 districts, 5 DEED support staff, 2 External Evaluators, and 1 Comprehensive Center staff member engaged in event.

AASB Grant Support

- This grant, awarded to the Alaska Association of School Boards (AASB), is supporting the School Boards and Advisory Boards with training and support.
- This Fall there have been 8 trainings for superintendents, school boards and advisory boards to better support school improvement.

State System of Support (SSOS) Coaching Program

- The SSOS Coaching program is moving to a regional model of support.
- Six regions will have two coaches each. Two regions will collaborate with the Comprehensive Literacy Statewide Development (CLSD) Grant.
- Hours of service provided to districts by SSOS coaches for August/September:

Coaching Support Type	Hours
Coaching Conversation	133.8
Supporting School Improvement Plan /Data	182.05
Inservice/Professional Development	93.55
Planning and Resource Development	96.8
Instructional Support and Observation	36.5
Family/Community Support	0
Regional Meetings	8
DEED Meetings	47
Other	12
Monthly Total	609.7

Professional Development

- The School Recognition and Support Team hosted two book studies in partnership with the Comprehensive Center.
 - Every Child a Super Reader Book study led by Hollins Emili and Samantha Carlon
 - Distance Learning Playbook Book study led by Brittnay Bailey and Allie Gardner
 - AKPLN discussion sites were built to extend conversation.
- New Teacher Course completed the first of four 6-week teaching sessions. The first session over relationship building was engaging and valuable. The next session is over Classroom Management.
- Echo Sessions are being utilized to bring together teachers and leaders around the state. These sessions also include support from the SSOS coaches and SRS team as presenters and participants in the discussion.
- ASTE Mixology Event to gather ways to provide technology support to teachers around the state.
- AKSVS trainings, AkPLN, and quarterly newsletter used to help train schools and individual educators how to best utilize AKSVS online learning system.

Special Education Program

- Special Education webinars for education personnel remain weekly on each Wednesday. The focus is still COVID related issues, but other issues are also discussed and addressed. The webinars are remaining at once weekly due to most districts with questions/issues are addressed individually via telephone. One webinar per week will be supported until any situation warrants an increase.

- This school year all districts are being monitored via desk audits with files submitted by the school district. Current status of Compliance Monitoring:
 - Ongoing Desk Audits being conducted presently for 20-21
 - No districts with Corrective Actions outstanding for 19-20
- The state is initiating the federal monitoring of the entire special education system for Alaska. This is a 3-year process with the first year underway in the specific area of finance. It has been over 10 years since the states last audit.
- The state special education directors' training was conducted virtually this fall with the March training also planned for a virtual environment.
- District Disproportionality reporting completed with ongoing training for the districts found in significant disproportionality.
- The Annual Performance Report/ State Performance Plan (APR/SPP) and State Systemic Improvement Plan (S-SIP) was submitted and approved. The federal special education grant application was submitted and approved.
- The department, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and the South East Regional Resource Center (SERRC) launched the website transitionalaska.org to provide resources to educators, students, and parents specific to employment/secondary transition.
- The department will begin annual Intensive Claim reviews in November with the completion of the district Fall OASIS reporting.
- Complaint and Due Process Hearing information remains available to the public. The current Due Process and Administrative Complaints status is as follows:
 - Due Process Hearings: 4 filed in FY20; 1 filed in FY21 (started July 1)
 - Complaint Investigations: 6 filed in FY20 (5 had findings, 1 had no findings) 2 filed in FY21 (Started July 1, 2020)

Teacher Certification Information

- Content Area Examinations will be able to be taken at home through Educational Testing Services (ETS). This service allows testing to be available from every location in the state which has been a barrier in certification. ETS has indicated online testing will become available for the ParaPro exam as well.
- The department has established new reports that allow districts to easily identify those teachers who are teaching out-of-field. In addition, it has reports showing disproportionate rates of inexperienced and out-of-field teachers in high minority, high poverty and Title I schools. DEED offered a winter webinar to help districts become familiar with these new available reports and provide certification updates.
- DEED is working with stakeholders and Alaska researchers to update the 2015 Alaska Equity Plan. This plan targets the equity gaps of low-income and minority students access to excellent educators. Specifically, the plan focuses on inexperienced, out-of-field, and ineffective teachers throughout Alaska.

First Day Vacancy Reports

Under 4 AAC 18.021, districts must report annually to DEED the certified positions that are vacant on the first day of school. For the 2020-2021 school year, 22 school districts report at least one certified staff vacancy. The districts reporting are listed below:

Alaska School Districts Reporting Certified Vacancies SY 202

- Anchorage School District
- Bering Strait School District
- Chatham School District
- Delta-Greely School District
- Dillingham City School District
- Fairbanks North Star Borough School District
- Galena City School District
- Juneau Borough School District
- Kake City School District
- Kenai Peninsula Borough School District
- Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District
- Klawock City School District
- Kodiak Island Borough School District
- Lower Kuskokwim School District
- Lower Yukon School District
- Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District
- Nome Public Schools
- Northwest Arctic Borough School District
- Petersburg Borough School District
- Southeast Island School District
- Valdez City School District
- Yukon-Koyukuk School District

For the 2020-2021 school year, a total of 226.8 full time equivalency (FTE) was reported vacant at the beginning of the school year. Of those vacancies, teaching positions accounted for 194.65 FTE. Of the 194.64 teaching position FTE approximately 30% were special education positions. Vacancies also occurred in the special services area job positions (Counselor, Nurse, Psychologist, Speech Therapist, etc.). These numbers are similar to the vacancies reported for the 2019-2020 school year.

The position types and total full-time equivalencies are listed below:

Job Type	FTE
Counselor	10.4
Teacher	120.75
Itinerant Teacher	2
Nurse	5.5
Special Education Teacher	58.75
Psychologist	4
Speech Therapist	8.6
Physical Therapist	2

Job Type	FTE
Occupational Therapist	1
ESL Teacher	1.5
Correspondence Program Coordinator	0.15
On-site Supervising Teacher	1
Correspondence Teacher	9.15
Staff Developer/Mentor Teacher	1
Online Course Facilitator	1
Total Fulltime Equivalency	226.8

Emergency Certificates

Teacher Certification is continuing to issue emergency certificates. As part of the Declaration of Public Health Disaster Emergency issued by Governor Mike Dunleavy on March 11, 2020, and Alaska Statutes 26.23.020(g)(1) and (7), the Governor, under Order of Suspension No. 2, suspended statutory and regulatory requirements that were barriers for educators to gain or maintain Alaska certification and for districts to focus on the continuation of educational services to their students. The suspension of requirements applied to any applicant for Alaska certification and all certificated staff of Alaska School Districts. Additionally, Commissioner Johnson invoked his authority under AS 14.20.020 and 4 AAC 12.410 to issue emergency certification and waive requirements for the renewal of certification in light to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Because of the disruption caused by the pandemic, the following certification requirement were suspended:

- Basic competency examination
- Content area examination
- Alaska studies coursework
- Alaska multicultural coursework
- Notarization
- Minimum required hours for student teaching

As of November 12, 2020, the teacher certification office has issued 210 emergency certificates for the 2020-2021 school year. Of those emergency certificates, 176 were teacher certificates, 33 were special service provider certificates, and one was an administrator certificate. All emergency certificates must have the support of an Alaska public school district. Moving forward, it is anticipated that additional emergency certificates will be issued for this school year. All emergency certificates will expire at the end of the school year.

The department continues to work with the Department of Public Safety to allow for a temporary name based criminal history check as an alternative to the submission of a fingerprint card. The name based criminal history check will allow the department to process applications while giving the applicants additional time to find a trained technician to roll their fingerprints.