

State Board of Education and Early Development

Annual Report to the Alaska Legislature

January 2021



State Board of Education and Early Development

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Dr. Keith Hamilton, First Vice-Chair

Lorri Van Diest, Second Vice-Chair

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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 four 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

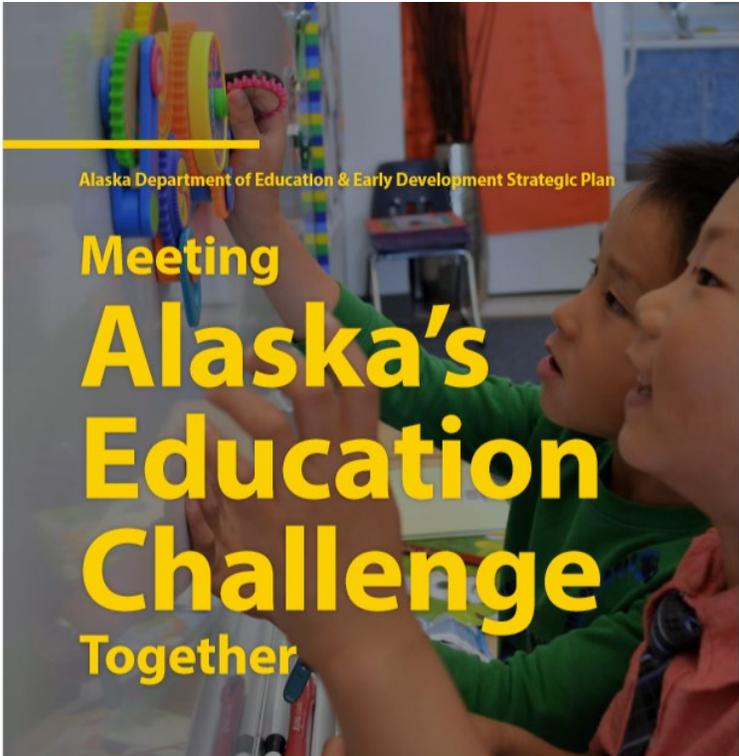


Under the board’s leadership, DEED has been collaborating with partner organizations to create and implement a strategic plan focused on five specific, measurable goals that are most likely to improve student outcomes from the dialogue and recommendations brought forward through the Alaska’s Education 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 approved its annual report to the legislature and approved Commissioner Johnson's appointment of Bernie Sorenson as Project Coordinator for the department. Ms. Sorenson has a diverse history in education in Alaska, having served as an educator, assistant superintendent, principal, coach, and consultant. She holds a bachelor's degree in elementary education and master's degree in educational leadership from the University of Montana.

In March and April, the board held special work sessions to receive updates on department activity in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In June, the board adopted emergency regulation changes to ensure funding to eligible school districts under Senate Bill 74 to improve Internet services for the upcoming school year under the School Broadband Assistance Grant program could be distributed in August.

After a period of public comment, the board adopted technical regulation changes to update statewide assessments language regarding testing procedures and requirements, district deadlines, and assessment communications, as well as update state and district deadlines regarding reporting and changes in the use of graduation rates in Alaska's accountability system.

The board approved a ten-year renewal for Twindly-Bridge Charter School in the Matanuska-Susitna School District and approved initial applications for a five-year charter for Hooper Bay Charter School in the Lower Yukon School District and a four-year charter for Qargi Academy Charter School in the North Slope Borough School District.

The board approved the department's FY2021 enacted operating budget, as passed by the Alaska Legislature and signed by Governor Dunleavy. The board also approved the final annual priority lists of capital projects eligible for funding under the school construction and major maintenance grant funds.

In September, the board adopted regulation changes to allow military training with the Alaska Army National Guard to count for high school credit and be available to all eligible high school students in Alaska. The regulation changes will require all school districts to allow eligible third and fourth year high school students to participate in the Alaska Army National Guard's Basic Combat Training and Advanced Individual Training courses and be awarded a health/physical education credit and/or an elective credit upon successful completion.

The board also adopted amendments to update the state's school library standards. The current library standards were last updated in 2006. In April 2019, a team of eleven educators participated in a committee to draft updated standards. Twenty-one educators, including librarians, parents, students, and educational organizations engaged in the review and provided feedback on the updated standards.

After a period of public comment, the board voted to make emergency regulation changes permanent to ensure funding to eligible school districts under Senate Bill 74 to improve Internet services under the School Broadband Assistance Grant program, with one additional amendment to require all circuits and connections reported on the E-rate application be included on the state application so the department can determine eligibility.

The board also repealed and replaced regulations to allow the issuance of emergency administrative certificates and some emergency teacher certificates; adopted regulation amendments to update the energy efficiency code of the American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air-Conditioning Engineers to the most recent edition; and adopted regulation amendments relating to fee increases for the Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums.

Lastly, the board appointed three members to the Mt. Edgecumbe High School Advisory Board. Michelle Martin and Mary Suzzuk Huntington were appointed to the Parent Representative seats, and Josh Vo was appointed as the Alumni Representative.

In December, the board approved its annual draft report to the Legislature and the minutes from the June 10-11, 2020 board meeting, September 16-17, 2020 board meeting, and October 21, 2020 work session.

New Officers, Members, and Staff

In June, the board re-elected James Fields as Chair, Dr. Keith Hamilton as First Vice-Chair, and Lorri Van Diest as Second Vice-Chair to serve from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021.

In July, Myriam Scott of Eagle River High School began her one-year term as student advisor. The board chooses the student advisor from several students nominated by the Alaska Association of Student Governments.

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, technology has been utilized to help provide quality education safely.

In March, in order to provide information, resources, and leadership during the spring closure of school buildings, DEED launched a dedicated Teaching and Learning Support website (aklearns.org). The website provides Alaska's educators and families with relevant resources as they navigate in-person and virtual models of instruction. In addition, the [Alaska Statewide Virtual System \(AKSVS\)](#) was implemented to expand opportunities for students across Alaska through high-quality online courses for K-12 students. These optional courses were made available at no cost to teachers, schools, and parents to support them during the transition to a virtual delivery model of instruction. AKSVS also provided training and professional development in the area of virtual instruction to over 190 teachers across the state in preparation for possible remote and blended teaching and learning environments during the 2020-2021 school year. 36 of Alaska's 54 districts are using the AKSVS platform and content to support various teaching and learning delivery models (in-person, blended, hybrid, remote, and/or fully-online) for the 2020-2021 school year.

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, in close collaboration and partnership with DHSS and public health officials, DEED developed the [Alaska Smart Start 2020 Framework Guidance](#) for Reopening Schools. DEED subsequently released a complementary Toolkit to the Smart Start Guidance in the form of a Google Drive for districts to pull down resources and incorporate them into their local planning and communications.

Starting in May through August, a series of webinars was created in partnership with DEED and the Region 16 Comprehensive Center to support districts on the planning and implementation of their Alaska Smart Start 2020 Reopening plans. These webinar series facilitated dialogue around the uncertainties that face Alaska's schools, how to build a comprehensive mitigation plan, and provided collaboration opportunities between districts and DEED staff. To continue the professional learning of educators throughout the 2020-2021 school year, DEED launched a collection of after school virtual opportunities known as 'Beyond the Bell.'

In August, 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. DEED is partnering with NEA-Alaska and Alaska teachers to provide access to the AK Learns 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.

DEED worked with the U.S. Department of Education to successfully apply for the distribution of eligible [CARES Act funds to districts](#). The two primary education funding sources are the Elementary and Secondary Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER Fund) and the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEER Fund).

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 released and is conducting webinars this winter on the use of a new [Trauma-Engaged Toolkit](#) for the pandemic and beyond. The toolkit includes strategies of support during times of stress and isolation. In addition, DEED has partnered with the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority to secure funding to create a long-term non-permanent School Counseling Education Specialist position that will reside on the DEED Health and Safety Team to provide mental health supports to schools as they endure the many stressors generated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This position will prioritize providing rural districts that have limited or no local school mental health capacity with COVID-19 response and recovery support for students, staff, and families.

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 2019-2020 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) deployed a disaster forbearance available to borrowers impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, Governor Dunleavy awarded \$786,000 in CARES Act funds to ACPE to effectively reduce 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.

Lastly, DEED requested, and the Governor subsequently approved, suspending various assessment and data reporting requirements for the previous school year (2019-2020), including school district operating fund balance amounts, performance designations, and certain accountability indicators. For the current 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.

In an effort to support school districts in response to Novel Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), [DEED submitted a request to the U.S. Department of Education](#) (US ED) to waive certain requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, section 1111) related to assessment and accountability requirements. US ED notified DEED on March 23, 2020 that the waiver was approved. As a result, [spring 2020 administrations of the following assessments were cancelled](#):

- PEAKS content area assessments in Mathematics, English Language Arts, and the Alaska Science Assessment
- Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) alternate assessment
- WIDA ACCESS for ELLs and Alternate ACCESS

For the graduating class of 2020, 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. Details of this waiver and any other changes to APS policies are available on the [Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education's APS website](#).

School Health and Safety Program

DEED's 2020 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

- **Alaska Project AWARE**

DEED was recently 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 Statewide Curriculum**

The Health and Safety Unit completed construction of a 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 five 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 DEED's eLearning Classroom and is available to all districts. 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 was also constructed.

- **Transforming Schools Toolkit:**

DEED, in collaboration with the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB), launched a new trauma-engaged resource—a toolkit to complement the [Transforming Schools Trauma Framework](#) completed last year (more than 6,000 copies of the Framework were requested and distributed in 2020.) 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 and the Toolkit in fall 2020.

- **ACEs/Trauma Informed Schools 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 2020 trauma-engaged schools course offerings included:

- *Overcoming ACEs in Alaska Schools:* This first course defines adverse childhood experiences and explains how they affect children’s brains, learning, and behavior.
- *Trauma Sensitive Schools:* The second course provides insight into the paradigm shift schools undergo as they become better equipped to support students’ responses to traumatic experiences and the impact they may have on learning and behavior.
- *Trauma Engaged and Practicing Schools:* The Trauma-engaged course will provide tools for teachers to use in their classrooms to include restorative practices, mindfulness activities, co- and self-regulation, social emotional learning, multi-tiered system of supports and describe the process of being a “trauma-informed school” and the steps for moving from “trauma-aware” to “trauma-informed practice”.
- *Classroom Practice:* Trauma can have a profound effect on how students perform in school. Teachers who take a trauma-engaged approach are sensitive to the fact that some students have experienced significant trauma and can provide the supportive environment they need for success. This course walks you through strategies you can use in your classroom.
- *Self-regulation:* is the ability to manage emotions and behavior. Students who have experienced trauma may have trouble developing self-regulation skills. This course provides a foundation for understanding self-regulation and walks you through how to help students develop these skills.
- *Mind-Body Connection:* To ensure the academic success of students who have experienced trauma, it is necessary for schools to address their health emotional

well-being. This course provides a good foundational understanding of how non-academic mindfulness tools and techniques can help students focus in the classroom. You may also find these activities helpful and healing for yourself.

- *Emotional Intelligence*: Students who have experienced trauma can react to stress in unpredictable ways because trauma can impede their ability to develop emotional intelligence. This course gives foundational information about emotional intelligence and walks you through strategies you can use with students.
- *A Guide to Family Partnerships*: Students and families should actively engage in school-wide planning and implementation efforts to address trauma. These efforts include the development of school-wide policy, protocol, and guidelines to create a trauma-informed school climate and to implement trauma-informed practices. Schools should embrace practices that incorporate peer and parent support and guidance.
- *A Guide to Childhood Traumatic Grief*: Childhood traumatic grief refers to a condition in which characteristic trauma-related symptoms interfere with children's ability to adequately mourn the loss of a loved one. If you know a student who is experiencing childhood traumatic grief, you can help by adopting trauma-engaged strategies to work with the student.
- *Trauma-Engaged Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health*: This is a series of three modules that introduces the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health framework and provides guidance for how to incorporate it into your everyday practice.
- *Self-Care for Educators*: This course provides health-enhancing information on how to manage compassion fatigue and secondary trauma by practicing self-care strategies. Topics covered include the definition of self-care, how to avoid compassion fatigue and burnout, the four important factors of self-care, and core self-care strategies. Active self-care reduces teacher turnover and depression, anxiety, anger and fatigue among teachers. In taking care of ourselves and each other, we provide positive role modeling for students
- *Upcoming courses for FY2021*:
 - *Anxiety*
 - *Electronic Cigarettes*

COVID-19 Preparedness and Response

- **Preparedness**: The Health and Safety Team was integrally involved in DEED's efforts to support districts in preparing for and responding to the pandemic. Highlights of DEED's early COVID-19 preparedness efforts included:
 - Participation in the Interdepartmental COVID-19 Preparedness Operations Workgroup to ensure state departments are sharing strategies, coordinating efforts, and utilizing consistent messaging with the public.
 - Sent out informational resources to all superintendents for use with parents, staff, and students as well as hotlinks to DHSS and CDC to support easy access to real time status updates and information on the virus.

- Conducted statewide presentations/Q&A with superintendents, educational leadership, and DEED staff to bolster internal and external readiness to respond to and mitigate any potential outbreak.
 - Created a dedicated COVID-19 DEED webpage for district use.
 - Created a COVID-19 resource document for school counselors. This document includes DEED resources, FERPA/HIPPA documents, American School Counselor Association, resources, telehealth, information for students about COVID-19, student check examples, virtual counseling supports, post-secondary/CTE, etc.
 - Partnered with DHSS to create sample health and safety protocols districts could utilize to assist them in composing their Alaska Smart Start 2020 district plans. These sample protocols were particularly helpful for smaller districts.
 - The Health and Safety Team reviewed the Conditions for Learning section of all Alaska Smart Start 2020 school district draft plans and provided feedback in consultation with DHSS.
- **Response:** The School Health and Safety Team transitioned into more pandemic response efforts after the 2020-2021 school year began. Highlights of the team's supports include:
 - Supported the delivery and content development for the School Health ECHO Series in partnership with DHSS to assist districts in responding to emergent health issues/local outbreaks.
 - Partnered with Public Health to create grants for Fairbanks, Kenai, Juneau, and Mat-Su school districts to be trained and paid to conduct COVID-19 contact tracing.
 - Expanded DEED's dedicated COVID-19 webpage for district use.
 - Created and delivered a large collection of trauma-engaged eLearning courses tailored for maximized utility during a pandemic.
 - Provided a collection of statewide and local presentations on the heightened mental health needs of both students and staff during the pandemic.
 - Partnered with the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority to secure funding for a Long Term Non-Perm Mental Health Education Specialist II position at DEED to better support districts during the pandemic (priority of mental health support to be given to rural districts with limited local capacity).

Increased Focus on Third Grade Reading Proficiency

In fall 2019, DEED received a \$20.7 million five-year Comprehensive Literacy State Develop (CLSD) grant from the U.S. Department of Education to expand the state's efforts to improve literacy skills for all students. A subgrant competition was held, with 26 complete applications received by the review deadline. Sixteen projects were selected for funding, involving students from birth through grade 12 in 45 different schools (within the 16 funded districts). Subgrant awards were finalized and announced by DEED on January 17, 2020.

School district sizes range from small (10-300 students) to large (over 1,000 students), with projects focusing on literacy development for children from birth through grade 12. Project highlights include professional development in effective reading instruction for teachers, hiring reading specialists, incorporating new and innovative reading instruction, and more. Five out of the 16 district projects focus on the K-5 grade span, specifically targeting students reading at grade level by third grade.

The new CLSD program manager is working with districts on fine tuning their programs as well as providing technical assistance. Coordination and collaboration with the external evaluator has resulted in deliberate ways to measure progress of DEED's implementation of the program. DEED is also in the process of updating the "Alaska Literacy Blueprint: Birth to Graduation," the comprehensive state literacy plan, in collaboration with stakeholders as part of the CLSD grant.

The Alaska Reads Act was introduced by Governor Mike Dunleavy and Senator Tom Begich during the second session of the 31st Legislature. DEED worked to create a comprehensive K-3 reading policy designed to improve reading outcomes. Programs included the expansion of high-quality pre-kindergarten opportunities, direct support and intervention services for low-performing schools, processes to ensure early identification of struggling readers, and expectations of reading intervention services for K-3 readers.

DEED has updated the Early Learning Guidelines (ELG) as one of the final deliverables for the Pre-School Development Grant DEED received from U.S. Department of Health and Social Services. These guidelines outline what types of progress children make from birth to kindergarten in all aspects of early childhood development, including literacy. The ELGs align to the Alaska Developmental Profile, the state's kindergarten readiness assessment, as well as the Alaska English Language Arts and Mathematics Standards.

DEED was able to hire a Literacy Content Specialist. This position provides information, resources, and leadership for literacy awareness, professional development, and programming in the state. In addition to providing support to districts regarding the Alaska English Language Arts Standards, the content specialist will assist in curriculum review and statewide literacy initiatives. Collaboration with the Early Learning and Assessments teams will ensure early literacy is strong across the department.

DEED's work with partner organizations is focused on increasing program offerings and professional learning opportunities for educators and stakeholders across Alaska. In partnership

with the Region 16 Comprehensive Center, a six-week book study focusing on reading and early literacy was held as part of the Beyond the Bell Professional Learning series in the fall of 2020. Literacy and early reading focused topical presentations, webinars, and workshops continue to receive top billing in DEED's presentation schedule.

A redesign of DEED's State System of Support (SSOS) Coaching Program is currently underway, with an emphasis on goal setting and training for DEED School Recognition and Support Team staff and SSOS coaches assigned schools designated as CSI Lowest 5%. Targeted training for principals and staff in these schools is being designed to support literacy leadership, early reading instruction, and the use of data to inform intervention and enrichment in the classroom.

Implementing the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

State Plan

DEED requested approval to amend its [Consolidated State Plan](#) under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), to implement the requirements of covered programs under ESEA. DEED sought public comment from the public, the Title I Committee of Practitioners, the State Migrant Parent Advisory Council, and other stakeholder groups. Feedback was also gathered through [DEED's ESSA webpage](#) where the amended sections were posted. The public survey posted to DEED's ESSA webpage was also disseminated through weekly newsletters to federal program contacts throughout the state. These proposed revisions to the Consolidated State plan will best address the educational needs of children in the state of Alaska. The proposed revisions include:

- Changes to the English learner exit criteria.
- Establishing alternate scoring procedures to calculate an overall composite proficiency level (CPL) for English learners (ELs) with a disability whose disability precludes their assessment in one or more domains on WIDA's ACCESS for ELLs.
- Changes to the Title I, Part C section to provide a broader description of Alaska's Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA), Service Delivery Plan (SDP), and Evaluation processes.
- Changes to the Statewide Accountability System and School Support and Improvement Activities.

DEED is still working through the approval process after receiving initial feedback from the US Department of Education.

COVID-19 Waivers

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

- DEED received a waiver from ESEA section 1111 related to assessment requirements. As a result, spring 2020 administrations of the following assessments were cancelled: PEAKS content area assessments in Mathematics, English Language Arts, and the Alaska

Science Assessments; Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) alternate assessments; and WIDA ACCESS for ELLs and Alternate ACCESS.

- DEED [received a waiver](#) from producing accountability designations for schools using data from the 2019-2020 school year. One assurance of the waiver was that schools 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 2020-2021 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 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 received a waiver from the following provisions:
 - Section 1127(b) of Title I, Part A of the ESEA so that your State educational agency (SEA) may waive, more than once every three years, if necessary, the 15 percent carryover limitation in ESEA section 1127(a) for State fiscal year (FY) 2020 Title I, Part A funds.
 - Section 421(b) of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) to extend the period of availability of State FY2019 funds for programs in which your SEA participates under its approved consolidated State plan until September 30, 2021.
 - Section 4106(d) of Title IV, Part A of the ESEA related to local educational agency (LEA) needs assessments for the 2019-2020 school year.
 - Section 4106(e)(2)(C), (D), and (E) of Title IV, Part A of the ESEA with respect to content-area spending requirements for State FYs 2019 and 2020 Title IV, Part A funds.
 - Section 4109(b) of Title IV, Part A of the ESEA with respect to the spending limitation for technology infrastructure for State FYs 2019 and 2020 Title IV, Part A funds.
 - Section 8101(42) of the ESEA, which defines “professional development,” for activities funded for the 2019-2020 school year.
- DEED submitted additional waiver requests on June 5, 2020 as a result of input from districts. As of November 3, 2020, the US Department of Education has not made a definitive decision on these requests.

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 Available 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 February 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.

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. In fall 2020, over 390 students were accepted at MEHS.

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 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 now provides funds to help schools get up to 25 mbps. During FY2021, 148 schools in 28 school districts received more than \$6.4M 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. In 2020, the OWL videoconference network migrated from dedicated Cisco equipment to a Zoom meeting platform.
- 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.
- [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 many more students using these live tutors to complete their homework.

- [Alaska's Digital Archives](#) shares digitized versions of 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.

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 FY2019, it accepted 46 cases and sanctioned 17 educators. Sanctions may vary from warnings to suspensions and revocations of certificates. View the FY2020 Annual Report at [2020 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 2016-2017 school year would be a member of the 2020 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

*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 2020, the preliminary five-year graduation rate was 84.9%. 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.

Preliminary information for the 2019-2020 school year shows a grade 7-12 dropout rate of 2.7% compared to 3.0% in 2018-2019. 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.

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](#)

APPENDIX A

Mt. Edgecumbe High School

State Board of Education Report

December 2020

Prepared by: Janelle Vanasse, Superintendent/Director

Note from the Superintendent

I appreciate the opportunity to report to the board and have the honor of serving as Superintendent to MEHS this year. The challenges of continuing education in this year has been trying for all educators. I am very proud to be a part of the MEHS team. The dedication staff have shown to make this year good for students, given the circumstances, is commendable. I cannot say enough about the residential team, both state staff and contract staff, in their relentless efforts to help students have fun and feel successful at MEHS. Staff have learned all sorts of new skills in socially distant recreation as well as caring for students who are in isolation or quarantine. Speaking of quarantine, our teaching staff have accommodated students in quarantine throughout the year, delivering instruction in person and by distance simultaneously. Some teachers have taken on full time distance for the first several weeks with our delayed students. The kitchen crew is amazing and has had to shift to hand-delivered meals to rooms within hours. Everyone is going above and beyond to make this not only a year to remember, but a year to thrive for our students.

I am also beyond grateful for the partnership with our local health provider SEARHC and our coordination with the City of Sitka and the full Unified Command COVID team.

Current Enrollment/Admissions Information

I am providing three sets of data in this unique COVID year. The first provides numbers we had as we started entrance travel for the start of the year. At that time, 393 students had committed to attending MEHS with 342 arriving on campus in August and an additional 49 planning for distance to start and a delayed entrance to campus. At the start of the year 28 students and families had decided to defer their acceptance, stay at home this year and come to MEHS the following year.

In the first week we had 3 students go home for homesickness.

Enrollment Count* As start of year

	In person	In person	Total in person	Delayed	Delayed	Total Enrolled	Deferred	Deferred	Total Deferred	In person went home	In person went home
Grade	F	M		F	M		F	M		F	M
9	57	35	92	7	4	103	7	2	9	2	0
10	57	45	102	4	5	111	5	4	11	0	0
11	50	32	82	13	3	98	6	4	12	1	0
12	31	36	67	10	4	81				0	0
	197	145	342	33	16	393	18	10	28	3	0

Dorm Total for start of the year 318

Typical start numbers: 412 in dorm and 435-445 total

Within the first month, we had 11 of our delayed students switch to deferred or withdraw. Each of these students cited struggles with distance education as their reason to return to their home school for the year. This shift, along with a handful of students who left campus to return home dropped enrollment numbers to 377 by the start of October.

October 1st numbers

	In person	In person	Total in person	Delayed	Delayed	Total Enrolled	Deferred	Deferred	Total Deferred	In person went home	In person went home
Grade	F	M		F	M		F	M		F	M
9	52	35	87	4	2	93	10	4	14	5	0
10	57	45	102	2	5	109	7	4	11	0	0
11	48	32	80	12	3	95	7	4	11	2	0
12	31	36	67	7	4	78	-	-	-	0	0
	191	145	336	25	14	375	25	12	39	7	0

Currently all students attending MEHS are on campus. The delayed students who had completed distance with us for the first 12 weeks of school all chose to return physically to MEHS in November. This was remarkable given the rising cases in our state and suggests a level of comfort in the MEHS mitigation plan and execution. We did have a handful more students return home for homesick or other issues, however the numbers are typical.

Enrollment Count* As of November 15, 2020

	In person	In person	Total Enrolled/ in person	Delayed that joined us	Delayed that joined us	In person went home	In person went home
Grade	F	M		F	M	F	M
9	53	37	90	4	2	8	0
10	58	50	108	2	5	1	0
11	58	33	91	12	3	4	1
12	37	40	77	6	4	0	0
	209	157	366	24	14	13	1

Smart Start Restart/COVID Update

We continue to work through our plan and have made minor adjustments as we have learned what works in our setting. Our team is currently working on plans for reentry after break and plans to support families during travel and Christmas time and housing for those who wish for their students to stay at Sitka. More will be provided in a presentation.

Data Highlight

MEHS has been working through revising our strategic plan. Direction from the Advisory board included aligning our plan with the Alaska Education Challenge and creating a living document that lends itself to revision.

Four student measurable targets have been identified and used at MEHS the last four years as part of a previous goal to identify student outcome goals and indicator data to look at yearly. These goals are

Academic Growth

MEHS students will demonstrate an accelerated or on-track academic growth rate

Academic Achievement

MEHS students will demonstrate proficiency at the appropriate grade or post-secondary readiness level

College and Career Readiness

MEHS students will have a post-secondary plan and be prepared to successfully pursue that plan

Leadership and Well-Being

MEHS will participate in activities that promote well-being and leadership and will be prepared to positively impact their communities

We reviewed our goal for Academic Achievement and its alignment with the Alaska Education Challenge target to close the achievement gap by ensuring equitable education rigor and resources. In recent years, we have kept track of how many students are accepted that are below average in math and reading and monitoring those students for academic growth and persistence at MEHS. This work started when the Class of 2020 were freshman. We are very pleased to see that when we look at the Freshman map scores of the graduating class of 2020, many students graduated that started with MEHS below average. In the comparison years of 2018 and 2019, very few of the graduates began below average. We did not do a data dive to understand whether these previous year tendencies was due to lower acceptance of below average students or lower retention of lower average students or both.

Freshman Fall NWEA MAP Quintiles (No test= not @MEHS as freshman)

Freshman MAP Quintile

Graduate Class of	No Test%	Low %	Low Ave %	Ave %	High Ave %	High %
2020 Math	35	12	14	10	19	11
Read	34	11	18	14	16	7
2019 Math	26	4	12	30	16	12
Read	24	0	21	17	26	12
2018 Math	27	0	2	17	27	27
Read	27	0	13	19	31	10

We are also very excited that despite the class of 2020 having a different profile than the comparison grades, their rates of meeting ACT benchmarks are very similar.

Percent of Graduates meeting Benchmarks on the ACT

Year	# total	# took ACT	English 18	Math 22	SSRead 22	Science 23
2020	94	63	27%	16%	24%	9%
AK Nat	81	54	23%	16%	22%	7%
Low SES	48	31	19%	6%	10%	4%
2019	82	55	29%	25%	12%	9%
AK Nat	68	47	28%	25%	7%	7%
Low SES	46	32	30%	22%	9%	7%
2018	100	60	32%	18%	21%	12%

% meeting benchmark is % of graduating class or subgroup, not those that took test

AK Nat= Alaska Native; Low SES= Low Socio Economic Status. Groups are separated for our grant-based needs assessment

Instruction focus

MEHS is using a 12-week rotation for class this year. Students continue to attend four or five block classes, however core courses are scheduled over two rotations—or $\frac{2}{3}$ of the year (24 weeks) rather than $\frac{1}{2}$ the year (18 weeks). Many elective classes are offered one block for .5 credits. The first block rotation of the year targeted labs for math and reading for freshman and Algebra students.

With COVID, we also added sections of core classes in order to limit all class sizes to 20 or less. The schedule was also manipulated as much as possible to limit the number of different courses any one teacher was teaching to start the year. The inservice time for the start of the year was dedicated to building skills and collaboration around preparing for teaching from a “box” (social distant) while in person and adjusting to delivering distance for students in quarantine as needed. Curriculum resources that were rich with online materials were purchased to aid in this work.

The first two weeks of courses, our students were kept in cohorts, or crews, and accessed their instruction using their computers. It was a bit difficult, especially for freshman who were just getting familiar with MEHS. Many students had a slow start, but with the work of tutors, the teachers, and the students themselves, most were successful and we have moved on to the second rotation of classes.

Pool Update

With the current state of Covid and the City of Sitka at high risk, the pool is being used for classes and private groups of MEHS students or outside agencies only. The pool is not open for public use.