



Innovation and Education Excellence

To: Members of the State Board of Education & Early Development
From: Monica Goyette, Ed. D., Director
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Item: 13A

standing General Report

The Division of Innovation and Education Excellence (IEE) is dedicated to providing an excellent education for every student every day by focusing division efforts on the five priorities of the [Alaska Education Challenge](#); providing oversight of state and federally funded programs to ensure quality and equity of student services; and providing technical assistance and support to districts statewide.

Alaska Reads and Early Learning Team

- Reading specialists completed spring site visits in support of the Department Reading Program (DRP) and are continuing to support districts with end-of-year data dialogues. Amira Tutoring has been launched as a virtual literacy support and will remain available through the summer.
- The Virtual Learning Consortium (VLC) continues to expand access to professional learning through the addition of ten new partner-provided asynchronous courses and an increased number of informational webinars available in the Digital Library.
- The Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) Grant extends Alaska Reads Act efforts by supporting literacy from birth through grade 12. The Alaska team attended the national CLSD convening to gather insights and promising practices from other state recipients. Subgrantee districts participated in a statewide convening on April 30, 2026, to strengthen implementation and collaboration across Alaska.
- The fifth annual Science of Reading Symposium took place May 1–3 at the Dena’ina Civic and Convention Center in Anchorage, engaging more than 900 in-person participants. The event featured six nationally recognized experts in evidence-based literacy instruction and 34 breakout sessions aligned to research and practice.
- The Alaska State Literacy Advisory Group met on May 3, 2026, bringing together a diverse group of stakeholders selected through an open application and vetting process to provide feedback and inform implementation of the Alaska Reads Act.
- The Early Learning Team is managing the application processes for the FY27–FY29 Early Learning Grants and Preschool ADM, while also supporting districts in closing out the FY24–FY26 Pre-Elementary and Early Education Program grant cycles.

Career and Technical Education

- The Career Advising Demonstration Project is expanding the number of participating districts as the project moves into the third year. Training was held April 23-24 at the Anchorage Job Center for new career guides. The Alaska Career Guide Annual Convening for all 2026-2027 school year career guides is scheduled in Anchorage September 8-11, 2026.
- School district applications for FY27 CTE Perkins funds are open in the Grants Management System (GMS). Thirty-one of Alaska's 53 districts receive the minimum Perkins allocation of \$20,000 to support CTE programs. The remaining districts receive larger awards based upon demographic data. DEED staff work with districts to develop applications for funds and build programs of study.
- School district monitoring and technical support visits by DEED CTE staff have been completed for the school year. Onsite visits were conducted with seven grantees this year.
- The CTE team has awarded competitive grants for the following purposes:
 - Plumbing/Electrician instructional material development grants to two school districts for FY26.
 - CTE Staff Professional Development grants awarded to five districts for FY27.

Data and Accountability

- The Data Team has transitioned focus to the implementation of summer data collections and administrative handbook revisions. Current operations focus on maintaining data integrity for state assessments and providing technical guidance to districts for end-of-year reporting cycles.
- Spring 2026 Alaska Science Assessment:
 - The team is currently performing demographic data clean-up for the Alaska Science Assessment to ensure reporting accuracy. The project is on track for completion in May.
 - Oversight of participation data remains a primary focus. Following the March 30 – April 20 assessment window, the team is auditing submissions to verify compliance with state testing participation requirements.
- WIDA ACCESS for English Language Learners Assessment Validation:
 - Validation of English Language Proficiency (ELP) data is underway. Following the receipt of initial test files from WIDA, the team has initiated quality assurance protocols to ensure student results are correctly mapped to the state database.

ESEA Federal Programs

- After extensive collaboration with stakeholders across Alaska, the Title I-C Education of Migratory Children program has finalized its statewide [Comprehensive Needs Assessment](#) and [Service](#)

[Delivery Plan](#). School districts will begin implementing the strategies outlined in the State Service Delivery Plan using their Title I, Part C funds in FY2027. These funds will focus on supporting migratory children in the following areas: English Language Arts and Mathematics, School Attendance, Early Learning and School Readiness, High School Graduation and Out-of-School Youth Achievement, and Support Services.

- On April 1, DEED’s WIDA English Language Development – Alaska Content Standards Crosswalks went live on <https://ak.satchelcommons.com/> and <https://rosetta.commongoodlt.com/>. These crosswalks allow educators to see which WIDA standards are addressed by each content standard (ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies). These crosswalks were created to help educators plan instruction for their English learner students. Additional resources and guidance will be developed to support these crosswalks in the coming weeks and months.
- DEED is currently in the process of completing interviews with Title III-A districts to determine which districts will receive a Title III-A Distinguished District Award. This award is given to III-A districts that have demonstrated positive outcomes for ELs based on DEED’s accountability system. This year, DEED will award one \$10,000 grant and one \$5,000 grant, which will be added to the selected districts’ FY27 Title III-A allocation.

Health & Safety

- The Health & Safety Team, in collaboration with statewide partners, has been planning the Safety & Well Being Summit. The Summit will be held September 16-17 at the Egan Convention Center in Anchorage. Registration is open and more information can be found on the Summit [website](#).
- This Spring, Alaska Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) schools engaged in trainings focused on strengthening implementation through prioritization, staff professional development, refining purpose statements and behavior matrices, defining problem behaviors, elevating student voice, applying high-leverage practices, using dignified error correction, and improving data-based decision-making and classroom practices. Schools also completed the annual Self-Assessment Survey (SAS), gathering anonymous staff feedback, and the Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI) completed by leadership teams to assess implementation fidelity and track growth over time. Now in its fifth year, the AK PBIS project serves 14 districts and 45 schools statewide, with approximately 88 educators participating in trainings this quarter, and schools presenting their work April 30 at the NWPBIS Annual Conference.
- DEED hosted the “Reducing Chronic Absenteeism” Community of Practice (CoP). Monthly topics discussed at the CoP included:
 - Fairbanks school district absenteeism efforts
 - PBIS connections to attendance
 - School Improvement- Perspectives from Schools with Improvement Plans focused on Reducing Chronic Absence

- School Nutrition & Health

School Recognition and Support

- The School Recognition and Support team continues to lead statewide efforts across school improvement, quality school initiatives, and educator recognition, providing coordinated support to districts and schools with a focus on continuous improvement and student outcomes. The team hosted several webinars in March and April focused on school improvement plan requirements and processes, as well as preparing designated schools to engage in the Science of Reading Symposium. Direct support was also provided to District Federal Programs Directors during the ESEA Technical Assistance Workshop on April 7–8.
- As this was a designation year for the lowest-performing five percent of schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement, Empowerment Specialists worked closely with all ten of these schools and supported an additional 49 identified schools for targeted support. This support included completion of comprehensive needs assessments and development of three-year school improvement plans, which were submitted to the department on May 15, 2026, with continuing ongoing support.
- The team also supported districts during the Science of Reading Symposium and hosted a post-conference session on May 3 focused on integrating evidence-based practices into school improvement plans. Travel grants, funded through 1003(a) School Improvement Grant funds, were provided to support participation from teachers, school leaders, and district administrators.
- The Quality Schools application was transitioned from a paper-based process to a digital submission to improve accessibility and efficiency for districts. A webinar was held on April 2 to review application requirements and the submission process, with a recording made available on the SRS webinars page. Applications were due May 1, and end-of-year reports for the FY26 cycle are due June 30.
- Alaska Teacher of the Year was announced on May 7. Dr. Jamin Burton, a music teacher at Colony High School in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District, was selected for this honor. The process includes three rounds of review, culminating in a final panel that provides recommendations to the Commissioner. The selected educator will represent Alaska in the Council of Chief State School Officers National Teacher of the Year program.

Special Education

- The state’s Special Education Annual Performance Report (APR) was submitted to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) for review. The APR was returned with comments for the state to address. We are currently working on those revisions and plan to submit them within the open clarification window.

- The Growing Reading Excellence and Alaskan Teachers (GREAT) grant is currently recruiting districts to participate for the Fall 2026 semester. Currently 5 districts are participating and with plans to include up to seven additional districts. The GREAT Grant Annual Performance Report was due May 1, 2026.
- DEED is supporting districts to transition to the new Embrace® platform managing and submitting Individual Education Plan (IEP). District feedback has been positive, particularly regarding the responsiveness and quality of customer support provided by Embrace. Embrace® will streamline special education processes, improving efficiency, documentation, reporting, and overall compliance management for districts statewide. Continued training opportunities are forthcoming and will be designed to build district capacity, promote consistency, and support effective use of the system.
 - To date, a total of 33 school districts are participating in the statewide rollout of the Embrace® special education system, reflecting continued momentum and interest across the state.
 - Ongoing collaboration with Embrace® focuses on identifying and addressing the varying needs of districts, including exploration of additional features such as Medicaid integration to enhance functionality and reimbursement processes.
- DEED welcomes Ryan Howe to the Special Education Team as a new Education Specialist 2. Mr. Howe has been a special education director in Wrangell for several years and brings a fresh perspective to the team.

Standards and Assessment

- The Content Specialists, in collaboration with the ESEA Title III A Coordinator, facilitated the completion of a crosswalk between the Alaska Content Standards and the WIDA English Language Development (ELD) Standards. This crosswalk provides educators with the areas where the Alaska Content Standards have correspondences to the ELD standards for integrated instructional practices.
- The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) State Coordinator successfully facilitated and supported the 2026 administration of the NAEP. NAEP is also known as the Nation’s Report Card and is administered every two years to a representative sample of fourth- and eighth-grade students in the content areas of mathematics and reading.
- Spring is testing season and the Standards and Assessment Team oversaw the execution of the 2026 administration of the Alaska System of Academic Readiness (AK STAR), Alaska Science, Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM), and Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners (ACCESS for ELLs) assessments.
 - AK STAR is the statewide summative assessment for English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics, it is administered annually to students in grades 3-9.

- Alaska Science is the state summative assessment for science and is administered to students in grades 5, 8, and 10 annually.
- Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) is annually administered to students with significant cognitive disabilities.
- ACCESS for ELLs is administered to all students who have been identified as English Language Learners.

Teacher Certification

- The current processing window for teacher certification applications remains approximately four to six weeks. Applications missing required components (such as official transcripts, fingerprint/background check results, program verification forms, etc.) experience extended timelines until all materials are received. This processing timeframe ensures the integrity and accuracy of the certification process.
- Between February 28, 2025, and February 28, 2026, the Teacher Certification office processed more than 4,250 certificates, including:
 - 1,644 Professional Teacher Certificates
 - 414 Professional Out-of-State Certificates
 - 351 Administrative Certificates
 - 318 Emergency Certificates
 - 225 Initial 2- and 3-year Certificates
 - 829 added endorsements:
 - 780 Alaska Reads Act endorsements
 - 482 Special Education endorsements
- After more than 17 years on the Teacher Certification Team, and over 30 years of state service, Jennifer Neal has retired. She supported DEED through many pivotal changes, including the latest move to the online certification system. Her final day was April 30. Recruitment for her replacement is underway.
- IEE recently launched the Green-to-Teach pathway, a state-approved post-baccalaureate alternative route to Alaska teacher certification. This pathway is designed for active-duty military members, veterans, and military spouses who hold a bachelor’s degree and are interested in becoming classroom teachers in Alaska public schools. Candidates complete required coursework through the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE), engage in structured on-the-job learning within an approved Alaska public school district, and fulfill all State of Alaska requirements for teacher certification.
- In May, 13 Principals began the University of Alaska Anchorage Principal Apprenticeship pilot. Alaska’s Principal Apprenticeship was one of the first approved in the country.

Tribal Affairs and Alaska Native Languages

- The Tribal Affairs and Alaska Native Language Team continues to advance the department’s work in strengthening partnerships with Alaska Native communities and supporting culturally relevant education across the state. This includes a focus on language revitalization, early literacy, and ensuring that educational systems reflect and honor the cultural and linguistic diversity of Alaska’s students.
- The Department has partnered with the Alaska Native Tribal Education Consortium, a tribally sanctioned, statewide coalition formed to uphold and advance tribal sovereignty in education. ANTEC works to amplify tribal voice, coordinate collaboration among tribes and partners, and advocate for improved outcomes for Alaska Native students. Through this partnership, ANTEC supports the department’s implementation efforts under the Alaska Reads Act and helps inform the integration of culturally and linguistically responsive approaches in literacy and school improvement work.
- The annual statewide Alaska Native Language Summit was held on March 30, 2026, in Anchorage in partnership with the Alaska Native Tribal Education Consortium and Education Northwest. The summit focused on statewide language initiatives and effective educational approaches to language revitalization, bringing together more than 150 participants from across Alaska, including educators, Tribal leaders, language experts, and community members.
- The University of Oregon provided an update on the Literacy Screeners for Alaska Indigenous Languages (LSAIL) project, a partnership with DEED focused on developing early literacy screeners in Alaska Native languages. The project is currently piloting screeners in Tlingit, Yup’ik, and Iñupiaq. Development began this year for Gwich’in and Dena’ina languages.
- The team has also expanded internal capacity with the hiring of Victoria ‘Ggoadm ‘Teebn’ McKoy, as the Alaska Native Language Program Coordinator. Ms. McKoy is a current member of the Council of Alaska Native Languages (CANL) and is completing her doctorate in Indigenous Studies at the University of Alaska Fairbanks this summer. Her expertise and leadership will support ongoing efforts to strengthen Alaska Native language initiatives statewide and support facilitation of the CANL.