



## MEMORANDUM

**To:** State Board of Education & Early Development  
**Date:** March 10, 2026

**Thru:** Deena Bishop Ed.D, Commissioner  
**Telephone:** (907) 269-4583

**From:** Monice Goyette, Director  
Division of Innovation and Education Excellence  
**Subject:** 21A Division of Innovation and Education Excellence Standing Report

## Division of Innovation and Education Excellence 2026 Board 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 around 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

- The Department Reading Program (DRP) enters its second year in 2025–26, expanding to 50 schools across seven districts. Reading specialists serve as instructional partners, providing targeted, data-informed support through coaching, goal setting, and Intensive School Reading Improvement Plans (ISRIPs) aligned with Alaska Reads Act priorities.
- The Virtual Learning Consortium (VLC) continues to expand access to professional learning, including new asynchronous courses supporting K–3 Teacher, Administrator, and Early Education Lead endorsements, as well as evidence-based literacy instruction and data-informed practices.
- The Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) Grant extends Alaska Reads Act efforts by supporting literacy from birth through grade 12 through coordinated district plans, high-dosage tutoring, and evidence-based professional development.
- The team is in the final planning stages for the 2026 Alaska Science of Reading Symposium, scheduled for May 1–3 at the Dena'ina Civic and Convention Center in Anchorage, featuring nationally recognized experts in evidence-based literacy instruction.

- The Early Learning Team is supporting districts that have received conditional approval to receive 0.5 Average Daily Membership (EEP-ADM).
- Training and professional development continue to be offered in support of all school districts and early education programs, including:
  - Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3) developmental screening
  - Teaching Strategies GOLD
  - Early education program standards
  - Support for CLSD districts
- In February, an in-person meeting is hosted for all districts receiving state early learning grants, including a workshop titled *Social Emotional Development and Challenging Behavior: Resources for Early Childhood Programs*. This meeting affords the opportunity for observation in Head Start classrooms throughout Anchorage.

### **Career and Technical Education**

- The annual statewide DEED Perkins CTE Workshop was held February 11-13, 2026, in Anchorage. The workshop focused on statewide initiatives and programs supporting CTE, selecting priorities to focus future resources, and the technical requirements for accessing federal Perkins CTE funds. Over 70 participants represented 29 school districts, 11 university campuses, 5 CTE Student Organizations, and 5 other vocation training partners.
- Call for nominations for the SBOE CTE Program Recognition Awards is open. Nominations are due to the Department April 3, 2026, for consideration by the full board at the June board meeting.

### **Data and Accountability**

- The Data Team completed and published the Report Cards to the Public for the state, districts, and schools. The Report Cards reflect Alaska's school performance for the 2024-25 school year. They can be found on the Department of Education & Early Developments website: <https://education.alaska.gov/compass/report-card>.
- The Fall OASIS data collection closed on November 7<sup>th</sup>. This is an annual data collection that includes supporting districts and schools by providing webinars, handbooks and technical assistance for the certified and classified staff accounting data collection. The Fall OASIS data is used in the foundation formula calculations. It is also utilized across many statistical reports including the Alaska's Public School Districts' Report Card to the Public, the federal Common Core of Data, the state's enrollment reports, Alaska Reads Act reporting, and other special requests from state agencies.
- The State has published several reports in accordance with the Alaska Reads Act. These include Alaska Reads Act endorsements, early education participation rates, literacy screener proficiency and growth, Parents as Teachers indicators, progression/non-progression, teacher and administrator ratios and teacher of record for kindergarten

through third grade. These reports can be found in the Data Center:

<https://education.alaska.gov/data-center>

## **ESEA Federal Programs**

- The Title I, Part C Education of Migratory Children program has completed its annual federal reporting. During the 2024–2025 performance period, Alaska identified 15,072 migratory children statewide. Of those eligible, 11,957 received Title I, Part C funded supplemental services. This included 5,253 children who received instructional services, 11,632 who received support services, and 1,039 who received counseling services.
- The 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Alaska Out-of-School Time Conference – co-hosted by DEED, the Alaska Afterschool Network, and Department of Health - took place November 17–19 and brought together 173 afterschool educators from 37 communities. The event featured 39 workshops, three site visits, a keynote address, remarks from two Alaska legislators, and recognition of leaders in the Afterschool field.
- DEED has nearly completed its crosswalk aligning state content standards with WIDA’s English Language Development (ELD) Standards. The educator review period closed January 26<sup>th</sup>, with ten Alaskan educators providing feedback. DEED staff will refine the crosswalk this spring and publish an online tool to help educators connect content standards with corresponding ELD standards.
- In November, the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) shared its initial analysis of English learner data under a new data-sharing agreement. DEED is now working to schedule presentations for district leaders.

## **Health & Safety**

- The Health & Safety Team has provided several Communities of Practice this quarter, including one on reducing chronic absenteeism. Monthly topics have included:
  - November – Health Effects on Attendance
  - December – Homeless and McKinney Vento Services
  - January – Family Partnerships.
- In collaboration with the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and Stellar Group, the Health & Safety Team co-hosted the second year of Community Partnerships for Building Supportive School Communities. Monthly topics discussed at these convenings have included:
  - November – Building a Mental Health Team/Finding Human Resources with Anchorage School District and Kuspuk School District presenting
  - December – Behavioral Health Threat Assessment with Valdez School District presenting
  - January – Help me Grow Alaska presented on ways they can assist school districts.
- Also in January, in collaboration with Northwest Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (NWPBIS), the Health & Safety Team provided a three-hour learning session

on Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) where over 40 participants learned more about the PBIS framework for supporting the academic, social, emotional, and behavioral competence of all students.

- In collaboration with Seattle Children’s Hospital and the Department of Health, the Health & Safety Team provided monthly training for Rural School Counselors, Rural School Social Workers, and School Nurses. The presentations included:
  - October – Coping Skills targeted at staff tasked with supporting students, families, and staff dealing with physical and mental health needs.
  - November – Disaster Response, including for schools that have received displaced families from Typhoon Halong.
  - December – First Approach Skills Training (FAST-T) with an emphasis on Trauma.

### **School Recognition and Support**

- Nominations opened for 2027 Alaska Teacher of the Year on January 12th. The nomination period runs through February 28th. The top 25-30 nominees will be offered the opportunity to submit an application to be considered for Alaska’s Teacher of the Year. Final choice will be made by the Commissioner between April and May. The recipient of this honor will be Alaska’s representative in the Council of Chief State School Officers’s (CCSSO) National Teacher of the Year.
- Notification was sent to districts and schools in November 2025 regarding 2026–27 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) designations. This year’s designation cycle identified schools requiring the highest levels of support, including Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) – Lowest 5 Percent, CSI – Graduation Rate, and CSI – More Rigorous Interventions. In addition to the standard designations, and with stakeholder approval, a Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) designation was introduced to identify schools with a student group performing below the 10 percent threshold, serving as an early-warning indicator for districts. Because this was an off-cycle year, no schools were newly identified for Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI). DEED continues to provide several layers of support to schools identified as CSI or ATSI, including funding, webinars, technical assistance, context and support-driven site visits, and Empowerment Specialists to work with the highest-need schools.
- Quality Schools application amounts were submitted in December, with funds scheduled for allocation in January, consistent with prior years. End-of-year report data is currently being compiled, and any outstanding reports are in the process of being collected and revised.
- Data was collected and analyzed about each strategy/intervention used by each district last year as well as the frequency of each strategy/intervention across districts.
  - There is a marked increase this year in the number of districts that are using Quality Schools funds for Reading and Math strategies/interventions.

- In 2024, 22 schools reported a reading program and 14 reported a math program
- In 2025, 28 schools reported a reading program and 27 reported a math program
- A survey is being created to collect data about school district alignment of curriculum with state academic standards.

## **Special Education**

- The pilot rollout of the statewide special education software, Embrace, is ongoing. Cohort 1 included eight school districts, and Cohort 2 began this month with an additional 17 districts. DEED currently assumes financial responsibility for a single, statewide online system used for special education paperwork and compliance management. The existing system, PowerSchool Special Programs, has raised concerns due to poor billing practices, administrative challenges, and a security breach. These issues prompted the Department to explore alternative options, including Embrace, which was selected primarily for its strong customer service and support. A third cohort is expected to launch this summer, bringing participation to more than 50 percent of districts statewide. At that point, the State will discontinue funding for PowerSchool Special Programs. While no district is mandated to switch platforms, the Department will no longer finance the PowerSchool option once this threshold is reached.
- The Special Education team has completed compliance monitoring reviews for the 2025–26 school year and is currently conducting intensive reviews to determine eligibility for additional funding and reimbursement for high-cost special education students who meet regulatory criteria. Initial reviews have been completed, and districts have 30 days to submit additional documentation for claims that were initially rejected.
- The federal reporting indicator requiring a State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) (Indicator 17) has historically focused on special education student graduation rates. Due to substantial improvement in this area, the Department will continue to support graduation outcomes while shifting the official SSIP focus to early literacy. This revised plan has undergone stakeholder input and is being submitted to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) for review and approval as part of the federal Annual Performance Report (APR).
- The annual Growing Reading Excellence through Alaskan Teachers (GREAT) grant training session is being conducted in conjunction with the Alaska State Special Education Conference (ASSEC) in Anchorage. The Department is currently exploring opportunities to expand special education–specific supports for new and aspiring special education teachers under the grant. Potential expansions include assistance with certification costs and increasing participation beyond the initial five districts identified in the grant.

## **Standards and Assessment**

- In conjunction with Governor Dunleavy’s proclamation of December 8-12, 2025, as Alaska Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Education Week, the Computer

Science Content Specialist hosted a weeklong series of webinars for educators to engage with national speakers around computer science and artificial intelligence information and resources.

- The English Language Arts/Social Studies Content specialist has been working with the eLearning vendor to finalize a module to support the implementation of Alaska's new Social Studies Standards.
- The Standards and Assessment team continues to support districts, schools, and NAEP staff in the preparation for NAEP testing that began January 26, 2026.
- The Standards and Assessment team, along with other DEED staff, participated in reviewing Alaska System of Academic Readiness (AK STAR) assessment forms as a part of the process to help ensure Alaska students are experiencing a quality assessment.

### **Teacher Certification**

- Due to turnover of key leadership personnel accompanied by snow closures in early January, the Teacher Certification Team fell behind on processing applications, slowing to an 8–9-week processing window for new applications. However, with one position being filled and the team working diligently to close that gap, the average processing time is back to 4-5 weeks. This time frame is the goal for maintaining an appropriate flow of applications.
- IEE is pleased to welcome Suzanne Morris as the new Lead Certification Analyst. She started with the Certification Team on January 13<sup>th</sup> and is quickly getting up to speed on the different application processes.
- IEE is pleased to have promoted Simone Sanders to the Teacher Certification Administrator position, effective February 17<sup>th</sup>. Simone has been a member of the Special Education team at DEED for two years, and IEE looks forward to her leadership in guiding certification, accreditation, and teacher retention and recruitment activities for DEED.
- The Spring cohort of Teacher Apprentices has launched, and DEED's sponsorship has added 22 new apprentices, bringing the total number of apprentices under DEED's sponsorship to 46 apprentices across 11 districts.
- DEED's sponsored Principal Apprenticeship is launching this Spring with the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA). One district has enrolled and is planning to launch with one apprentice for the pilot, and another is currently enrolling in the pathway, with one apprentice for the pilot. DEED continues to promote the opportunity to districts to increase engagement for a small pilot in Spring and is working with the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) to keep on track for a Fall pilot.