



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**May 16, 2018**

## **Alaska's Every Student Succeeds Act Plan Approved by the U.S. Department of Education**

JUNEAU -- Alaska's plan to implement the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was approved today by U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos. Approval of the state plan is required for Alaska to continue to receive approximately \$80 million annually in funding from the federal government to support the state's public schools.

ESSA was passed into law by Congress in December 2015, replacing No Child Left Behind as the primary federal legislation regulating America's public education system. Under ESSA, state education agencies are required to submit a plan detailing the implementation of the law.

"ESSA has provided a chance for Alaska to build on our ongoing commitment to increasing student success, supporting responsible and reflective learners, and cultivating safety and well-being," said Alaska Education Commissioner Dr. Michael Johnson. "Alaska's plan includes new accountability components and establishes a more well-rounded education system – this includes prioritizing the importance of reading proficiently. We know students who read on grade level by the end of third grade are much more likely to have success in school and graduate."

Highlights of Alaska's ESSA plan include:

- Setting goals for each school and district to reduce the number of non-proficient students by half in ten years, for all student groups.
- Providing flexibility for the State and districts to target strategies for school improvement based on the unique needs of each school.
- Measuring and rewarding both academic performance and growth for all students.
- Reporting rates of chronic student absenteeism to encourage statewide discussions about its impacts on student learning.
- Reporting per-pupil spending at the school and district level to increase financial transparency.

The development of Alaska's ESSA plan included significant outreach to collect feedback, including over a year and a half of input from more than 4,000 stakeholders through online

surveys, discussion groups and webinars, community conversations, and an ESSA advisory committee.

Alaska's ESSA plan went through a number of revisions as Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) staff worked with federal reviewers to clarify how the plan met ESSA's statutory requirements.

Commissioner Johnson expressed thanks to all those who helped develop Alaska's plan. He also noted the exceptional dedication and hard work of DEED staff in meeting difficult timelines throughout the development process.

Alaska's approved plan and approval letter by U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos are available on DEED's [ESSA webpage](#).

###