

Dr. Michael Johnson
Commissioner



Department of Education
and Early Development

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DEED Fills Key Leadership Positions

JUNEAU -- Dr. Niki Tshibaka (Chuh-Baka) and Karen Melin (Ma-Leen) have been appointed to leadership positions within the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), Alaska Education Commissioner Dr. Michael Johnson announced yesterday.

As part of Governor Michael J. Dunleavy's commitment to the safety of Alaska's citizens, the Governor has approved an addition to the leadership team at DEED specifically to prioritize student safety and well-being. Dr. Niki Tshibaka has been named Assistant Commissioner, and will lead DEED's health and safety team.

Dr. Tshibaka is an attorney, and for over 16 years has been advancing civil rights, human rights, and social justice causes in government, non-profit, and private sectors. He holds a bachelor of arts degree in political science from Amherst College and a juris doctor degree from Harvard Law School.

Dr. Tshibaka will coordinate the efforts of multiple state departments to address safety and well-being issues. This work will include collaborating with students, school districts, tribes, community organizations, non-profits, and families to maximize educational opportunities.

"With great appreciation to Governor Dunleavy, I am pleased to welcome Dr. Tshibaka to DEED. Dr. Tshibaka's experience as an attorney, and advocate for a variety of social justice issues, will be critical as we leverage resources across departments, in communities, and in partnership with non-profits, to address the safety and well-being of our students," said Commissioner Johnson.

Ms. Karen Melin has been named Deputy Commissioner. Ms. Melin previously served as an education administrator and education specialist at DEED, most recently serving as the project coordinator for the Alaska's Education Challenge and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Previously, Ms. Melin worked for the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District as an assessment and multi-tiered system of support coordinator. She holds certification in Alaska as a teacher, and has experience both as a reading specialist and an elementary teacher. She holds an associate of arts degree in early childhood education from Evangel College and a bachelor of arts degree in elementary education from the University of Alaska Southeast.

At DEED, Ms. Melin will oversee 208 employees and an agency operating budget of \$293 million. The department includes divisions that support K-12 public schools, Mt. Edgecumbe High School in Sitka, the Alaska State Council on the Arts, the Alaska State Archives, the Alaska State Museums, the Alaska State Library, and the Professional Teaching Practices Commission.

“Karen has continuously demonstrated her commitment to Alaska’s students, investing many years by serving in multiple capacities, and providing program management and leadership wherever her skills were needed at the department,” said Commissioner Johnson. “I look forward to her leadership as we support Alaska’s educators and families as they provide an excellent education for every student every day.”

Rounding out Commissioner Johnson’s executive leadership team is Brittany Hartmann. Ms. Hartmann has wide-ranging legislative, public relations, and research experience in public education policy in Alaska, having previously served as a legislative aide and member of the Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce Education Committee. Ms. Hartmann will serve as DEED’s legislative liaison, and the primary point of contact for Commissioner Johnson.

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