

Dr. Michael Johnson  
Commissioner



Department of Education  
and Early Development

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STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

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## DEED and DHSS Launch Professional Development Webinars to Prepare for the 2020-2021 School Year

JUNEAU – The Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), in partnership with the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) and the Region 16 Comprehensive Center, is launching a series of webinars to support parents, teachers, school district staff, and education leaders and stakeholders in planning for the uncertainty around the restart of school during the COVID-19 pandemic, aligned with the revised [Alaska Smart Start 2020: Restart & Reentry Framework Guidance for K-12 Schools](#).

“There are many uncertainties around the operation of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic,” said DEED Commissioner Dr. Michael Johnson. “Teaching and learning must be the constant as we all work together mitigate the variables so that students and staff are safe and well.”

**The first webinar series with DHSS will focus on providing school health information.** Intended for superintendents, principals, and school health leaders, the recurring sessions will focus on health considerations, answering questions from the field, and establishing a safe school environment during the COVID-19 pandemic. The weekly sessions will launch July 21. To learn more and register visit [https://echo.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJAvduqorTgqGdlldKANttMHI-el85qrH\\_s0](https://echo.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJAvduqorTgqGdlldKANttMHI-el85qrH_s0).

To continue the creative discourse and scenario planning achieved through the Alaska Smart Start 2020 webinar series held this spring, **DEED, with the support of the Region 16 Comprehensive Center, is launching the Alaska Smart Start Summer Virtual Summit 2020** to be held throughout the month of August. The Virtual Summit invites teachers, parents, district staff, tribal leaders, community members, and education stakeholders to interact daily with expert guest speakers, network with a statewide community of learners, and collectively plan for the conditions, continuity, and capacities for learning in the upcoming school year. To learn more and register visit [aklearns.org/smartwebinar/](http://aklearns.org/smartwebinar/).

“The health and well-being of all Alaskans is the mission of the Department of Health and Social Services, and that includes every child, every teacher, and every community member,” said Dr. Anne Zink, Alaska’s Chief Medical Officer. “COVID has challenged us all in different ways, and we must take the science and data we have and use it to the best of our ability so that districts, schools, parents, and teachers can make data-informed decisions as we find ways to educate the next generation.”

*The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development provides information, resources, and leadership to support over 130,000 students in 503 public schools across Alaska. The mission of the department is to ensure an “Excellent Education for Every Student Every Day.”*

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