

Dr. Michael Johnson  
Commissioner



Department of Education  
and Early Development

www.Education.Alaska.Gov

Juneau, Alaska

STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**January 22, 2020**

### **State Board Meets to Prepare for 2020 Legislative Session**

JUNEAU -- The State Board of Education and Early Development, meeting January 20 by audio conference, received budget and legislative updates in advance of the 2020 legislative session.

Erin Hardin, Legislative Liaison for the department, provided a legislative update for the board, including a review of prefiled bills relating to education. Most notably, the board received an update on the Alaska Reads Act, sponsored by Governor Mike Dunleavy and Senator Tom Begich, which will have its first hearing on January 23 in the Senate Education Committee. The [Alaska Reads Act](#) is a bill that will create a statewide comprehensive K-3 reading policy designed to improve reading outcomes. The policy expands high-quality pre-k opportunities for four and five year olds, provides direct support and intervention services for low-performing schools, ensures early identification of struggling readers, and requires reading intervention services for K-3 students who need more help to become successful readers.

The board also received an overview of the Governor's FY2021 department operating budget, presented by Director Neil Steininger.

The board approved its annual report to the legislature. The report is required by statute and must be submitted no later than the 30<sup>th</sup> legislative day of each regular session.

Lastly, the board approved Commissioner Johnson's appointment of Bernie Sorenson as Project Coordinator for the department. Ms. Sorenson has a diverse history in education in Alaska, having served as an educator, assistant superintendent, principal, coach, and consultant. She holds a bachelor's degree in elementary education and master's degree in educational leadership from the University of Montana.

The January 20 meeting packet and 2020 board meeting schedule are posted at [https://education.alaska.gov/State Board](https://education.alaska.gov/State_Board). The next board meeting is scheduled to be held February 26, 2020 by audio conference.

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