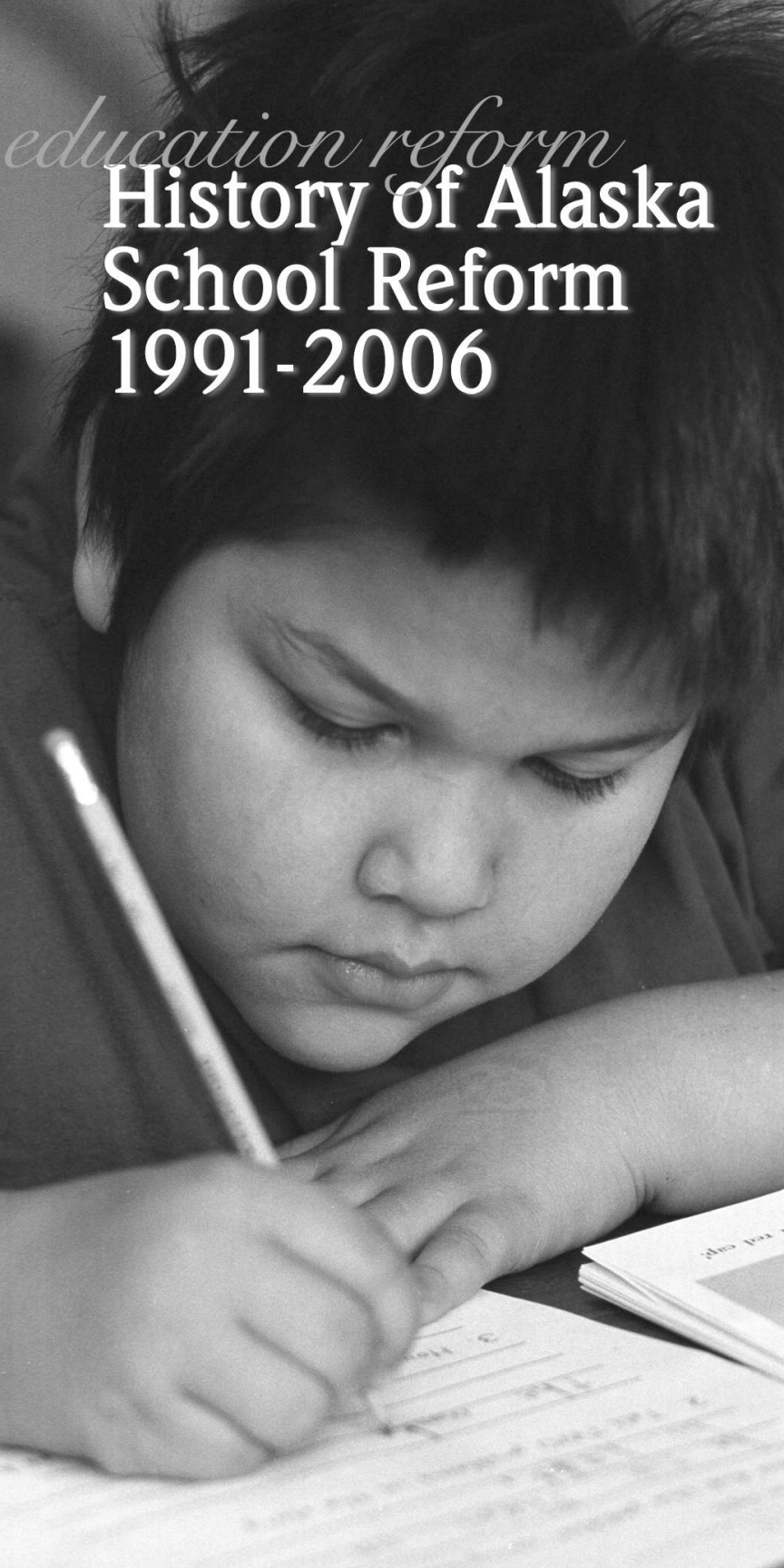
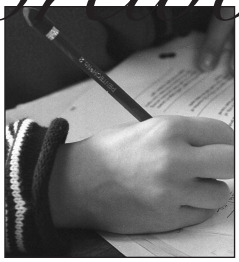


education reform

History of Alaska School Reform 1991-2006

quality schools

foreword



More than 15 years ago citizens from throughout Alaska created a remarkable vision for education. The vision employs high standards, high academic achievement, excellent teaching, and close partnerships between families, schools, businesses and communities to prepare our children for a successful life and secure a bright future for our state.

This vision demonstrates a true, long-term consensus among Alaska's policymakers, educators and business leaders about the best ways to educate our state's children.

Started by a few, today the vision is shared by many. Thousands of Alaskans have been involved. The tasks and accomplishments have been considerable. And remarkable results are mounting.

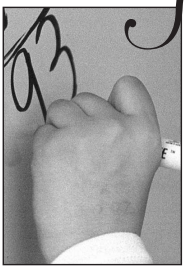
The vision has vastly altered our system of education from one where inputs and time-on-task ruled the day, to one where the foundation is results and accountability at every level of schooling. In this new system, standards and high expectations are in place at every level of schooling -- for schools, teachers, administrators, students, and paraprofessionals. Everyone is held accountable for quality performance and results. Support systems and incentives assist and encourage everyone involved to meet standards and performance targets.

This publication briefly chronicles how the vision for a quality system of schools has unfolded from 1991 through 2006. The work and support of everyone over the years cannot be overstated. Those involved will remember the wise words of village elders, the deep caring of parents, the hopeful smiles of our children, the dutiful deliberation of school boards and state legislatures, the patient guidance of teachers and principals, and the dedication of other school and government employees and many others.

education

Today, many more continue the work to fully achieve the vision – for a successful life for our children and a bright future for our state.

History of Alaska School Reform 1991-2006



History of Alaska School Reform 1991–2006

June 1991

Governor Walter J. Hickel directs the newly appointed State Board of Education and Commissioner of Education Jerry Covey to develop a plan to improve Alaska's system of public schools.

November 1991

The Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission, composed of 21 prominent Alaskans appointed by Governor Hickel, meets for the first time. The Commission identifies 10 broad areas of educational concerns and asks the Governor and State Board of Education to appoint more than 100 Alaskans from outside and inside the educational system to make recommendations in each of the areas. The reform movement becomes known as Alaska 2000 (AK2K).

January 1992

The ten committees of Alaskans meet for the first time.

October 1992

The State Board of Education approves AK2K recommendations, including developing student academic standards. AK2K becomes Alaska's major school reform initiative.

December 1992

The State Board proposes a regulation that sets a goal for schools to provide students with "a working knowledge of English, mathematics, science, geography, history, skills for a healthy life, government and citizenship, fine arts, technology and world languages." The regulation takes effect June 1993.

February 1993

At the direction of the State Board, the Standards and Assessment Oversight Committee meets for the first time to set direction for development of student standards. The State Board commits to developing content standards—broad statements of what our students should know and be able to do—in 10 core subject areas: English/language arts, mathematics, science, geography, government and citizenship, history, skills for a healthy life, arts, world languages and technology.

The State Board asks the public to comment on proposed voluntary content standards in math, science and English/language arts. Public hearings are held in 14 communities around Alaska. Public hearings are held over Legislative Teleconference Centers in dozens of additional communities. As a result of strong public comment, the State Board holds a second round of public hearings. Standards are adopted in 1994 and take effect on January 4, 1995.

September 1994

The State Board asks the public to comment on proposed standards in history, geography, government and health. The board holds hearings in six communities and teleconferenced hearings in dozens of other communities. The board adopts standards on November 29, 1994. Regulations take effect July 26, 1995.

December 1994

Governor Tony Knowles takes office and appoints a new State Board, which in turn appoints Commissioner Shirley Holloway, effective March 13, 1995.

June 1995

The State Board asks the public to comment on proposed content standards in world languages and technology. The board takes written testimony and adopts the standards on October 24, 1995. Regulations take effect March 28, 1996.

April—October 1996

Commissioner Holloway builds the Alaska Quality Schools Initiative (QSI), which has four major strands: High Student Academic Standards and Assessments; Quality Professional Standards; Family, School, Business and Community Network; and School Excellence Standards.The QSI replaces AK2K as Alaska's major school reform initiative. QSI builds upon AK2K and takes school reform to a new level of accountability.

quality schools

standards

October 1996

Governor Knowles, ARCO President Ken Thompson and Commissioner of Education Holloway invite school and community leaders to Girdwood for the Knowles Administration's first Education Summit. At the conclusion of the summit, Commissioner Holloway commits to developing in Alaska a results-based system of education based on standards. This is the commissioner's QSI plan.

Spring 1997

The Legislature passes, and Governor Knowles reluctantly signs, the secondary pupil competency testing law, which becomes AS 14.03.075. The new law requires all high school students to pass an exit exam in order to receive a diploma. Those who do not pass get a certificate of attendance. The effective date is January 1, 2002. The Governor announces that a single exit exam at the conclusion of 12 years of schooling is not a good idea and he will introduce legislation in 1998 that will implement a complete school system of accountability based on measurable student performance standards.

June 1998

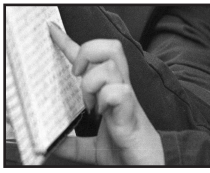
The Governor signs into law Senate Bill 36, which becomes AS 14.07.020(b). The new law sets a requirement for the department to develop student performance standards in reading, writing and mathematics, and to develop benchmark exams at designated grade levels. The QSI portion of SB 36 required the following:

- **Academic Standards**—Mandated the State Board of Education to adopt academic standards in reading, writing and math at four levels: ages 5–7, 8–10, 11–14 and 15–18. The high school and benchmark exam questions are to measure whether students have met the standards.
- **Alaska Benchmark Examinations**—Mandates the department to assess students at the 3rd, 6th and 8th grades beginning in March 2000, in order for schools to check whether students are meeting the reading, writing and math standards and are on track to pass the high school exam.

- **Developmental Profile**—Requires schools to complete a developmental profile on all entering kindergarten and 1st-grade students.
- **QSI Grant**—Gives school districts additional dollars through the Quality Schools Grant program if they establish plans to adopt standards, intervene with additional services for children who are not meeting the standards, and train educators how to teach students in a results-based system of public education. The QSI Grant program became part of the state's school funding program.
- **School Designators**—Requires the State Board to develop an annual system of rating schools and designate each school by August 2002 in one of the four categories: distinguished, successful, deficient and in crisis. The categories are to be based on a school's student test scores and other indicators of student performance.
- **School Report Cards**—Requires each school to annually report specific information about student performance to their communities and the state beginning July 1, 2000. The information required includes school accreditation status; results of norm-referenced achievement tests; results of state standards-based assessments in reading, writing and mathematics; description of student, parent, community and business involvement in student learning; and rates of student attendance, K–8 retention, grade 7–12 dropout and graduation. The department is required to issue its first school-by-school report card on January 15, 2001.

June 1998

The Department of Education establishes the elements of the QSI law as the department's key priorities.



September 1998

The State Board adopts by motion the student employability standards as an 11th content standard.

January 1999

The State Board adopts by motion student performance standards in reading, writing and mathematics.

March 1999

Benchmark exams for grades 3, 6 and 8 and high school exams are field tested statewide. The State Board mandates all sophomores to take the high school exam.

September 1999

Public schools complete first developmental profiles of kindergarten and 1st-grade students.

September 1999

The State Board adopts in regulation performance standards in reading, writing and mathematics. The same regulation removes content standards from regulation and readopts them by reference in the publication Alaska Standards: Content and Performance Standards for Alaska Students. The board also adopts by reference the employability content standards.

February 2000

The School Designator Committee begins a series of meetings to recommend elements of a system to rate schools as distinguished, successful, deficient and in crisis.

March 2000

The State Board adopts Alternate Performance Standards and the Student Cultural Standards.

March 2000

The first administration of the high school and benchmark exams is conducted statewide. At the direction of the State Board, all 10th-grade students are required to take the high school exam.

September 2000

The State Board adopts passing scores for the high school exam.

September – October 2000

About 350 school board presidents, school administrators, some of the state's best teachers, and business and community leaders convene at Girdwood for Education Summit 2000, the second education summit of the Knowles Administration. The purpose is to develop strategies to help more children meet the state's new higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Teams from school districts statewide examine the performance of their districts' students on state tests and learn how to analyze and score data and to improve schools to better meet the learning needs of students.

benchmarks

December 2000

The State Board adopts proficiency cut scores for the benchmark exams.

December 2000

The State Board adopts a resolution urging the Legislature to change the effective date for the high stakes portion of the High School Graduation Qualifying Examination, from January 1, 2002 to 2006. The Board's plan would continue the administration of the test.

December 2000

As the next step toward fulfilling the goals of the Quality Schools Initiative, Governor Knowles appoints 11 Alaskans to an Education Funding Task Force. The Task Force will recommend to the Governor and the State Board in February 2001 a five-year funding plan to fulfill the goals of the QSI and improve education in Alaska.

January 2001

By law, the first school-by-school Report Card to the Public is delivered to the Legislature and the public.

February 2001

Governor Knowles' Education Funding Task Force develops a five-year funding plan, and publishes it in what becomes the A+ Report, to advance the goals of the Alaska Quality Schools Initiative. The panel recommends $42.4 million in programs and services in year one of the plan, and 1 percent increases in years two, three, four and five. Overall, the Task Force recommends spending $100.3 million more in 2006 than in 2001. Most of the new funding is requested for the school foundation program, which would increase per-student spending by $414 by year five of the plan. An additional $7 million in year one, increasing to $8.6 million by year five, is requested outside the foundation program to implement recommendations related to achieving the goals of the Quality Schools Initiative.

March 2001

The Department of Education & Early Development makes available new practice tests for the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam and the Alaska Benchmark Examinations at grades 3, 6 and 8.

May 2001

The Governor's Task Force on School Funding influences the Legislature to increase school funding as the Legislature passes SB 174 in the closing hours of the session. Total public school foundation funding is increased $24.3 million, which includes a hike in the base student allocation by $70 per pupil. The

total fiscal year 2002 foundation program is $695.8 million. In the state appropriation bill, an additional $12 million is included for Learning Opportunity Grants, an increase of $6 million over fiscal year 2001. In addition, upon the recommendation of the Governor's Task Force, the Legislature appropriates $300,000 to conduct a study of area cost differentials.

May 2001

The Governor's Task Force on School Funding is also influential in encouraging the Legislature to pass several bills to provide incentives to attract and keep teachers. SB 149/HB 242 directs the Department of Education & Early Development to issue a preliminary teacher certificate to out-of-state teachers who hold a baccalaureate degree. The certificate is valid for three years. The measure also requires the department to issue revocable teacher certificates, valid for one year, to teachers whose certificate expired more than one year earlier. The revocable certificate allows the teacher time to complete requirements for a regular teacher certificate. The bill also allows school districts that have, or anticipate having, a shortage of qualified teachers in a particular discipline to adopt a policy to permit the employment of qualified retired teachers. The retired teacher, while reemployed, does not lose retirement pay, but does not earn additional retirement benefits. SB 86 creates a subject-matter expert limited teacher certificate for a person to teach in a subject in which the person is an expert. The certificate is valid only for the subject for which the person has expertise and holds at least a baccalaureate degree.

July 2001

Education Commissioner Holloway distributes a memorandum to policymakers and education leaders about the most recent release of testing data from the Alaska High School Graduation Qualifying Examination and the Alaska Benchmark Examinations. She states: "The data I am releasing today will cause deep soul searching in Alaska. The analysis shows a deep divide in student achievement among ethnic groups. White students score higher than other ethnic groups, much higher on average than Native students. Why is this so? What steps do we need to take to shrink this divide? It's time for debate. It's time to find out. It's time for action. As we more deeply analyze the data, a picture begins to come into focus. It is important that we share this picture with others. By doing so we encourage broader understanding of what the exam results mean, and stimulate debate over what we need to do to improve achievement. It is vital that our data-driven debate be free of political and personal agendas and is focused on students."

September 2001

The State Board adopts a regulation to fulfill its vision for a complete statewide student assessment program. The regulation extends norm-referenced testing to students in grades 5 and 9. The regulation means that students in grades 4, 5, 7 and 9 will take the TerraNova normed test, developed by CTB/McGraw-Hill. Other tests include the Alaska Benchmark Exam at grades 3, 6 and 8, and the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam beginning in grade 10.

October 2001

The Governor's Education Funding Task Force issues its "Year Two" funding recommendations to Governor Knowles. The Task Force recommends a $32.7 million investment in Alaska's schools for the next school year. The highlights are $23 million in permanent increases to the foundation formula and $6 million in assistance and incentives to help schools work to meet higher standards. The Task Force also urges the Legislature to fund all the projects on the state school construction and maintenance lists. The Task Force report states that its year two recommendations will keep the Task Force's five-year funding plan on track. Organizations statewide begin gearing up to support the Task Force's year two recommendations.

November 2001

The State Board reinforces its vision of the Quality Schools Initiative by adopting a resolution calling for voluntary preschool for all 3- and 4-year-old children. The resolution also expresses support for the development of pilot preschool programs in communities with low achievement scores on state exams, high poverty, and lack of Head Start or other early development programs.

April 2002

The State Board unanimously adopts a resolution asking the Legislature to delay the school designator program to allow more time to align the state's accountability system with the new requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act, collect the data necessary to measure student growth, and other information such as parent and community involvement

in schools; build the capacity to effectively collect, analyze and use data needed to make credible designations; and conduct a statewide pilot study of the school designator system in 2003. The No Child Left Behind Act took effect with its signing on January 8, 2002.

May 2002

The Governor's Task Force on School Funding for the second year in a row influences the Legislature to add an additional $10.9 million to the Learning Opportunity Grants formula to advance the goals of the Quality Schools Initiative. The Learning Opportunity Grants, distributed to all school districts, now total $23.3 million. In addition, the Task Force is successful in convincing the Legislature to offset the effects of a provision in the school foundation program that erodes the supplemental funding floor for rural districts as the Legislature appropriates $1.3 million to 25 rural school districts. The Legislature also adds an additional $6 million in school funding outside the school foundation formula to be shared by all school districts, also on a formula basis.

The Legislature adopts HB 352, introduced by Governor Knowles, to delay by two years the school designator program. The Department of Education & Early Development now needs to begin assigning performance designators of distinguished, successful, deficient or in crisis to all public schools in the state beginning September 2004.

September 2002

The State Board adopts new passing scores for the High School Graduation Qualifying Examination because the test has been reconfigured.

December 2002

Frank Murkowski takes office as Governor. He appoints a new State Board in February 2003.

May 2003

The State Board appoints Roger Sampson Commissioner of Education & Early Development.

The Legislature approves a 4 percent increase to the base per-student allocation for fiscal 2004, from $4,010 to $4,169. It is the first increase in two years, and is intended to encourage greater accountability. The state will spend nearly $668 million in the foundation program in the 2003–2004 school year. The Legislature also changes state funding of school transportation from 100 percent reimbursement to a grant program with a fixed amount per student.

August 2003

The state announces the first determinations of adequate yearly progress under the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Of 488 eligible schools, 42 percent meet the targets for the percentage of students who scored proficient on state assessments in reading, writing and math.

Fall 2003

The state posts a web site about the No Child Left Behind Act and creates sample written materials that districts can use to notify parents about the law.

September 2003

The new State Board adopts statements of its vision, mission and goals that continue to advance and accelerate the progress of the standards-based reforms of prior administrations. The board says it is committed to develop, maintain and continuously improve a comprehensive, quality public education system. Its mission is to ensure quality standards-based instruction to improve academic achievement for all students. The board's goals are continuous academic growth for all students, including closing the achievement gap in reading, writing and math; to continue to refine the state assessment and accountability system; to promote the continuous growth of professionals and paraprofessionals; and to increase effective instructional time.

The State Board issues a resolution accepting accountability for public education in Alaska. The resolution states that Alaska has committed itself to developing an education system that holds schools, districts and the state to significant annual achievement targets. The board resolves to set in motion an education system in which teachers are trained and skilled to teach in ways that best meet students' needs; Alaska standards identify what students should know and be able to do; Alaska benchmark tests and other assessments will be

performance

assessments

used to determine student proficiency; and test results will be used to develop instruction and identify additional skills that students need.

The state wins a $14 million federal Reading First grant to promote reading instruction and student learning. The department disburses much of the funds to three large school districts. The funds, which will be spent over five years, are expected to help more than 2,000 students in kindergarten to grade 3 receive reading instruction that is validated by research. More than 130 educators in those districts will be trained in research-proven reading instruction.

December 2003

The State Board approves a state appeals procedure for students whose school district has denied them a waiver from the High School Graduation Qualifying Examination.

The State Board adopts a regulation that allows people who have not passed the High School Graduation Qualifying Examination to retake the test any number of times. This allows people to achieve a high school diploma by passing the exam later in life.

The state produces a video and gives workshops that help principals interpret assessment data and use data to improve student achievement.

The state develops daily lesson plans that align with Alaska standards. The lessons are in reading, writing and math for grades 1 to 8.

The state streamlines the delivery of state and federally mandated trainings for educators by developing online and computer-based training courses for teachers in state-mandated trainings in drug-and alcohol-related disabilities, child abuse detection and reporting, school crisis response planning, personnel development, education for exceptional children, and evaluation of professional employees, and in federally mandated training in blood borne pathogens.

February 2004

The state announces it will contract with the Data Recognition Corporation to develop a unified system of state assessments that will more quickly provide useful diagnostic information to parents and educators. The contract saves the state $12.3 million and results in better assessments whose content is owned by the state.

March 2004

The State Board establishes a variety of ways for teachers to meet the federal requirement to demonstrate they are highly qualified. Experienced teachers can use a system in which they gain points for experience, schooling and professional development.

The State Board adopts the Alaska State Paraprofessional Standards. Recognizing the valuable role of paraprofessionals, the standards provide career guidance to paraprofessionals, clarify the responsibilities of teachers toward paraprofessionals, provide guidance to school districts in job descriptions and evaluations, and help colleges create professional development programs for paraprofessionals.

May 2004

The Legislature approves a 9.8 percent increase in the base per-student allocation for fiscal year 2005, from $4,169 to $4,576. The state will spend $733.3 million in the foundation program in school year 2004-2005.

June 2004

The State Board issues a resolution asking the Legislature to adopt a long-range fiscal plan that would assure adequate funding for basic state services, including education.

August 2004

The State Board amends regulations regarding state assessments for students with disabilities. The regulations adopt the Participation Guidelines for Alaska Students in State Assessments of 2004. The guidelines help parents and educators decide when accommodations for students or modifications to the tests are appropriate. The regulations implement the class action settlement of Noon v. State, which allows for more accommodations and modifications.

The Alaska Statewide Mentor Project begins with 22 mentors serving 339 beginning teachers in 31 districts. The project is a partnership, using federal funds, of the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development and the University of Alaska. The project trains experienced Alaska teachers to guide teachers in the first and second years of teaching. The goals are to attract and retain teachers; improve student achievement; and create a cadre of mentors who will be educational leaders in their schools and districts.

The state announces the second determinations of adequate yearly progress under the No Child Left Behind Act. Of 497 eligible schools, 58.8 percent meet the targets for the percentage of students who scored proficient on state assessments in reading, writing and math. It is a notable increase over the previous year's results, although some of the improvement can be attributed to changes in the way AYP is determined.

December 2004

The State Board requires students to complete a half-credit course in Alaska history or demonstrate they have met the state standards in the subject. The requirement is effective for students who will graduate on or after January 1, 2009. An exception is made for students who transfer to Alaska after their second year of high school.

The State Board passes a resolution supporting boarding schools in Alaska and calling for an action plan. Since 1999, 16 small schools had closed around the state. The board calls on the Legislature, Governor Murkowski and the education community to work with the board to develop a plan to design and fund a system of statewide boarding schools.

January 2005

The Alaska Statewide Mentor Project expands to serve new principals. Seven coaches mentor 45 new principals in 25 districts.

March 2005

The State Board adopts regulations to recognize distinguished performance and distinguished improvement by schools and districts.

May 2005

Governor Murkowski calls for a task force on early childhood literacy. Governor Murkowski asks the Ready to Read, Ready to Learn Task Force to identify ways Alaskans can improve the readiness of pre-schoolers to read and learn; recommend how families can become better at teaching children to listen, speak, read and write; recommend how pre-schools and child care centers can provide the optimal start for children; and consider the roles of the business community, local governments and the state government.

The Legislature approves an increase in the base per-student allocation by 7.5 percent for fiscal year 2006, from $4,576 to $4,919. The state will spend nearly $803 million in the foundation program for school year 2005-2006.

The Legislature approves more than $96 million for school construction and major maintenance projects, fully funding the major maintenance list for the first time in Alaska history.

The Legislature also extends the school debt reimbursement program until October 31, 2006, and allocates $192 million for voter-approved projects across 14 municipal school districts.

June 2005

The State Board adopts new, challenging student performance science standards.

In keeping with federal requirements, the State Board requires a state assessment of science to be given to students in grades 4, 8 and 10, starting in the spring of 2008.

The State Board adopts grade level expectations as the performance standards for science, math, reading and writing. The grade level expectations represent considerably more detailed standards than before. They are intended to provide a clearer guide to parents and educators of what children should know and be able to do at each grade level.

The State Board overhauls teacher certification into a standards- and performance-based system. The new system requires teachers to demonstrate content knowledge at a higher level than before; and for the first time the state requires teachers to demonstrate they can convey their subject in the classroom. Under the tiered certification system, new teachers receive a nonrenewable Initial certificate good for only three years, at which time teachers must show they have met a variety of requirements before receiving a five-year, renewable Professional certificate. The system also establishes a Master certificate.

July 2005

The State Board adopts new thresholds for each proficiency level of the new standards-based assessments, which Alaska students took for the first time in April 2005. In keeping with the new tests, the board also adjusts the table of annual measurable objectives, which sets out what percentage of students must score proficient for a school to have made adequate yearly progress under the No Child Left Behind Act. The changes do not make it harder or easier for schools to meet annual achievement targets.

The State Board adopts a grade span system to determine whether districts have made adequate yearly progress under the No Child Left Behind Act. Under the system, districts move to a higher level of improvement status if they do not make

adequate yearly progress for two consecutive years in three grade spans in math or language arts. The grade spans are grades 3-5, 6-8, and 9-10.

August 2005

The Alaska Statewide Mentor Project expands its reach, with 24 mentors guiding 381 teachers in 36 districts, as well as nine coaches guiding 81 principals in 27 districts.

The state announces the third determinations of adequate yearly progress under the No Child Left Behind Act. Of 495 eligible schools, 59 percent meet the targets for the percentage of students who scored proficient on state assessments in reading, writing and math. Although the percentage hasn't changed much from the year before, it's still good news because the target is higher for the school year 2004-2005 than in previous years. It is the first AYP determinations under the state's new assessments.

September 2005

The State Board adopts a guide to determine what students are in the economically disadvantaged student subgroup under the accountability system of the No Child Left Behind Act. This provides clarity for districts. The board also adds the subgroup of multi-ethnic students, and it combines Alaska Native and American Indian into one subgroup. The categories better reflect Alaska's population. Schools are held accountable for the performance of subgroups.

actions

The State Board sets qualifications for special education teachers to demonstrate they are highly qualified, as required by the No Child Left Behind Act.

The state receives a $3 million federal grant to recruit and mentor special education teachers.

November 2005

Mt. Edgecumbe High School, the state-operated boarding school in Sitka, dedicates its new 7,500-square-foot science wing. The science wing, the renovation of an unused building as a dormitory, and conversion of other space to classrooms allows MEHS to enroll 60 more students, mostly rural. The improvements, worth $7.5 million, are funded from a federal payment to the state.

The state receives a $3.5 million federal grant to centrally computerize information about student performance across the state and through the years. Longitudinal data make it possible to follow the academic growth of individual students and assess the value of specific education programs. The project also makes it easier for districts and the state to comply with reporting requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act.

December 2005

The State Board requires a state standards-based assessment in grade 10. Alaska previously gave SBAs in grades 3-9.

March 2006

The State Board adopts revised standards for English language proficiency for students with limited English proficiency. The standards, first set in 2004, will be used to implement a new English language proficiency assessment. The revision provides greater clarity in setting out measurable standards that indicate what a proficient student knows and is able to do. They are strongly linked to Alaska's standards.

The State Board adopts standards in Alaska history. The standards provide guidance to districts in creating curricula and in devising tests that students can use to demonstrate competency rather than take a course. The standards stem from the new one-half credit requirement in Alaska history.

The State Board adopts 10th-grade standards-based assessments in reading, writing and math.

May 2006

The Legislature increases the base per-student allocation 9.4 percent for fiscal year 2007, from $4,919 to $5,380. It represents a 34 percent increase since fiscal year 2003. The Legislature also appropriates $35 million as one-time funding. The state expects to spend $922.7 million in the foundation program for school year 2006-2007.

The Legislature approves $73.2 million in grants to build three rural schools in fiscal year 2007 and $89.7 million to build five rural schools in fiscal year 2008. The Legislature also extends the school debt reimbursement program to November 30, 2008.

June 2006

The State Board, in keeping with a federal requirement, adopts five corrective actions for districts that have not made adequate yearly progress for four years. The state also develops a method to perform instructional audits of struggling districts, as the basis for preparing improvement plans. The five possible corrective actions are: defer or reduce funds; implement a new curriculum based on state standards; work

accountability

with the local school board to replace district personnel; initiate procedures to remove schools from the district's jurisdiction and provide alternate public governance; and along with at least one other action, let students transfer to other public schools and provide transportation to do that.

The State Board endorses Alaska's recently developed Early Learning Guidelines. The guidelines, which are voluntary, apply to children from birth to age 5. They were created by representatives of Head Start, child care centers, universities, public schools, the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services and the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development, and other members of the public. The guidelines describe four stages of children's development in five areas: physical well-being; social and emotional development; approaches to learning; cognition and general knowledge; and communication, language and literacy.

July 2006

The State Board sets the proficiency levels for the 10th-grade standards-based assessment, and it changes two of the passing scores for the High School Graduation Qualifying Examination. The latter changes reflect the greater refinement of standards in the grade level expectations, as well as the sense among educators that the passing score for the writing test had been too low.

The Legislature, responding to the State Board's resolution of support for boarding schools, provides more funding for the non-academic costs of such schools. The board adopts regulations that require school districts to gain state approval before opening a boarding school that accepts students statewide. The state will examine infrastructure, demand, capacity, cost, the ability to run a quality program, the health and welfare of the students, and the public interest.

August 2006

The Alaska Statewide Mentor Project continues to expand. Twenty-seven mentors assist 400 teachers, and nine coaches

assist 59 principals in 21 districts. Previously funded by federal sources, the program this year is funded by $4.5 million from the Legislature and $500,000 from the University of Alaska.

The state announces the fourth determinations of adequate yearly progress under the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Of 497 eligible schools, 62.7 percent met the targets for the percentage of students who scored proficient on state assessments in reading, writing and math. That represents an increase of 15 schools making adequate yearly progress from the year before.

September 2006

The U.S. Department of Education fully approves Alaska's assessment system under the No Child Left Behind Act. Federal reviewers determined that Alaska's system aligned valid, reliable and fair tests to challenging content and performance standards; involved a wide variety of Alaskans in developing the tests and standards; and used an effective, understandable method of presenting the results to the public.

The State Board adopts regulations to implement the Alaska Public School Performance Incentive Program, which grants bonuses to a school's staff if students show significant improvement in achievement or continue to achieve at an advanced level. The Legislature approved the administration-proposed program in 2006 and funded it at $5.8 million in the first year. It is intended to encourage school staff to collaborate and use effective strategies to help all students grow academically. The regulations reflect the fact that the Legislature approved the program as a three-year pilot and capped the number of certificated personnel who can receive a financial incentive at 850 a year.

The State Board adopts performance standards and grade level expectations for kindergarten to grade 2. The standards articulate the skills students need to learn to demonstrate proficiency in grade 3 on the state standards-based assessment. The standards will help districts develop their curricula.

The State Board amends regulations regarding intensive students. The regulations clarify which students are eligible for intensive funding, noting that districts should consider what skills are appropriate to a child's age. The regulations also allow district staff to care for up to three intensive students at a time, if that's safe and appropriate. Districts previously had been expected to supply one adult for each intensive child.

The Ready to Read, Ready to Learn Task Force issues its recommendations about early education. The recommendations fall into three areas: in the home; child care and

early education programs; and establishing a sustainable system for early childhood literacy and learning, with accountability for outcomes.

November 2006

The Department of Education & Early Development unveils the Alaska Reading Course to the State Board. The 25-hour course, developed with the assistance of nationally recognized experts, is intended to show teachers of all subjects and all grades how to teach reading and improve students' reading skills. The course will be taught only by specially trained instructors and will be offered through universities, professional-development organizations, and school districts. Members of the public, such as home-school parents, also may take the course.

Department of Education & Early Development
801 W. 10th St., Suite 200 • P.O. Box 110500 • Juneau, AK 99811-0500
Phone: 907-465-2800 • Website: www.eed.state.ak.us