



MEMORANDUM

To: State Board of Education & Early Development
Date: May 21, 2024

Thru: Deena Bishop Ed.D, Commissioner
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From: Kathy Moffitt, Director
Division of Innovation and Education Excellence
Subject: Agenda 9A. Division of Innovation and Education Excellence Standing Report

Division of Innovation and Education Excellence 2024 Board Report

The Division of Innovation and Education Excellence (IEE) is dedicated to providing an excellent education for every student every day by focusing division efforts around the five priorities of the [Alaska Education Challenge](#); overseeing state and federally-funded programs to ensure the quality and equity of student services; and providing technical assistance and support to districts statewide.

The IEE Division encompasses eleven teams that manage a wide range of state programs and activities. These teams include Academic Support, Assessment, Career and Technical Education, COVID Support, Data and Accountability, Early Learning, ESEA Federal Programs, Health and Safety, School Recognition and Support, Special Education, and Teacher Certification.

The IEE Board Report includes highlights of work with initiatives, compliance work, and support to districts as it relates to the Alaska Education Challenge priorities.

Academic Support

The [Department Reading Program](#) has accepted 25 schools for implementation and coaching support and is meeting to create SMART goals for their Intensive Support Reading Intervention Plans. The support allocated for each school from the five Academic Support Team Reading Specialists is outlined by the Memorandums of Understanding between each school, district, and department; the support equates to 152 hours per week. The program aligns with AK Challenge Priority #1 in supporting the lowest 25% of schools to read at grade level by the end of third grade.

Representatives of the Alaska Virtual Consortium (AVC) presented at the Alaska Society for Technology in Education (ASTE) Conference in February to bring awareness of the new program to district leaders and teachers, which is one aspect of AK Challenge Priority #2. To address AK Challenge Priority #3, each Reading Specialist continues to be a direct point of contact for each district to support the implementation of the AK Reads K-3 District Reading Intervention Plan. Current support topics include revising their [K-3 Plan](#) for next school year, [non-progression](#) meeting support, and multi-grade classrooms.

The Academic Support Team assists with support of [professional development for Alaska Educators](#) in alignment with AK Challenge Priority #4 to prepare, attract, and retain effective education professionals. Approximately 1,200 Alaska Educators have successfully completed the Alaska Reads Act-approved [Keys to Literacy](#) course. There are currently three more Spring cohorts in session, with 240 participants, and registration is open for the Summer cohorts. The [NWEA SoR Course for Leaders](#) has had 170 Alaska Leaders complete the course. There are 60 enrolled for the Spring session, with an upcoming NWEA Intensive Summer course opportunity being advertised. Lexia [LETRS](#) has 572 enrolled/completed participants, with more upcoming cohorts this Summer and into next Fall.

Assessment

From February to April 2024, the Assessment Team was focused on two key activities: preparing for and supporting Spring 2024 testing and preparing for and delivering Spring 2023 AK STAR results.

In preparation for the Spring 2024 test window, the Assessment Team held the District Test Coordinator (DTC) annual training in Anchorage on February 6 and 7. This annual training provides the opportunity for the DEED team and vendor partners to share essential information about the assessment systems, practices, and policies so that DTCs can return to their districts and ensure a smooth and successful testing implementation.

During this time, the Assessment Team worked closely with assessment vendors to ensure test items/forms were reviewed, students were registered, test delivery systems were functioning, and customer service protocols were in place. These activities ensure that vendor partners and DEED are well-prepared to address district needs before and during the test window.

- The 2023-24 testing windows are listed here: https://education.alaska.gov/tls/Assessments/pdf_files/5_year_assessment_calendar.pdf

Upon SBOE's approval of the revised cut scores for AK STAR, the Assessment Team worked closely with NWEA to follow timelines for preparing the 2023 for release. AK STAR 2023 results were distributed to districts on March 20, 2024, and shared publicly on April 17, 2024. Superintendents and DTCs were given information and resources to support disseminating results to their school communities. Districts are required to deliver results to families no later than May 10, 2024.

- Assessment Results for the 2022-23 school year can be found here: <https://education.alaska.gov/assessments/results/results2023>
- Resources for understanding AK STAR assessment results can be found here: <https://education.alaska.gov/assessments/akstar/results>

These activities align with the Alaska Education Challenge Goals #1 and #3, supporting all students to read at grade level by the end of third grade and closing the achievement gap by ensuring equitable educational rigor and resources.

Career and Technical Education

The following three accomplishments of the DEED CTE team this quarter promote the second priority of Alaska's Education Challenge: increasing career and technical education opportunities for Alaska's students.

The annual DEED Perkins CTE Workshop was held in February. The conference kicks off the new application process for FY25 Perkins funds. With over 70 participants, work focused on CTE Programs of Study exemplars from across the state and collaborative work with Department of Labor partners.

DEED CTE will submit four revisions to Alaska's existing State Perkins Plan by May 10, 2024. Access proposed revisions at the following link: [Proposed Revisions to Alaska's Perkins V State Plan for Submission May 2024](#). Three of the proposed revisions cover increasing the minimum school district grant from \$15K to \$20K, better-aligned application paperwork, and a proposed state Perkins budget for FY25. The fourth proposed revision sets new performance targets on 10 program performance indicators.

CTE programs funded through the \$1.5M Governor's CTE "incentive grants" are being implemented: Fourteen school district grantees were funded to strengthen CTE Programs of Study this year. Collaboration work continues to develop career guidance within the state through virtual and in-person meetings and the establishment of three Career Guide positions (focused on high school students) with the Department of Labor Jobs Centers network. Alaska's five Career and Technical Student Organizations have received additional grant funds to assist with school/student outreach and annual student-state conferences. Work continues with national Advance CTE to develop a work-based learning toolkit to facilitate school and employer collaboration.

COVID Support Team

The COVID Relief team has been engaged in monitoring for American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds awarded to Local Education Agencies (LEA) through the formula. Additionally, we monitor discretionary funds awarded to LEA and nonprofit entities across the state. The COVID Relief team has conducted in-person check-ins with subgrantees concerning construction spending. Specifically reviewing with entities for Davis Bacon compliance, allowability of expenditures, contract compliance, and on-time delivery of services.

In combination, efforts to assess risk, monitor, and meet directly with LEA's support AK Challenge Priority #3. Specifically, this supports the equitable distribution of funding, ensuring resources are targeted to support rigor and focusing expenditures of COVID funds to support students, thus helping to close the achievement gap. In general, COVID Relief funds were, by design and purpose, meant to address some of the academic losses associated with the pandemic.

Data and Accountability

The spring OASIS data collection was closed on April 15, 2024. This is one of several annual collections that the Data Team manages. The Spring OASIS collection assists in the reporting of student demographics and allows DEED to calculate participation rates.

This data collection supports AK priority Challenge #3, closing the achievement gap by ensuring equitable education rigor and resources. By enabling DEED to measure and monitor participation and student demographics, this data collection will help to ensure equitable education rigor and resources.

Portions of the Report Card to the Public pertaining to AK STAR assessments have been published.

- The state Report Card can be found here:
<https://education.alaska.gov/compass/Report/2022-2023/>.
- School and District Report Cards can be found here:
<https://education.alaska.gov/compass/report-card>

The accountability calculations are ongoing and will be completed by the end of May 2024.

Early Learning

The Early Learning Team efforts support Alaska's Education Challenge priority #1 and #4, support all students to read at grade level by the end of third grade, and prepare, attract, and retain effective education professionals. This is accomplished through support to districts in the creation and/or maintenance of high-quality early education and pre-elementary programs. Funding allowed two districts to be awarded the District Wide Early Education Program Grant (EEP Grant) for the 2024-2025, 2025-2026, and 2026-2027 school years: Northwest Arctic Borough School District and Alaska Gateway School District.

Additionally, the Application for Early Education Program Approval and .5ADM (EEP-ADM Application) was updated and posted on January 25, 2024, and will close on May 15, 2024. The team started the 'rollout' of districts and Head Start programs using the Ages and Stages

Questionnaire (ASQ-3) overall developmental screen with students. In this first quarter of the rollout, materials were distributed, and three training sessions occurred.

Professor Tonia Dousay (UAA) was invited to present to the Alaska Head Start directors to share the news that UAA has been approved as a sponsor with the Federal Department of Labor. Programs may collaborate with UAA to create a registered apprenticeship program to help staff earn their early childhood credentials and/or degrees.

ESEA Federal Programs

The ESEA Federal Programs team hosted its annual Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Consolidated Application Technical Assistance Workshop in-person the week of April 8th. This workshop provided guidance and technical assistance to districts in complying with the provisions of the ESEA. The Alaska Department of Education & Early Development (DEED) staff provided programmatic and Grant Management System (GMS) application updates to approximately 80 district staff throughout the State. In addition to DEED ESEA presentations, there were two district presentations, an AASB presentation on parent and family engagement, and a DEED Reads Act team presentation. The Bruman Group, PLLC, presented federal updates virtually to attendees the week prior. The Bruman Group, PLLC is nationally recognized for its federal grants management and education regulatory and legislative practice.

Alaska's Migrant Education programs are vital in addressing several of Alaska's educational challenges. The U.S. Department of Education requires each State to conduct an annual review of the program's eligibility determinations through a process called prospective re-interviewing. Re-interviewing allows confirmation of the state's eligibility determinations and the accuracy of the number of migratory children that the State reports to the Office of Migrant Education. In addition, re-interviewing helps to identify and fix any problems in the state's identification and recruitment (ID&R) processes. It is essential to have strong ID&R processes to ensure eligible migratory children receive the Title I-C funded services designed to address their unique educational needs resulting from their migratory lifestyle. In 2023-24, 49 migratory families were re-interviewed. It was confirmed that accurate eligibility determinations were made for all 49 families.

Alaska's 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) programs are vital in addressing several of Alaska's educational challenges. As a condition of receiving 21st CCLC funds, both DEED and subgrantees must annually collect and submit data that reflects progress in meeting both federal Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) accountability measures and locally set measures, as well as the other measures of effort. Collecting and aggregating data takes some time to complete after the program year ends, so outcomes from the 22-23 school year have only become fully available in the past few months. Alaska's 21st CCLC programs provided approximately 3,493 students afterschool and/or summer programming in FY23, running 53 centers. In the afterschool program alone, the following was offered:

- 5,345 additional hours of Academic Enrichment such as tutoring, homework help, and credit recovery.
- 6,992 hours of Healthy and Active opportunities such as USDA snacks or meals, Girls on the Run, SEL instruction.
- 2,439 additional hours of Literacy Education.

- 9,525 additional hours of STEM such as coding, robotics, and math pre-teaching.
- 8,495 additional hours of Well-rounded Education such as art, cooking, and music.

Health & Safety

The DEED Health & Safety team has begun planning the fourth Safety & Well-Being Summit to be held on September 25-26, 2024, at the Egan Center in Anchorage. DEED has invited educational leaders, key staff, and strategic stakeholders from across the state to: Promote healthy development through trauma-engaged and restorative practices, improve school climate, and be better prepared for any possible school crisis. To attend the summit, please register [here](#). This project directly aligns with the Education Challenge's fifth priority area, improving students' safety and well-being through school partnerships with families, communities, and tribes.

DEED staff continue to provide Trauma Engaged Schools (TES) and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) coaching and training to 33 schools in 8 districts. In April, DEED brought over 100 Alaskans to the NWPBIS conference in Tacoma. All of the schools presented during the Pre-Conference Alaska Day and are progressing well toward program implementation.

In FY 24, DEED staff cross-walked the sections of the Alaska Trauma Framework with the implementation steps for PBIS. DEED staff presented this work to many entities at the Response to Intervention (RTI) conference, Special Education Conference, Governor's Council of Special Education meeting, USDOE Trauma Recovery Demonstration Grantee meeting, NWPBIS conference, Alaska Trauma Institute, and the SAMHSA Project AWARE Grantee meeting. This Initiative directly aligns with the Education Challenge's fifth priority area, improve the safety and well-being of students through school partnerships with families, communities, and tribes. <https://education.alaska.gov/apps/traumawebtoolkit/new-framework-page.html>

School Recognition and Support

The Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant, supporting Alaska Education Challenge #1 by funding 39 literacy projects in 30 districts across the state, has held both an in-person convening in late January and a virtual convening on April 1, providing grant and monitoring information as the 5th year comes to a close. DEED has applied for a No Cost Time Extension, giving the subgrantees an additional year to spend down their grant funds.

In March, the School Improvement team was requested to present on the Empowerment Process at the Meeting the Moment conference in Washington DC, hosted by the National Comprehensive Center, where other states could learn about Alaska processes and DEED could share successes and lessons learned. A large focus has been on community and stakeholder engagement within the process and the value of data. Additionally, the DEED Empowerment Specialists have joined the Reading Specialists in being trained on the Student Focused Coaching model, providing continuity and alignment across the teams with how to approach communication and support of schools and districts. The teams will work together closely to support high-needs schools. These efforts align with all Alaska Education Challenge elements, particularly priorities #1, #3, and #5.

Special Education

The Special Education Team successfully initiated a groundbreaking professional development program through the GREAT grant, empowering Alaska Native paraprofessionals to earn teaching certification in special education. This innovative initiative addresses the critical need for more culturally diverse and qualified educators in special education, thereby enhancing educational outcomes for Indigenous students across Alaska.

In a significant milestone, the Special Education Team undertook the comprehensive rewrite of the Special Education Handbook, a pivotal resource guiding educators, administrators, and parents in navigating the complexities of special education services. This updated handbook incorporates the latest research, best practices, and legal requirements, ensuring clarity, accessibility, and effectiveness in supporting students with diverse learning needs. Moreover, the team crafted model forms integrated within the handbook, streamlining administrative processes, and promoting consistency in documentation across the state.

Building upon the commitment to inclusive and equitable education, the Special Education Team successfully launched the Dyslexia Training Initiative for Alaska Special Education Teachers. This program provides educators with specialized training and resources to effectively identify, support, and empower students with dyslexia. By equipping teachers with evidence-based strategies and interventions, this initiative fosters a more inclusive learning environment, empowering all students to achieve their full potential in literacy and beyond.

Teacher Certification

The Teacher Certification Team launched the Special Services, District Sponsored, and Miscellaneous certificate categories in The Educator Application and Certification Hub – Alaska (TEACH-AK) on April 19th, 2024, making all certification applications available online through TEACH AK. Teacher Certification is transitioning to 100% online applications starting June 1, 2024. The TEACH-AK online certification process streamlines the certification process and stores educator data. The District Portal is currently under construction and will be available this summer. It will provide real-time application data to districts, helping them support their employees through the certification process.

Teacher Certification is working collaboratively with the Reading Team to add AK Reads endorsements to educators' certificates who have completed a DEED-sponsored Science of Reading professional learning opportunity. This work is ongoing and will be completed by July 2025. Additionally, 271 AK Reads Act Endorsement applications have been received by Teacher Certification and have been added or are in the process of being added to certificates.

Teacher Certification has established a communication plan to communicate with educators, districts, and education preparation providers. The plan includes a website update, live webinars, office hours, and ongoing email updates through the DEED Information Exchange. The combination of this effort will streamline and simplify the process for educators to become certified in Alaska.

The Alaska Teacher Apprenticeship application is in process and is anticipated to be ready for submission to the US Department of Labor (DOL) for review by the end of June. The DEED

team is working with the National Center for Grow Your Own to meet with stakeholders and garner input on the plan before submission. In addition, DEED is facilitating support to Educator Preparation Programs (EPP) by convening working groups with EPPs that have successfully provided US DOL-approved instruction programs for Apprenticeship and with the Alaska CAEP Accreditation body representative. The ongoing partnership work supports DEED in building a sustainable model that will best meet the needs of Alaska's varied school districts.