

State Board of Education and Early Development

Annual Report to the Alaska Legislature

DRAFT - Updated November 11, 2022



State Board of Education and Early Development

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Alaska State Constitution Education Clause

Section 7.1 - Public Education.

The legislature shall by general law establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all children of the State, and may provide for other public educational institutions. Schools and institutions so established shall be free from sectarian control. No money shall be paid from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or other private educational institution.

AS 14.07.168. Report to the legislature

Not later than the 30th legislative day of each regular session of the legislature, the board shall prepare and present in person to the legislative committees having jurisdiction over education an annual report that describes the efforts of the board to develop, maintain, and continuously improve a comprehensive quality public education system, as provided for under the bylaws of the board. The report must include: (1) a summary of the resolves and rationales provided in support of policy decisions made under AS 14.03.015; (2) program and curriculum changes made, discussed, or recommended in meetings held under AS 14.07.125; (3) additional information relevant to efforts made to improve and maintain the public education system.

OUR MISSION

**An excellent education
for every student
every day.**

OUR VISION

All students will succeed in their education and work, shape worthwhile and satisfying lives for themselves, exemplify the best values of society, and be effective in improving the character and quality of the world about them.

Alaska Statute 14.03.015

Photo courtesy of Anchorage School District. Used with permission.

Purpose Statement

The Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) provides *information, resources, and leadership* to support an excellent education for every student every day.



Alaska's Education Challenge

Over the last five years, parents, students, educators, policymakers, tribal leaders, partner organizations, and local school boards have stepped forward to answer Alaska's call to action to create a shared vision for improving our public education system – the result is Alaska's Education Challenge.

That vision starts with three shared commitments: (1) Increase Student Success, (2) Cultivate Safety and Well-Being, and (3) Support Responsible and Reflective Learners.

In order to meet Alaska's education challenges, we are addressing our public education system through three components:

1. A call to action: Shared Commitments
2. A focus of efforts: Measurable Goals
3. A prioritization of change: Targeted Strategies

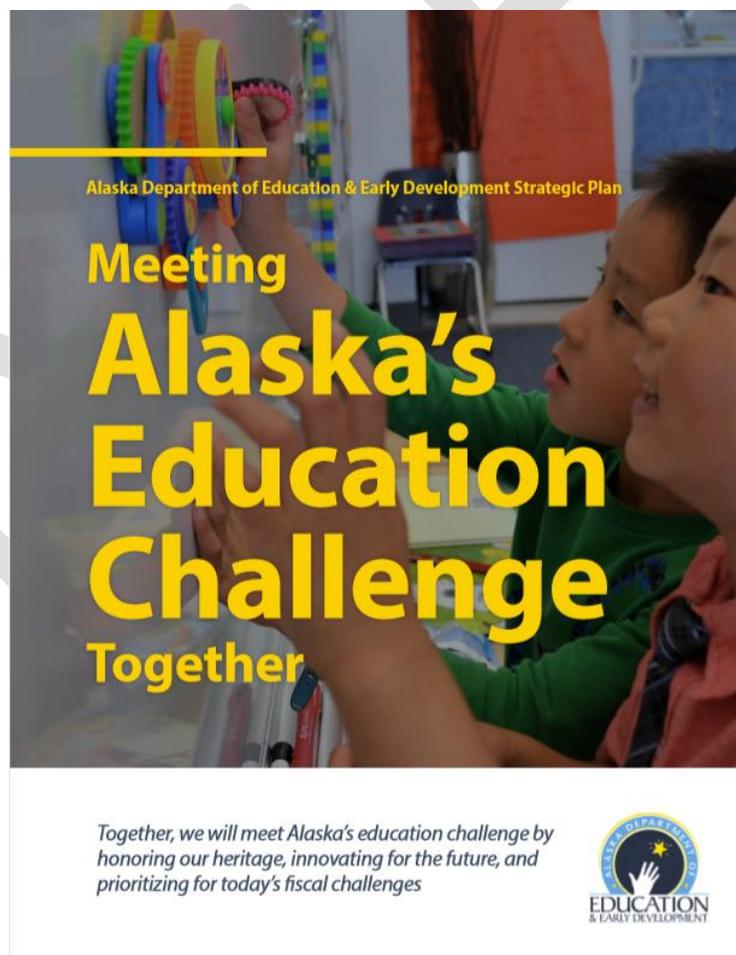


Under the board’s leadership, DEED has been collaborating with partner organizations to create and implement a strategic plan focused on five specific, measurable goals that are most likely to improve student outcomes from the dialogue and recommendations brought forward through the Alaska’s Education Challenge.

They are:

1. Support all students to read at grade level by the end of third grade
2. Increase career, technical, and culturally relevant education to meet student and workforce needs
3. Close the achievement gap by ensuring equitable educational rigor and resources
4. Prepare, attract, and retain effective education professionals
5. Improve the safety and well-being of students through school partnerships with families, communities, and tribes

To learn more about the Alaska’s Education Challenge and view the strategic plan, visit <https://education.alaska.gov/akedchallenge>.



REGULATIONS AND OTHER BOARD ACTIONS

In March 2022, the board provided provisional approval of the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) School of Education teacher preparation program. The provisional approval is valid through December 31, 2025 and includes four conditions: the establishment of an advisory committee, annual updates on its progress toward [CAEP](#) accreditation, written assurance to the board that UAA will freeze enrollment in the program if denied [NAEYC](#) accreditation during the provisional approval period, and written assurance from UAA and the UA Board of Regents that students enrolled in the provisionally approved program will have the opportunity to complete their program at UAA and be recommended for licensure if UAA is denied either NAEYC or CAEP accreditation.

At its March meeting the board also adopted regulations changes addressing recommendations from the Governor's Teacher Retention and Recruitment Working Group by expanding pathways to certification, simplifying qualification requirements, and streamlining the certification process. The board adopted regulation changes to pertaining to assessment participation guidelines, and approved amendments to regulations to add the definition of "world languages" and updated the term "foreign language" to "world language." The definition provides that world languages means "non-English languages including Alaska Native, American Indian, and American Sign Language."

The board approved 10 year charter school renewals for Alaska Native Cultural Charter School, Aquarian Charter School, Ayaprun Charter School, Family Partnership Charter School, and Fronteras Immersion Charter School. The board also approved the final FY2023 School Construction and Major Maintenance Grant Fund lists.

In June, the board approved Heidi Teshner and Lacey Sanders as Deputy Commissioners of the department and approved Suzzuk (Mary Huntington) as Superintendent of Mt. Edgecumbe High School and Miranda Bacha as MEHS Principal. Travis Vaughan was approved as the Sitka Community Representative on the MEHS Advisory Board, and Jerilyn Kelly was approved as the Parent Representative on the MEHS Advisory Board. The Board also approved regulations establishing a Seal of Biliteracy and alternate assessment scores.

The board approved the initial application for the Knik Cultural Charter School, approved an amendment for Academy Charter School to expand to high school, and renewed the charter for Ketchikan Charter School.

At the June meeting, Commissioner Dr. Michael Johnson informed the board and the governor of his retirement, effective June 30. At a special meeting in July, the board appointed Heidi Teshner as Acting Commissioner.

Also at its July special meeting, the board voted to send regulations for assessment cut scores out for public comment for both the AK STAR (English language arts and mathematics) and Alaska Science Assessment.

In September, the board approved the commissioner recruitment process, allowing DEED to initiate the procurement process for a contractor to lead a nationwide search for a new commissioner.

The board also approved the department engaging in discussions with the U.S. Coast Guard regarding a sale of Mt. Edgecumbe High School property. The Board's approval of the MEHS land sale authorizes department staff working with the U.S. Coast Guard on their request to purchase approximately 1.56 acres over three parcels owned by DEED on Seward Avenue in Sitka. The U.S. Coast Guard would like to construct a floating dock and support building for a new Fast Response Cutter (FRC) and replace the existing pier for the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Kukui. The MEHS Advisory Board will also review this land sale at a future board meeting.

The board adopted amendments to regulations for assessment cut scores and re-adopted regulations for teacher certification, assessment participation guidelines, and native languages. The re-adoption provided a technical fix for a fee waiver in the previously approved regulations.

New Officers, Members, and Staff

In June, the board re-elected James Fields as board chair. Sandy Kowalski was elected First Vice-Chair, and Sally Stockhausen was elected Second Vice-Chair. The positions are valid from July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023.

Also in June, Commissioner Dr. Michael Johnson informed Gov. Mike Dunleavy and the State Board of Education and Early Development of his retirement. The board named Deputy Commissioner Heidi Teshner Acting Commissioner at its July special meeting.

Maggie Cothron, a freshman at Polaris K-12 School in Anchorage School District was selected as the board's student advisor in September.

SIGNIFICANT STEPS

COVID-19 Relief Funding: Supporting Efficacy and Transparency

Beginning with the CARES Act in March 2020, Congress passed three COVID relief bills, which included funds for educational institutions to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. In total, Congress allocated Alaska more than \$620 million for education. In January 2022, DEED launched the [Alaska K-12 Education COVID-19 Relief Funding Dashboard](#) to show how COVID relief funds for education in Alaska are being utilized.

There is a dashboard for each funding entity: school districts, DEED, the Office of the Governor, and non-public schools. In addition to allocation and expenditure information, the dashboards host other relevant information including FAQs, fact sheets, and COVID relief funding guidelines.

The dashboards continue to be regularly updated.

Reading: Strategic Support and Implementing the Alaska Reads Act

Supporting all students to read at grade level by the end of third grade is the top priority identified in Alaska's Education Challenge. In June, Gov. Mike Dunleavy signed the Alaska Reads Act into law, creating four new programs to support early literacy. However, the department's work to address pervasive issues in early literacy preceded the Alaska Reads Act, is occurring alongside the implementation of the law, and will continue work in tandem with the requirements of the Alaska Reads Act in the future.

Academic Support Team

DEED hired three full time non-permanent position to make up the Academic Support Team: a Reading Team administrator, a K-3 Reading Specialist, and an ELA Content Specialist. A Math/Science Content Specialist position which was already staffed is also on the Academic Support Team.

The Academic Support Team leads professional development, provides subject area related information through newsletters, and provides direct to support to educators. The team also is involved in projects including the development and implementation of Alaska's Strategic Reading Plan, development of an updated Alaska Literacy Blueprint, and implementation of the Alaska Reads Act.

Alaska Science of Reading Symposium

DEED partnered with the Region 16 Comprehensive Center (R16CC) to present the Alaska Science of Reading Symposium from April 29-May 1. More than 780 people attended the event in Anchorage. Registration was free, and the event was funded with COVID relief funds. The symposium included 42 speakers, 30 sessions, and 16 exhibitors.

Forty-two of Alaska's 54 districts were represented at the symposium. More than 350 attendees were elementary teachers, around 200 attendees were administrators, and just over 100 were middle or high

school teachers. Attendees also included school board members, educational support professionals, early learning professional, and parents or community members. An attendee survey was used to gauge both the efficacy of the event and to help prioritize needs in the development of *Alaska's Strategic Reading Plan*. The 2023 Alaska Science of Reading Symposium is scheduled for April 28-30, 2023 in Anchorage.

Strategic Reading Plan

DEED developed [Alaska's Strategic Reading Plan](#) to outline the path to meeting the top priority of Alaska's Education Challenge. The plan encompasses all efforts of the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development to provide information, resources and leadership that work toward achieving Alaska's reading goal. The Strategic Reading Plan is how DEED's mission and purpose are manifest in alignment with Priority #1 of Alaska's Education Challenge. While DEED's focus in the *Strategic Reading Plan* is to provide support to schools so that all students read at grade level by the end of third grade, support is provided for all grades

The *Strategic Reading Plan* is arranged in six strategies :

1. Professional Development
2. Evidence-Based Materials
3. Early Literacy
4. Frameworks for Success
5. Science of Reading (SOR) Resources, Data and Communication
6. Teacher Preparation

The Plan is a living document. It contains all current activities and resources in each strategy area and will be updated regularly as new opportunities are available. Additionally, the Plan will serve as a record to document all of DEED's efforts to improve literacy outcomes. This will facilitate evaluating the effectiveness of the Plan, and also produce a comprehensive historical account of Alaska's reading improvement.

Implementing the Alaska Read's Act

In June 2022, Governor Mike Dunleavy signed the Alaska Reads Act into law, creating four new programs to support early literacy. The new programs of the Alaska Reads Act together with Department efforts previously underway are both incorporated into Alaska's Strategic Reading Plan. The effective date of the Alaska Reads Act is July 1, 2023.

To implement the law, DEED established four staff committees, each related to one of the law's programs:

- District Reading Intervention
- Department Reading Program
- Early Learning
- Virtual Education

DEED held stakeholder engagement panels in September regarding draft regulations. These included meetings on Early Learning and Parents as Teachers; District Intervention; Department Reading Program; Virtual Education; and Teacher Certification/Preparation and Technical Components.

In October, DEED selected mCLASS, powered by DIBELS® 8th Edition, from Amplify as the statewide literacy screener required under the Alaska Reads Act.

The Department has plans to continue stakeholder engagement in addition formal public comment periods for regulation, and has planned professional development related to the Alaska Reads Act requirements.

Advancing Tribal Compacting and Culturally Relevant Education

Efforts to establish state-tribal compacting of education advanced significantly in 2022 with the passage of [SB 34](#).

As a part of the implementation of SB 34 and in accordance with Alaska’s Education Challenge, DEED issued an RFA for State Tribal Compact Demonstration Partner grants in October. The purpose of this program is to provide support for Tribal partners to work with the State Board of Education (SBOE) on the negotiation, consultation, and co-development of a legislative report on what is necessary for creating the opportunity enacted through statute and regulations to provide for future State Tribal Education Compact schools.

The Department seeks a variety of applications based on geographic representation, variety of educational methodologies, representation of different size schools, and communities, and overall statewide representation. The intent is to have a demonstration project that shows how State-Tribal Education Compact schools can work across all of Alaska. The goal of the demonstration phase is to lead to a more permanent widely available education compacting process.

Using American Rescue Plan Act funds, DEED will award up to \$100,000 to five awardees. The grant funds will be used to provide support for tribes in negotiating with the SBOE on the topic of state-tribal education compacting. The result of the program will be the development of a report to the Alaska Legislature for what is needed legislative to create State Tribal Education Compacts.

The deadline for responses is December 30, 2022. Notice is intent to award is March 15, 2023. The grant award period is April 2023 through January 31, 2024.

Improving Teacher Retention and Recruitment

Since 2020, the State of Alaska has been working to improve teacher retention and recruitment. Phase I consisted of establishment of the Governor’s Working Group on Teacher Retention and Recruitment. The purpose of the working group was to review the root causes of Alaska’s teacher retention and recruitment issues and propose solutions to better attract and retain great teachers. In April 2021, the Governor’s Teacher Retention and Recruitment Working Group released a report and results from

teacher surveys, marking Phase II. Phase II included the publication of the TRR Action Plan, a framework for action that proposed six essential areas of practical, professional and policy recommendations.

Winter 2022 marked the beginning of Phase III – implementation. The first TRR Implementation convening was held in February. Participants provided initial feedback on implementation throughout the spring. Four subcommittees were created to development implementation plans;

- Organizational Health Cadre
- Recruitment Task Force
- Retirement Working Group
- Alternative Certificate Team

All phase III meeting recordings, documents, and notes are available at aklearns.org/trr.

OTHER DEPARTMENT FUNCTIONS

Mt. Edgecumbe High School (MEHS)

Mt. Edgecumbe is the state-operated residential school in Sitka. The board serves as the MEHS board. Parents and others participate on an advisory board. MEHS started the 2021-212 school year with 412 students enrolled. About 20 beds were left unfilled to allow for quarantine needs. MEHS students come from 110 communities in Alaska. The three communities with the largest representation are Anchorage (32 students), Sitka (27 students), and Bethel (19 students). Many of the Anchorage students have roots in various communities, though that is not reflected in this data. More than 80% of the communities have five or less students attending MEHS.

Alaska State Council on the Arts

The Alaska State Council on the Arts supports educators, artists, community-based organizations, and statewide partners in delivery of arts education in schools and communities. The council awards funding to Alaskan schools, districts, educators, and organizations in several categories. Other grants to communities also serve students through school outreach and education programs provided by Alaskan arts and culture organizations.

The Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums (LAM)

The Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums offers library and information services to state agencies and the Legislature; employs consultants who assist local libraries, archives, and museums to develop their own services and programs; operates the state museums as a service to Alaskans and the tourist industry; provides for the orderly management of current state records; and preserves state government's public records of permanent value for study and research.

Additionally, LAM provides a range of services that benefit lifelong learners and K-12 and postsecondary students, even during the COVID-19 months of remote learning. Examples are:

- The School Broadband Assistance Grant program provides funds to help schools get up to 25 mbps.
- Through OWL (Online with Libraries), rural public libraries have high-speed internet access, so students can access the internet after school hours. OWL also hosts a ZOOM network so libraries can provide public access to Zoom for meetings and events.
- The Alaska Digital Library and the Alaska Digital School Library provide Alaskans of all ages and students whose libraries have joined one of these digital library consortia to download thousands of audiobooks and eBooks. Usage of both services surged during FY2021 as readers turned to online ebooks and audiobooks.
- Live Homework Help provides live tutoring for students in grades four to early college, seven days a week, from 8 a.m. to 2 a.m.
- Alaska’s Digital Archives shares digitized versions of more than 102,000 historical Alaskan videos, photographs, and documents with students and researchers.
- Alaska’s Statewide Library Electronic Doorway (SLED) Databases contain hundreds of full-text online books, magazines, newspapers, and other research resources targeted to elementary, middle school, high school, and college students’ academic needs.
- Other Divisions in the Department enhance the value of SLED by using their funds for statewide subscriptions to Tumblebooks (access to ebooks for children) and Teen Health and Wellness (a resource covering topics such as bullying, vaping, suicide, and school safety for teenagers).

Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC)

The Alaska Professional Teaching Practices Commission governs educators’ ethical and professional standards and their compliance with state law and contractual obligations. Certificate holders fund the Commission. The Commission reports by fiscal year. In FY2022, it accepted 29 cases and sanctioned 14 educators. Sanctions may vary from warnings to suspensions and revocations of certificates. View the FY2022 Annual Report at education.alaska.gov/ptpc.

SCHOOL AND STUDENT DATA

Graduation and Dropout Rates

All states report a four-year graduation rate for cohorts of students. Alaska has reported this data since the 2010-2011 school year. A student who entered 9th grade in the 2017-2018 school year would be a member of the 2021 cohort. Cohort groups include students who transfer into an Alaska public school.

The graduation rate is calculated as the number of graduates in the cohort who receive a regular diploma by June 30, divided by the number of all students assigned to the cohort.

Year	4-yr. graduation rate	Graduate count*
2011	68.0%	8,064
2012	69.4%	7,987
2013	71.8%	7,795
2014	71.2%	7,672
2015	75.6%	8,251
2016	76.1%	8,108
2017	78.2%	8,385
2018	78.5%	8,454
2019	79.8%	8,419
2020	78.9%	8,010
2021	78.1%	7,963
2022	77.8%	-----

*Graduate count is the number of students who graduated with a regular diploma during the school year (July 1-June 30). This count includes all students who graduate during the school year, regardless of cohort year.

In 2022, the five-year graduation rate was 83.04%. This refers to a cohort of students who were 9th-graders five school years previously. Many of the students graduated in four years, but others needed all or part of a fifth year.

Dropout rates are calculated by taking the total number of students in grades 7-12 who drop out of public school during the school year and dividing by the October 1 enrollment count for all students in grades 7-12.

Information for the 2021-2022 school year shows a grade 7-12 drop out rate of 3.68%. This is up approximately half of a percent from the 2020-2021 school year. Overall, the dropout rate has gradually declined from 6.0% in 2004-2005 to its current level.

Additional student and school data is available on DEED's Data Center website and on The Compass: A Guide to Alaska's Public Schools.

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

Every two years the U.S. Department of Education, through the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), tests large samples of 4th-graders and 8th-graders in each state (plus the District of Columbia and Department of Defense schools) in reading and mathematics. After a delay due to the COVID-19 pandemic, NAEP resumed in January through March 2022.

NAEP's state and nationwide results are presented as average scores on a scale of 000 to 500. The scale scores fall into four categories of achievement as defined by NAEP: advanced, proficient, basic, and below basic. Thus, NAEP also reports the percentage of students who fall within those achievement categories.

NAEP's definition of proficiency is rigorous. In NAEP, *basic* refers to partial mastery of the subject. *Proficient* refers to competency in challenging material, including knowledge, application, and analytical skills. *Advanced* is superior performance.

- In the highest-scoring state, 43% of its students scored proficient or advanced in 4th-grade reading;
- In the highest-scoring state, 42% of its students scored proficient or advanced in 8th-grade reading;
- In the highest-scoring state, 44% of its students scored proficient or advanced in 4th-grade math; and
- In the highest-scoring state, 35% of its students scored proficient or advanced in 8th-grade math.

NAEP summarizes a state's results by the number of states (plus D.C. and Department of Defense schools) it has scored *lower than*, *statistically the same as*, and *higher than*.

- In 4th grade math, Alaska scored lower than 40 states, statistically the same as 10 states, and higher than 1 state.
- In 8th grade math, Alaska scored lower than 24 states, statistically the same as 20 states, and higher than 7 states.
- In 4th grade reading, Alaska scored lower than 44 states and statistically the same as 5 states.
- In 8th grade reading, Alaska scored lower than 37 states, statistically the same as 13 states, and higher than 1 state.

The following data, comparing Alaska results to the national average, are from results released in 2022. Alaska's performance on the NAEP is poor. It is similar to the national average because that also is poor. Some states perform notably better than Alaska and the national average. The department has cited Alaska's performance on NAEP as one indication of the need to implement higher standards in English language arts and math.

Math

Alaska 4th grade: 65% basic or above; 28% proficient or above; 5% advanced.
Nation 4th grade: 74% basic or above; 35% proficient or above; 7% advanced.
Alaska's average scale score is 226. The national average is 235.

Alaska 8th grade: 59% basic or above; 23% proficient or above; 5% advanced.
Nation 8th grade: 61% basic or above; 26% proficient or above; 7% advanced.
Alaska's average scale score is 270. The national average is 273.

Reading

Alaska 4th grade: 51% basic or above; 24% proficient or above; 5% advanced.
Nation 4th grade: 61% basic or above; 32% proficient or above; 8% advanced.
Alaska's average scale score is 204. The national average is 216.

Alaska 8th grade: 63% basic or above; 26% proficient or above; 3% advanced.
Nation 8th grade: 68% basic or above; 29% proficient or above; 3% advanced.
Alaska's average scale score is 253. The national average is 259.

For more information, see:

<https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/>