



MEMORANDUM

To: State Board of Education & Early Development
Date:

Thru: Deena Bishop Ed.D, Commissioner
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From: Kathy Moffitt, Director
Division of Innovation and Education Excellence
Subject: Agenda item 4A. 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](#); providing oversight of state and federally funded programs to ensure 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 programs and activities for the State. These teams include: Assessment, Career and Technical Education, COVID Support, Data Early Learning, Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Federal Programs, Health and Safety, Academic Support Team, School Recognition and Support, Special Education, and Teacher Certification.

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

AK Challenge Priority #1:

Support all students to read at grade level by the end of third grade

Academic Support Team

- 74 schools serving grades K-3 were notified in November that they were eligible for participation in the Department Reading Program based on the 2021-2022 state accountability system. The completed applications are due February 15 and schools will be notified of acceptance by April 1.

Assessment

- Following the State Board of Education vote to approve updated cut scores, the Assessment team has begun work with the vendor to complete reporting and distribute results.
 - Commissioner Video <https://youtu.be/AEI4QPPcqL8?feature=shared>
 - Roadmap graphic https://education.alaska.gov/assessments/AKSTAR_ResultsFlyer2023_final.pdf
- In preparation for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) assessments in early 2024, the NAEP State Coordinator engaged in several key readiness activities at the state level and with schools.
- DEED created an outreach strategy to solicit student-developed promotional videos for NAEP and a group of students in the Fairbanks North Star Borough compiled the video that was selected for distribution throughout the state. The [NAEP Alaska Video](#) has been shared with schools to promote NAEP to students, staff, and families.
- The Assessments Team continued to collaborate with the Reading Team and vendor Amplify to assist districts in preparation for the winter administration of the literacy screener.

Data and Accountability

- The Data Manager organized a virtual workshop on January 19th with the national Privacy Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) for Data Team staff. The training addressed accidental data disclosure and data sharing agreements. The entire Data Team attended, including newer staff members, and have completed this training.

Early Learning

- The [Alaska Early Education Program Standards](#) were adopted and went into effect on July 1, 2023.
- DEED has procured the Ages and Stages Questionnaire Third Edition (ASQ-3). Ages and Stages Questionnaire - Social Emotional Second Edition (ASQ-SE-2) is a social emotional development screen.
- Seven districts were awarded a 3-year District-Wide Early Education Program grant. Link: [Early Learning Grant Awardees](#)
- The FY25 District Wide Early Education Program Grant was released on January 16, 2024. This application is due February 15, 2024.
- The FY25 District Wide Early Education Program application for .5ADM stable funding was released January 25, 2024. This application is due Wednesday, May 15, 2024.

ESEA Federal Programs

- In partnership with Keys to Literacy, the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development (DEED) is continuing a free professional development course for educators that meets the required foundational reading skills addressed in the Alaska Reads Act.

School Recognition and Support

- DEED is in the fifth and final year of the Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) Grant for the 2023-2024 school year. The final year of the grant will run from 10/01/2023 - 09/30/2024 with the amount of \$15,757,443.

Special Education

- The Special Education team organized remedial and targeted training sessions during the Alaska State Special Education Conference (ASSEC) in Anchorage in February.

AK Challenge Priority #2:

Increase career, technical and culturally relevant education to meet student and workforce needs.

Career and Technical Education

- The annual DEED Spring Perkins/CTE Workshop occurred February 7-9, 2024, in Anchorage with more than 60 participants from around the state. Representatives from more than 25 school districts, the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, University campuses, the State Board of Education, and other industry and advocacy groups contributed to the work.
- DEED will be submitting the Alaska State Perkins Plan to the US Department of Education in May 2024. Upon approval, this four-year plan makes annual federal Perkins funds available to the state to support CTE programs of district and partner subgrantees. Information sessions were held between October and February and a 60-day comment period is currently open for public input on the updated plan.
- State CTE funds made available in the 2024 state budget have been distributed through three initiatives for use by June 30, 2024.
 - CTE Program of Study (CTEPS) Improvement Grants have been awarded to 13 school district subgrantees for strengthening existing or developing new programs. Interest was high as 22 districts applied for grants from the limited funds available.
 - Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO) Support Grants were awarded to Alaska's six student organizations. These one-time grants fund activities related to forming new chapters across the state, leadership stipends, and participation by students and leaders in state and national leadership and skills conferences/competitions.
 - Career Guides partnership with DEED is partnering with Alaska Department of Labor to stand-up three Career Guide positions to support K-12 students in career exploration and awareness of career options after high school.
- The CTE Team formally wrapped up over two years of Skills/Career Camp grants funded with COVID Discretionary funds. Over twenty organizations received grants to provide CTE hands-on opportunities to cohorts of students as they build back CTE programs after COVID interruptions.

Early Learning

- Head Start received an additional 1.5 million in grant funding. This one-time additional funding was added during the legislative budgeting process and the Early Learning Team distributed the additional funds to existing grants.
- The Pre-Elementary Grant (PEG) has nine districts participating in a new 3-year cohort beginning this fall.
- The FY24 Early Learning Coordination One-Time Grants were awarded to school districts that applied for either or both the Pre-Elementary Grant (PEG) and District-Wide Early Education Program Grant (DWEEP). There are 8 recipients of this grant; 2 of the 8 applied for both the PEG and DWEEP, 6 of the 8 applied for only the PEG.

Special Education

- The Special Education Team has successfully obtained a State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) known as the Growing Reading Excellence and Alaskan Teachers (GREAT) grant.
- There is ongoing training for districts at the state special education directors' Spring training, focusing on the development of district level programs to train students in becoming paraprofessionals.

AK Challenge Priority #3:

Close the achievement gap by ensuring equitable educational rigor and resources.

Academic Support Team

- Each Reading Specialist is a direct point of contact for a district to support the implementation of the AK Reads K-3 District Reading Intervention Plan. This support is in the form of meetings, implementation support, coaching, phone calls, and/or emails. The Academic Support Team has spent a cumulative 673 hours of direct district or school support in the months of December and January.

COVID Support Team

- The COVID Relief Team is conducting individual check ins with each district regarding spending deadlines, remaining funds, construction obligations, and learning loss priorities.
- The COVID Relief Team is conducting formal monitoring through June for school districts and non-profits to ensure funds are spent in a manner consistent with Federal law and regulation.

Data and Accountability

- The Report Card to the Public has been posted on the DEED website. 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>).
- EdFacts comprises the submission of 24 reporting files to the US Department of Education. The reporting is submitted across the winter months, and the data team is working with IEE teams to compile and complete all EdFacts reporting in a timely

manner, though some reports will be delayed due to the adjustments to AK STAR cut scores.

- The Fall OASIS data collection has been closed and the data team is performing quality control checks before posting to the data center in early February.
- The Data Team will present the ESEA State Plan accountability addendum request to stakeholders in a meeting with the Community of Practitioners and the Superintendents on January 26, 2024.

ESEA Federal Programs

- DEED issued the Title III-A Immigrant Children & Youth funding application to districts. This provides districts experiencing a significant increase in immigrant children and youth enrollment funds to help support those students.
- DEED started the process of convening an English learner (EL) stakeholder group to explore allowing multiple pathways to exit EL status and re-working DEED's Home Language Survey (HLS). The EL Stakeholder group met recently and examined the current EL Exit Criteria and the HLS template.
- The 9th Annual Alaska Out-of-School Time Conference-co-hosted by DEED, the Alaska Afterschool Network, and DOH-occurred November 15-17 and engaged 168 afterschool educators from 33 Alaskan communities.

School Recognition and Support

- Per federal and state regulations, schools designated under ESSA are required to complete and submit a comprehensive needs assessment, a school improvement plan, and an accompanying budget. Schools undergo monitoring via the ESEA district monitoring schedule. Improvement plans for schools under designation are expected to be aligned with district initiatives and state standards, reviewed and approved by school, district, and state personnel.

Special Education

- The annual review of data gaps for students with disabilities is currently being reviewed utilizing various reports, many of which are mandated for federal compliance:
 - The Special Education Child Count by District report, outlining the number of students with disabilities categorized by district and disability type, has been uploaded to meet federal reporting obligations. It is awaiting availability on the Data Center page (<https://education.alaska.gov/sped/618data>) under Special Education Data.
 - The Special Education Child Count by Disability and Age report has been submitted and will soon be accessible on the Section 618 Data and State Disproportionality Reports page through the Data Center.
 - The Implementation of Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) Requirements report, detailing the count of students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment and various subgroups, will also be accessible on the Section 618 Data and State Disproportionality Reports page.
- An essential aspect of the ongoing assessment involves addressing inconsistent test scores within the special education demographic. This inconsistency is attributed to the uneven application of accommodations during assessments. To address this issue, Special

Education Directors are regularly informed through webinars, face-to-face trainings, weekly developmental opportunities, and the upcoming Spring Directors training.

**Challenge Priority #4:
Prepare, attract, and retain effective education professionals.**

Academic Support Team

- DEED’s three LETRS Cohorts for Teachers, in partnership with the Region 16 Comprehensive Center, are full at the 117-seat capacity. After this year, local facilitators from Alaska/DEED will assist in implementation.
- The final two cohorts of six total for NWEA Science of Reading for Leaders (25 participants each) started January 9. Additional courses are planned and will be promoted to districts soon.

COVID Support Team

- The COVID Support Team is working directly with districts across the state as they develop and implement budgets for the American Rescue Plan grants. An area of focus is to ensure and verify that districts are meeting or exceeding the obligation that districts spend at least twenty percent of the American Rescue Plan Grant on “Learning Loss” associated with the missed instructional opportunity associated with the pandemic. Some of our districts have prioritized attracting and retaining teachers, securing curriculum, and providing professional development for teachers with these funds.

Health & Safety

- **eLearning:** The following chart shows the number of course completions for our highest trafficked health and safety eLearning courses for educators as well as the student facing courses on suicide prevention and those under the Alaska Safe Children’s Act.
 - The Health and Safety Team is currently working with teams across the Department to better understand the program and capabilities for future training plans and opportunities. Annual course updates are also underway.

DEED Online eLearning Courses	Oct.1 -Dec. 30 2023	Lifetime Total Course Completions
Part A: Suicide Awareness (2016)	846	24,302
Part B: Suicide Prevention (2016)	418	11,662
Part C Suicide Intervention (2016)	301	7,121
Part D: Responding to Suicide-Postvention Guidelines (2016)	302	4,941
Overcoming ACEs in Alaskan Schools (2017)	144	2,830
Trauma-Engaged and Practicing Schools (2018)	67	1,717
Trauma-Sensitive Schools (2017)	130	2,091
Classroom Practices (2019)	77	1,047
Emotional Intelligence (2019)	72	911

Family Partnerships (2020)	39	632
Mind-Body Connections (2019)	52	777
Childhood Traumatic Grief (2020)	93	1,175
Self-Regulation (2019)	48	842
Self-Care (2020)	81	856
Trauma-Engaged Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (2020)	44	355
Overcoming Stress and Anxiety in Alaskan Schools (Released Spring 21)	122	627
Opioids and the Opioid Epidemic 101 (2018)	35	310
Naloxone Administration for an Opioid Epidemic (2018)	31	349
E-Cigarette Use Among Alaska Teens (2021)	48	347
Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Training for Educators (2016)	1511	31,842
Mandated Reporters of Child Abuse & Neglect (2016)	1,919	38,640
Prenatal Alcohol and Drug Related Disabilities (2005/2017)	819	27,650
Navigating Transitions (student courses) (2018)	44	1,156
Bree's Law (student courses) (2021)	613	3,217
Total Course Completions	7,856	165,397

School Recognition and Support

- On January 24, 2024, it was announced that Catherine Walker, a National Board-certified teacher at Diamond High School in Anchorage who teaches oceanography, marine biology, unmanned aviation science, and engineering essentials, is one of four finalists for the National Teacher of the Year (NTOY).

Special Education

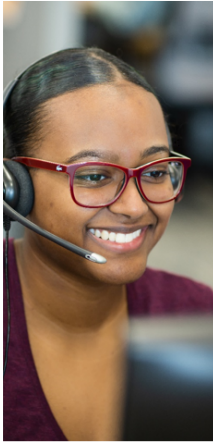
- Previously mentioned, the Special Education team successfully obtained a national federal grant to establish a "Grow Your Own" program targeting paraprofessionals for recruitment as special education teachers. The program offers training and educational opportunities, with a specific focus on an instructional component for Reading Literacy included in the grant application.

Teacher Certification

- After nearly 20 years with DEED, Teacher Certification Administrator Sondra Meredith retired from the department in January. She was a well-respected member of the IEE Team and statewide education community who provided excellent customer service, technical assistance, and support to educators, districts, educator preparation programs, DEED, the legislature, and the State Board of Education. It is an honor to thank her for her service and recognize her many contributions to certification, teacher recruitment and retention, and educator preparation program approval and support.
- IEE is working with the National Center for Grow Your Own to develop an application for US Department of Labor Approval of an Alaska Teacher Registered Apprenticeship program. In February, DEED is convening a workgroup to provide input on the first draft of the plan. The goal is to have an application ready for submission by June 30, 2024.

**AK Challenge Priority #5:
Improve the safety and well-being of students through school partnerships with families, communities, and tribes.**

ESEA Federal Programs



**GET CONNECTED.
GET HELP.**

211

Connecting homeless students and their families to resources



(March 1 – December 31, 2023)

17,879 - Calls answered by Alaska 211

3,854 - Callers who reported having children in Alaska public schools

591 — Callers given connections to their School District Homeless Liaisons

786 - Referrals – primarily for basic needs – provided to callers connected to School District Homeless Liaisons

- United Way of Anchorage (UWA) has partnered with DEED and school districts across the state to expand outreach to our students who are experiencing homelessness.

Health & Safety

- DEED awarded 8, \$25,000 Suicide Awareness Prevention grants to the following school districts Petersburg, North Slope, Nenana, Juneau, Fairbanks, Anchorage, Mat Su, and Kenai.
- Monthly AK Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) training and coaching (provided by Health & Safety Staff) began in October for 8 districts and 34 schools.

Training topics included creating Behavior Expectations, a Behavior Purpose Statement, and a Behavior Matrix.

- Health & Safety Staff participated in the Alaska School Counselors Association (AkSCA) Annual Conference including staffing a table with DEED resources, as well as presenting sessions on Counseling Ethics, the Alaska Safe Children's Act, The Intersection of Public and Behavioral Health, and a Rural School Counselor Sharing and Support Session. Health & Safety Staff also coordinated with PalPak and Seattle Children's Hospital to provide a full-day Brief Interventions for School Clinicians (BRISC) training as a post-session.

Special Education

- The special education team collaborates with the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (GCDSE) to enhance the engagement of the Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP). This involvement aims to facilitate the review and commentary process on the state's special education indicators and their corresponding targets. Simultaneously, the team is actively preparing the Annual Progress Report for special education, which is slated for submission to the federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).