

State Board of Education & Early Development
Approved Meeting Minutes
July 1, 2025
Virtual Meeting

Tuesday July 1, 2025

Chair Stockhausen called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Roll was called, and the following members were present to provide a quorum: Member Barbara Tyndall, Member Kimberly Bergey, First Vice Chair James Fields, Member Kathryn McCollum, and Chair Sally Stockhausen.

Chair Stockhausen called a quorum. It was noted that Member Lt. Colonel James Fowley will join meeting later and Student Advisor Amber Sherman is on vacation. First Vice Chair Fields gave the invocation, and the board pledged allegiance to the flag.

Member McCollum motioned, and Member Bergey seconded the following motion: I move to approve the agenda for July 1, 2025 meeting. Without further discussion the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote. There were no conflicts of interest disclosed.

Public Comment

1. Jason Weber, Superintendent, Valdez City Schools. Superintendent Jason Weber voiced strong opposition to DEED's proposed school funding regulations, urging the State Board to reject them. He argued the changes are flawed, lack transparency, and do not include a district-level cost analysis. Weber criticized DEED for failing to show how the changes would meet the federal Impact Aid disparity test, citing a lack of reliable data. He accused DEED of trying to reduce the state's financial responsibility at the expense of students. Additionally, he expressed concern over the erosion of local control, stating the regulations would centralize power and diminish school boards' ability to serve their communities. He concluded by calling the proposal unsubstantiated, unfair, and harmful to Alaska students and families.

2. Nils Andreassen, Executive Director, Alaska Municipal League. Nils Andreassen thanked the Board for previously choosing not to adopt emergency regulations on a complex issue without sufficient public engagement. He emphasized the importance of ongoing dialogue about how Impact Aid and local contributions affect education in Alaska. Andreassen offered AML as a resource to support understanding of the legal, historical, and technical aspects of these issues. He encouraged the Board to engage deeply with stakeholders, listen to public input, and ensure decisions ultimately support students and communities—not penalize local governments or school districts. He concluded by expressing appreciation for the Board's commitment and thoughtful approach.

3. Frank Hauser, Superintendent, Juneau School District. Frank Hauser strongly opposed DEED's proposed regulation on local contributions, describing it as the most harmful statewide action he has seen in his nearly 30-year career in Alaska education. Speaking on behalf of the roughly 70,000 students who could be affected, he highlighted the estimated \$8 million impact to the Juneau School District alone. Hauser criticized the regulation's broad scope—potentially affecting local grants, fundraisers, and even student meals—and DEED's lack of clarity or guidance despite repeated requests.

He questioned the claim of an emergency, noting DEED hasn't even requested a hearing with the federal Impact Aid program, which also did not request any regulation change. Hauser emphasized that federal rules offer flexibility that DEED's proposal would unnecessarily restrict. He urged the Board to consider whether this regulation truly serves students' best interests and warned against adopting rules more restrictive than required by

federal law.

4. Jacque Novar, Fairbanks, AK. Jacqueline Novar expressed strong opposition to the proposed regulation change, stating it would reduce local autonomy, diminish community support for schools, and harm approximately 70,000 Alaska students. She criticized the lack of public analysis and evidence that the proposal would meet the federal disparity test or be accepted. Novar argued the regulation takes a "sink all boats" approach to equalization at a time when Alaska is already losing families. She noted Alaska is the only state still using this outdated method and urged the Board to look forward by fully funding education rather than adopting harmful, regressive policies.

5. Meghan Johnson, Early Childhood Systems Director at Thread. Megan Johnson, representing Thread—Alaska's childcare resource and referral agency—voiced opposition to the proposed changes in Section 2 of the early education program standards. She explained that Thread, in partnership with DEED and early learning programs, provides essential coaching and training to help meet aligned program standards. Johnson emphasized that the Alaska Early Childhood Strategic Direction supports increased access to high-quality early learning through coordinated systems, data, and services—including coaching and infant/early childhood mental health consultation.

She warned that making these supports optional, rather than required, would undermine long-standing efforts to improve early education quality and access. Johnson urged DEED and the Board to maintain the current standards as required, and to invest in building statewide capacity for coaching and consultation—key supports for teachers, administrators, and families in achieving high-quality early childhood programs.

6. Carolyn Stone, a parent of two Anchorage School District students, spoke in opposition to the proposed regulation changes to 4 AAC 09 affecting public education funding. She criticized the state's long-term flat education funding while Department of Corrections funding increases, noting the negative impact on classrooms, including teacher departures, layoffs, and program cuts.

Stone expressed concern over the rushed June 2nd proposal, which bypassed consultation with superintendents and was met with widespread public and local government opposition. She warned the regulation would force local governments to reduce school funding, with Anchorage alone potentially losing \$11 million.

She urged the Board to:

1. Reject the regulation changes and any policy limiting local investment in schools.
2. Support challenging Alaska's failure of the federal Impact Aid disparity test within the allowed timeframe.
3. Prioritize transparency and collaboration with education stakeholders.

Stone emphasized that children are paying attention and learning from the Board's actions.

7. Rebecca Braun, Juneau Parent. Rebecca Braun urged the Board to oppose the proposed regulation on local contribution, expressing concern that it does not serve the best interests of Alaska's children. She acknowledged the state's failure of the federal disparity test but called for a less harmful and more thoughtful solution. Braun criticized the regulation for lowering standards, reducing local self-determination, and increasing regulatory ambiguity and risk for districts.

She shared a personal impact: her district just announced the closure of the RALLY after-school childcare program—a service she depends on as a single working parent—due to declining state support. Braun emphasized the real-world consequences of the Board's decisions and urged them to reject the proposal and carefully consider all alternatives that minimize harm to families and communities.

8. Kim Hanisch, Superintendent, Unalaska City School District. Kim Hanisch expressed opposition to the proposed regulation change, emphasizing that Unalaska takes pride in its strong local support—both financial and

practical—for its schools. She warned that the regulation would reduce the quality and variety of programs the district can offer. Hanisch urged the Board to vote no or, at minimum, allow more time for public comment before making a decision.

9. Nathan Duval, Valdez City Manager. Nathan Duval voiced opposition to the proposed regulation changes related to local contributions, raising several concerns on behalf of the City of Valdez. He highlighted potential negative impacts on both homeschooled and in-person students, especially regarding funding for activities and after-school programs. Duval also noted a lack of clarity about how the regulation would affect city-owned school facilities, questioning the fairness of requiring tenants (school districts) to handle maintenance without ownership rights.

He emphasized the importance of preserving local control, stating that communities should retain the right to invest local tax dollars in education as they see fit. Duval urged the Board to prioritize local autonomy and provide clearer definitions within the proposed regulations.

Work Session

Agenda Item 1 – Mt. Edgecumbe High School Update

Deputy Commissioner Karen Morrison provided an update on leadership and operational transitions at Mt. Edgecumbe High School (MEHS). Superintendent Huntington's last day was June 27, and the department is working on an alternative plan to ensure leadership is in place by the start of school, with more updates expected soon.

Currently, Administrative Services Director Dawn Hannasch and MEHS Admin Officer are on-site assisting with key transitions. This includes onboarding a new dorm and food services contractor (NANA), upgrading kitchen equipment, and transitioning staff from paper to electronic timesheets. They are also offering staff training and preparing for more sessions as the full team returns.

Facility walkthroughs, updates to dorm common areas, and engagement planning for students are underway. Additionally, the department has applied—confidently expecting approval—for a grant to expand the aquatic center and teach all students to swim. A full budget update will be shared at the October board meeting.

Agenda Item 2 – Regulations for Public Comment

2A. Early Education Program Standards

Becky Moren, DEED's Early Learning Administrator, provided an overview of proposed updates to the early education program standards in alignment with DEED's mission and the Alaska Reads Act. These standards help guide districts in supporting students to read at grade level by the end of third grade and are tied to early education program grants and funding mechanisms such as the 0.5 ADM application.

Key updates stem from the passage of HB 148 in spring 2024, which removed references to Head Start performance standards from statute. In response, DEED held a stakeholder meeting and survey in December 2024–January 2025. Feedback from this engagement led to several changes, including moving coaching and infant/early childhood mental health consultation to the supplemental (non-required) section of the standards. The goal was to make the standards more understandable and achievable, while also improving clarity and organization.

Moren also shared application trends and grant cycle updates, noting increased interest from districts. Future program and funding application dates were announced for FY27 and FY26.

Commissioner Bishop emphasized that the regulation changes are intended to align with recent statutory changes and reflect input received from both the legislature and stakeholders.

Agenda Item 3 – Commissioner Update

Commissioner Bishop provided an in-depth update on Alaska's early literacy assessment using *DIBELS 8* (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills), delivered via the *mCLASS* platform by the vendor *Amplify*. This tool is used to screen all K–3 students three times a year, monitor progress weekly, and support individualized reading plans, including dyslexia screening.

Key Points:

- **Terminology Clarification:**
 - *Amplify* = Vendor
 - *mCLASS* = Platform (Mobile Classroom)
 - *DIBELS 8* = Actual assessment tool
- **Statewide Implementation:**
 - 51 of 53 districts administered the screener (excluding Mount Edgecumbe and Mat-Su, which will join next year).
 - Participation rate is 80% statewide, 90% when excluding correspondence/homeschool.
- **Instructional Impact:**
 - Assessment provides instant teacher feedback, grouping tools, and supports instructional planning.
 - Professional development has trained over 2,400 teachers; 1,800 completed calibration courses.
 - Results guide *Individualized Reading Improvement Plans* (IRIPs), per the Reads Act.
- **Student Growth & Performance:**
 - **Growth from Beginning (BOY) to End of Year (EOY):**
 - In Fall, 40% of students were “well below benchmark” compared to 34% nationally.
 - By Spring, 60% of Alaska’s students were at or above benchmark—a historic improvement.
 - Alaska’s students outpaced national growth rates in reading proficiency.
 - Notable gains occurred in **kindergarten through 3rd grade**, with Grade 3 showing improved growth for the first time.
 - Alaska’s scores have now improved for **two consecutive years**, indicating a positive trend.
- **Data Insights:**
 - The largest growth was among students already performing **above grade level**, disproving criticisms that phonics-focused instruction “dumbs down” the curriculum.
 - Overall trend shows reduced numbers of students starting the year “well below” and increased numbers reaching proficiency.
- **Policy & Grant Impact:**
 - Strong literacy policy (Reads Act & HB 114) is credited with enabling this success.
 - 26 of 33 eligible districts received the \$9.5M federal **Comprehensive Literacy Grant** due to these strong policies.

Commissioner Bishop emphasized that these early, promising results are a testament to the quality instruction delivered by Alaska’s teachers and the effectiveness of statewide policy. More detailed data will be released after system verification. The board was the first to see this data.

Commissioner Bishop provided a proposed timeline and structure for reviewing and updating the Alaska’s Education Challenge (AEC) strategic plan. The intent is to gather board feedback and assess progress to guide future planning.

Timeline Overview:

- **July 2025:**
 - Review begins with current meeting.
 - Subcommittees will meet with DEED staff to evaluate goals and base data.
 - A standard template will be used to guide review and discussion.

- **August–September 2025:**
 - DEED will compile subcommittee input, data, and stakeholder feedback (e.g., surveys) into draft summaries.
- **October 8–9, 2025:**
 - Subcommittees will present progress updates and recommendations to the full board for discussion.
- **October–November 2025:**
 - Final reports will be refined and submitted to the board.
 - The board will evaluate what has been achieved, what remains, and potential future directions.

Purpose of the Review:

- Measure progress on AEC goals using hard data and conversations.
- Determine which goals are complete, which need adjustments, and what to prioritize next.
- Maintain ongoing board involvement and alignment with DEED.

Updated Subcommittee Structure:

To reflect board member changes, new subcommittee assignments were shared. Each will have a DEED staff lead and a board lead:

1. **Reading at Grade Level by Grade 3**
 - *DEED Lead:* Kathy Moffitt
 - *Board Lead:* Kathy McCollum
2. **Career, Technical & Culturally Relevant Education**
 - *DEED Lead:* Brad Billings
 - *Board Lead:* Lt. Col. Fowley
3. **Tribal Compacting / Closing the Achievement Gap**
 - *DEED Lead:* Deb Riddle
 - *Board Lead:* Pamela Dupras (pending reappointment)
4. **Prepare, Attract, and Retain Effective Educators**
 - *DEED Lead:* Kelly Manning
 - *Board Lead:* James Fields
5. **Safety and Well-Being**
 - *DEED Lead:* Kelly Manning
 - *Board Lead:* Barb Tyndall

Subcommittee chairs will coordinate meeting schedules, and DEED will support with data and logistics. The process is designed to keep the board engaged in strategic decision-making with a clear plan to evaluate and improve upon AEC goals.

Agenda Item 4 – FY2026 Budget Update

FY2026 Budget Summary – Department of Education & Early Development presented by: Dawn Hannasch, Administrative Services Director.

- The FY2026 budget reflects a strategic shift from temporary, one-time funding (primarily from pandemic-related federal grants) toward long-term stability and sustained support for Alaska's education system.
- Overall budget decreased by \$96.5 million (a 5.2% reduction) compared to FY2025, largely due to:
 - Expiration of COVID-era federal grants
 - Removal of a one-time state appropriation
 - A \$24.9 million reduction in Student & School Achievement
 - A \$1.5 million cut to Residential Schools (one-time FY25 funds)
 - A 10.9% decrease in Career & Technical Education funding
- Despite reductions, strategic increases were made, including:

- \$103 million increase (8.9%) to the ongoing foundation formula to stabilize K-12 funding
- \$4.5 million increase (21%) for student financial aid—Alaska Performance Scholarships and Education Grants
- Modest increases for broadband support, cultural instruction, and administrative services
- Personnel budget saw minor adjustments (2-5%) due to:
 - Merit-based salary increases per union contracts
 - Compliance with Administrative Order 358 (travel & hiring freeze)
- Overall, the FY2026 budget prioritizes:
 - Efficiency, staff retention, and service continuity
 - A strategic realignment to move away from emergency funding toward a more sustainable education funding model

Agenda Item 5 – Teacher Certification Update

Presented by Colleen Walker, Administrator of Teacher Education & Certification

Overview

The Teacher Certification Office has modernized systems and improved services through digital transformation, stronger district partnerships, and internal process improvements. These efforts support teacher recruitment, retention, and success statewide.

Historical Context

- Pre-statehood: Certification overseen by U.S. Bureau of Education with minimal requirements.
- Post-1959: Moved to Alaska Department of Education; new certificate types and regulations added over decades.
- Early 2000s: Introduction of online renewals; most applications remained paper-based.
- 2023-2024: Full modernization launched through TEACH-AK and the District Communication Hub.

Key System Modernizations

TEACH-AK (Launched late 2023)

- Streamlines certification applications and back-office review.
- Automated workflows and notifications.
- Designed to reduce barriers, especially in rural and hard-to-staff areas.
- Over 10,000 applicant accounts created.
- Processing time reduced from 16 weeks to 4 weeks.

District Communication Hub (Launched Fall 2024)

- Provides secure, real-time access to educator certification data for district HR teams.
- Enables faster issue resolution and improved support for applicants.
- Enhances collaboration between DEED and districts.

Internal Improvements

- 15+ internal systems modernized, including:
 - Digital workflows and status updates
 - Second-review process enhancements
 - Video-based customer support
- Implementation guided by SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound).

Certification Metrics (June 1, 2024 – June 1, 2025)

- Total Active Certificates: 12,421
- Teaching Positions in AK: 6,858
- Applications Processed: 5,000+
 - 2,000 certificate renewals

- 2,834 Alaska Reads Act endorsements
- Processing Time: Reduced from 16 weeks to 4 weeks

Alaska Reads Act Endorsement

- Effective July 1, 2025: Required for all K–3 classroom teachers.
- High completion rate among educators reflects strong support and system readiness.

Certification Team

- Colleen Walker – Teacher Education & Certification Administrator
- Justine Bishop – Lead Analyst, PTPC Liaison
- Joa Sangster – Certificate Renewal Lead
- Jennifer Neal – TEACH-AK Platform Lead
- Tins Kapada – Deficiency Resolution Lead
- Nicole Thompson – Teacher Registered Apprenticeship Coordinator

Future Priorities

- Continued automation to minimize manual processes
- Expand training for applicants and district HR staff
- Monitor Alaska Reads Act impact and compliance
- Offer flexible renewal credit options (e.g., micro-credentials)
- Strengthen interdepartmental collaboration with teacher prep programs and benefits division
- Use SMART goals to stay aligned with educator workforce needs

Closing Remarks

The department is proud of the measurable progress in teacher certification and grateful for statewide partnerships that contributed to this work. These system improvements position Alaska to better support educators and meet long-term certification demands.

Member McCollum expressed appreciation for the new TEACH-AK system, sharing that her own renewal experience was fast and efficient, with helpful feedback and processing completed in under four weeks.

Commissioner Bishop acknowledged that the certification process had previously received significant negative feedback but highlighted how the department successfully turned it around by ending paper-based processing and streamlining operations. She praised the certification team and district partners for their efforts and the impressive improvements now reflected in their metrics.

Chair Stockhausen also commended the team, recognizing the challenges of retraining both applicants and districts. She noted that while the State Board has worked to remove barriers to certification, this has also increased the department's workload. Despite this, the team has risen to the challenge and enabled more individuals to serve Alaska's students. She thanked them for their perseverance and dedication during a difficult transition.

Business Meeting

Agenda Item 6 – Regulations for Public Comment

6A. Early Education Program Standards

Member Fields motioned, and Member Bergey seconded the following motion: I move to approve a 30-day public comment period for the updated Early Education Program Standards as adopted by reference in 4 AAC 60.190(b). Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

Agenda Item 7 – Executive Session

7A. Attorney Consultation

7B. Commissioner Evaluation

I move the State Board of Education and Early Development convene an executive session to obtain attorney consultation, and to conduct the Commissioner's evaluation. Without further discussion, the motion passed unanimously in a roll call vote.

The board held an executive session to obtain attorney consultation, and to conduct the Commissioner's evaluation. Those present were board members, Commissioner Bishop, Deputy Commissioner Morrison, and legal counsel.

Chair Stockhausen motioned that the board come out of executive session without any objection.

Agenda Item 8 – Consent Agenda

8A. June 3-4, 2025 Board Minutes

Board Comments

Member Bergey expressed appreciation to the department staff for their extensive preparation and hard work leading up to the board meetings. She also thanked the public for their participation and comments, noting the value of community engagement. Lastly, she acknowledged and thanked his fellow board members for their efforts in staying prepared, which helps the meetings run smoothly.

Member Lt. Col. Fowley shared that it's a beautiful summer day at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson and wished everyone—students and teachers alike—a great summer break. He added that the board will continue working on their behalf.

Member Tyndall expressed appreciation for the meeting and all she learned from it. She thanked Commissioner Bishop for her contributions and complimented Chair Stockhausen on doing a great job in a challenging new role. She closed by expressing gratitude to everyone for a great meeting.

Member McCollum echoed others' comments, expressing gratitude for the preparation and ongoing work that supports Alaska's students. She shared that she's proud to contribute in any way she can and wished everyone a great month.

Member Fields praised Chair Stockhausen for a strong first meeting and acknowledged the learning curve she's facing. He thanked Commissioner Bishop for her report and efforts on goal setting and the Alaska Challenge. He expressed interest in the subcommittees' findings to help improve support for kids, teachers, and districts. He also appreciated the public comments and emphasized continuing to do what's best for kids, wishing everyone a good July.

Chair Stockhausen thanked everyone, echoed the positive comments already shared, and officially adjourned the meeting at 5:55 pm.