



## MEMORANDUM

**To:** State Board of Education & Early Development  
**Date:** August 11, 2022

**Thru:** Heidi Teshner, Acting Commissioner  
**Telephone:** (907) 269-4583

**From:** Susan McKenzie, Director  
Division of Innovation and  
Education Excellence  
**Subject:** Agenda 10A. Division of  
Innovation and Education  
Excellence Standing Report

### Division of Innovation and Education Excellence September 2022 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's Education Challenge](#); providing oversight of state and federally funded programs to ensure quality and equity of student services; and providing excellent technical assistance and support to districts statewide.

The IEE Division encompasses nine teams that manage a wide range of programs and activities for the State. These teams include the Assessment Team, the Career and Technical Education Team, the COVID Support Team, the Early Learning Team, the ESEA Federal Programs Team, the Health and Safety Team, the Reading Support Team, the School Recognition and Support Team, the Special Education Team, and the Teacher Certification Team. In addition, staff from each of these teams have been very involved in supporting the department COVID Fiscal Team work.

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

## **Alaska's Education Challenge Priority #1: Support all students to read at grade level by the end of third grade**

### **COVID Support Team**

- DEED, solicited, then ranked and selected seven entities to receive grant reimbursements for After-School programs for the 2022/2023 & 2023/2024 school year.
  - Thirty-one entities applied. Most awarded entities had a strong literacy component.
    - This extension of the school day should remediate and accelerate student reading achievement across grade levels. With a focus on literacy, students involved in the after-school programs will experience increased competence in reading and comprehension.

### **Early Learning**

- DEED completed the request for proposals review process for a statewide K-3 literacy screener/assessment and chose a vendor. The procurement process for that vendor is in its final stage. This tool can provide detailed assistance to teachers and identify potential dyslexia in students to ensure remediation and accommodations are not delayed.
  - The Early Learning and Reading Support teams collaborated on the proposal evaluation process.

### **Reading Support Team**

- The Reading Support Team has been engaged in many facets of the Alaska Strategic Reading Plan, especially assisting with development of regulations related to the Alaska Reads Act. Members of the Reading Support Team serve on the following Reads Act committees:
  - District Reading Intervention
  - Department Reading Program
  - Early Learning
  - Virtual Education

This work occurs in several ways:

- Through each weekly strategic plan committee meeting
- In both cross-team smaller group and larger meetings
- Recent in-person regulation meetings in Juneau

This work is also tied into the other Alaska's Education Challenge goals of closing the achievement gap and retaining effective professionals.

- Plans are underway to provide professional development in the teaching of reading to teachers and paraprofessionals
  - Professional development will be provided using the following resources:
    - Heggerty Phonemic Awareness
    - Phonics for Reading
    - Core Reading Sourcebook that covers evidence-based reading strategies
    - Core Multiple Measures to assess students in the five big areas of reading
  - Professional development will begin in September and extend into October

- The Reading Support Team is preparing to launch its first Alaska Department of Education and Early Development Reading Newsletter with the goal of providing ongoing resources, professional development opportunities, and evidence-based reading information to stakeholders.

### **School Recognition and Support**

- University of Florida Literacy Institute (UFLI) Foundations Professional Development
  - UFLI Foundations is an explicit and systematic phonics program. It introduces students to the foundational reading skills necessary for proficient reading while providing a lesson structure and resources that educators can be successful in teaching.
  - Comprehensive Support (CSI) and Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) schools will be receiving at least one book per grade level for Kindergarten through Grade 2. A copy will be made available for intervention needs in grades 3 through 5.
  - DEED is hosting both asynchronous and synchronous learning sessions beginning in September on how to teach Foundations and a background in reading development.
- Comprehensive Literacy and Statewide Development (CLSD) subgrantees are entering Year 4 of the 5-year CLSD Grant
  - In October, Alaska will be reporting on Year 3 Grant Project Specific Performance Measures for the U.S. Department of Education and subgrantees will report on MAPs data for top project goals related to reading.

### **Special Education**

- The Special Education Team has been represented in the Alaska Reads Act drafting of regulations. Regulations cannot delay or deny a student access to a special education referral at any point in the service delivery of a reading program and this is supported under the current regulations draft.

## **Alaska's Education Challenge Priority #2:**

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

### **Career and Technical Education**

- Federal Carl Perkins Career and Technical Education (CTE) funds are available to school districts for the 2022-2023 school year. Many districts have submitted applications and DEED program managers are actively reviewing and supporting submissions for approval in August. For smaller districts the minimum allocation available is \$15,000. Mainly due to this minimal amount, each year 10-12 districts decline to take Perkins funds.
- DEED will continue to provide travel funds to school districts to participate in two, annual statewide CTE conferences:
  - Alaska Association of Career and Technical Education (ACTE) 2022 Professional Development Conference – October 16-18 at the Hotel Captain Cook in Anchorage. <https://www.acteonline.org/alaska/professional-development/alaska-acte-professional-development-conference/>
  - DEED Perkins CTE Application Workshop – tentatively February 8-10 in Anchorage.

## **COVID Support Team**

- Districts are continuing to complete and revise their funding applications for FY2022 COVID-19 relief funding to include funds from the Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security (CARES), Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA), and American Rescue Plan (ARP) Acts.
  - Many districts are finding innovative ways to supplement their existing CTE efforts by expanding opportunities offered to students using these funds. Other districts are finding innovative ways to incorporate culturally relevant educational activities using these funds.

## **Early Learning**

- Early Learning has applied for the 5-year Head Start Collaboration Grant. This is a non-competitive grant awarded to states to facilitate collaboration among Head Start agencies and entities that carry out activities designed to benefit low-income children from birth to school entry, and their families. Work on this grant application started in November 2021 to get stakeholder input from Head Starts and other early education program partners. This grant was submitted July 1, 2022 and will provide \$125,000 in annual federal funding for the project period of 2022-2027.

## **Special Education**

- The Special Education Team, through its Alaska Inter-agency Transition Council (AITC), developed a platform to host trainings, webinars, resources, and information on secondary transition processes through multiple portals for students, educators, and parents.

## **Alaska's Education Challenge Priority #3:**

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

## **Assessment**

- The Assessments Team, in partnership with assessment vendors, Data Recognition Corp (DRC) and NWEA, held standard setting activities in June 2022.
  - Alaska Science Standard Setting
    - 27 Alaska educators met June 14-15 to determine the proposed range of scores in each achievement level using the Achievement Level Descriptors. Educators used a process called “Standard Setting”, specifically the bookmark method. The process was led by facilitators from DRC. Staff members from DEED were present to observe and to serve as resources.
    - Following three rounds of panelist review and discussion, cut scores were recommended to DEED. An internal team of department staff reviewed the recommendations from the panels of educators with Acting Commissioner Teshner. After consideration, the department team made minor technical adjustments to the recommended cut scores that fell within one conditional standard error of measurement from the panelists’ recommended scores for science.
  - AK STAR Standard Setting

- 50 Alaska educators met June 21-23 to determine the proposed range of scores in each achievement level using the Achievement Level Descriptors. Educators used a process called “Standard Setting”, specifically the bookmark method. The process was led by facilitators from ACS Ventures and supported by NWEA. Staff members from DEED were present to observe and to serve as resources.
    - Following three rounds of panelists’ review and discussion, cut scores were recommended to DEED. An internal team of department staff reviewed the recommendations from the panels of educators with Acting Commissioner Teshner. After consideration, the department team made minor technical adjustments to the recommended cut scores that fell within one conditional standard error of measurement from the panelists’ recommended scores for ELA and two conditional standard errors of measurement from the panelists’ recommended scores for Mathematics.
  - For both assessment programs, it was important to the department team to honor the work and professional judgment of the Alaskan educators. It was also important to reflect the reality of the performance of Alaska students on the standards and to recognize the performance of Alaska students on previous assessments.
- The Assessments Team, in partnership with assessment vendors, DRC and NWEA, held alignment study activities in June 2022.
  - Alaska Science Alignment Study
    - Seven reviewers (three Alaska reviewers and four national reviewers) met June 13-16 to participate in an independent alignment study. The process was led by Dr. Jim Augustin, an independent facilitator contracted by DRC. Staff members from DEED were present to observe and to serve as resources.
    - The alignment study will include two phases. Phase one was a review of the Spring 2022 operational science assessments for alignment to the new K–12 Science Standards for Alaska.
    - Reviewers analyzed the Alaska Science Assessment, blueprints, and Achievement Level Descriptors for alignment to the K-12 Science Standards for Alaska at grades 5, 8, and 10. The analysis and results of phase one of the alignment study will be presented to DEED in September. Phase two will be conducted in summer 2023.
  - AK STAR Alignment Study
    - An alignment study is one means to gather evidence to support the validity of the AK STAR ELA and mathematics summative assessments. HumRRO’s approach to the study is designed to verify the summative component of the AK STAR ELA and mathematics assessments uses a reasoned approach to sampling the content within the Alaska standards in ELA and mathematics, thus indicating that the test effectively measures what is intended.
    - The AK STAR alignment study will be completed in two phases. For phase one, 31 Alaska educators met June 20-22 to provide item ratings on the entire item pool at each grade level. The process was led by facilitators from HumRRO and supported by NWEA. Staff members from DEED were present to observe and to serve as resources.
    - An additional round of educator reviews is taking place virtually in August 2022 to complete the review of all item sets for all grades.

- The results of phase one will be initial evidence that the AK STAR assessments measure the content of the Alaska Standards. Phase two will be conducted in Summer 2023 to provide the final piece of validity evidence needed for peer review to demonstrate that assessments administered in Spring 2023 align to the depth and breadth of the Alaska Standards.
- Key activities since June 2022 include:
  - Continued assessment development activities with NWEA and subcontractor ETS, with efforts focused on the Year 2 assessment design. DEED and partners are exploring adaptive test models that extend the purpose of the assessment beyond determining end-of-grade proficiency to also include high-precision RIT scores compatible with MAP Growth. To ensure the planned adaptive design is technically sound, DEED and NWEA consulted with Alaska’s Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for guidance.
  - Continued development of interpretive guides and other resources to support educators and families in understanding how to review and use the results provided in the AK STAR and Alaska Science reports.

### **COVID Support Team**

- DEED is preparing a Request for Application (RFA) for summer program grants in 2023 and 2024. This competitive RFA will be available for educational entities to complete in September, due back to DEED October 7, ranked by November 1, and awarded by November 4.
  - The main purpose of these grants will be to provide an extension of the school year, to continue student learning and to provide enrichment opportunities diminishing the loss associated with summer academic inactivity.

### **Data and Accountability**

- Accountability System - The accountability system and school designations are slated to return using data from the 2021-2022 school year. US ED issued an accountability addendum template in December 2021. The addendum was submitted to US ED on July 12, 2022 and DEED received approval on August 8, 2022.
  - The addendum provides for the following changes:
    - Extend long-term goals by two years
      - Academic Achievement
      - Graduation Rates
      - Progress in Achieving English Learner Proficiency
    - Prior year data will not be used to reach a minimum number of 10 students per indicator
    - Combine grades Kindergarten to 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade spans together for each indicator
    - Growth indicator will not be included in this year’s system but will appear again in the following school year
    - Third Grade ELA will replace the Growth indicator for elementary and secondary schools that are not high schools
    - No schools will exit CSI lowest 5% or TSI designations so that the state can provide additional year of support

- School years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 do not count towards time in designation status
- Reads Act – Members of the data team are working with other teams in the department to identify data needs of the act regarding data collections, reports, and regulations development.

### **School Recognition and Support**

- The Project for Successful School Improvement
  - DEED will be rolling out the Project for Successful School Improvement to all of our designated schools this year.
  - This process requires school and community input and engagement in the assessment, development, and implementation of evidence-based actions and approaches to school improvement in a three-year plan.
  - Schools will receive tiered support per their designation status as determined through our state ESSA plan:
    - All designated schools will have access to regular webinars or technical assistance calls to our school improvement specialist.
    - All designated schools will receive a printed or digital copy of Alaska’s Empowerment Playbook, including a step-by-step approach to community and asset-based school improvement, planning templates, and model agendas.
    - TSI/CSI Grad Rate schools will receive \$25,000 each in 1003(a) grants for planning and implementation.
    - CSI lowest 5% will receive \$50,000 in 1003(a) grants for planning and implementation.
    - CSI lowest 5% will receive additional assistance in planning through Empowerment Specialists, a contracted position specific to this process as developed by DEED, Region 16 Comprehensive Center (R16CC), and ADI (Academic Development Institute).
  - DEED will be hosting an in-person workshop to train all CSI 5% school principals and district liaisons on this new process in late September 2022.
  - This update project has been developed in partnership with R16CC and supports Alaska’s Education Challenge Priority #5: Improve the safety and well-being of students through school partnerships with families, communities, and tribes.

### **Special Education**

- The special education team will be conducting the annual Special Education Director’s training in Anchorage October 27-28, 2022. This two-day training will focus on the state special education handbook, a legal review and complaints investigated summary training. Other training areas are being developed currently.
- After a brief summer break, the weekly Special Education Directors meetings began again the second week of August 2022. These weekly sessions are intended to provide frequent and real time Q & A opportunities to district staff. Through this communication link, the department provides leadership, instruction, and support while building relationships with the school districts.

## Teacher Certification

- Seal of Biliteracy: Regulations outlining the requirements for the awarding of the Seal of Biliteracy are effective on August 27, 2022. DEED staff are working to design an embossed seal, establish webpages, and provide information to districts concerning this new opportunity for Alaska students.

## Alaska's Education Challenge Priority #4: Prepare, attract, and retain effective education professionals.

### Assessment

- DEED and NWEA launched the Certified Facilitator Program June 2-3 in Anchorage with 48 Certified Facilitator (CF) candidates from around the state. The kickoff training provided both a review of the training content CFs will be providing to districts as well as a close walk through of options, tools, and resources for how best to facilitate the content and personalize to the needs of districts. The CFs have met monthly to review content and discuss implementation plans. The next training session will occur September 22-23 in Anchorage, and three additional districts have signed on to join the cohort.
- DEED will be providing live, virtual Assessment Literacy professional development through NWEA beginning in September and offered throughout fall and winter to educators statewide. The Professional Learning Catalog can be accessed here:  
[https://dpdol.nwea.org/pl/sa/AK/AK\\_StatewidePL\\_Catalog\\_FY23.pdf](https://dpdol.nwea.org/pl/sa/AK/AK_StatewidePL_Catalog_FY23.pdf).

### COVID Support Team

- DEED continues to communicate, coordinate, and expedite the use of COVID-19 relief funds allocated to local educational agencies (LEAs). This monitoring ensures proper use of funds and provides for an auditable trail.
  - Many LEAs are hiring additional staff supported by COVID-19 funds.
    - This should reduce the stress and burden for individual staff members contributing to retaining teaching staff.

### 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.

DEED Online eLearning Courses	April – June 2022	Lifetime #'s
Part A: Suicide Awareness	437	21,943
Part B: Suicide Prevention	201	11,423
Part C Suicide Intervention	154	7,439
Part D: Responding to Suicide- Postvention Guidelines	113	6,163
Overcoming ACEs in Alaskan Schools	46	2,420



Trauma-Engaged and Practicing Schools	34	682
Trauma-Sensitive Schools	34	341
Classroom Practices	6	192
Emotional Intelligence	7	94
Family Partnerships	1	33
Mind-Body Connections	9	55
Childhood Traumatic Grief	9	662
Self-Regulation	3	146
Self-Care	25	589
Trauma-Engaged Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health	6	70
Overcoming Anxiety and Stress in Alaskan Schools (Released Spring 2021)	25	272
Opioids 101 and the Opioid Epidemic 101	6	163
Narcan Administration for an Opioid Epidemic	6	211
E-Cigarette Use Among Alaska Teens (Released Summer 21)	34	115
Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Training for Educators	530	29,676
Mandated Reporters of Child Abuse & Neglect	686	29,748
Prenatal Alcohol and Drug Related Disabilities	545	21,352
Navigating Transitions (student courses)	26	947
Bree's Law (student courses)	1313	7,748
<b>Total Course Completions</b>	<b>4,256</b>	<b>142,484</b>

### Reading Support Team

- Members of the Reading Support Team are participating in the following professional development with the goal of supporting districts in evidence-based reading:
  - LETRS – Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling
  - Canvas – Platform that the Department has for sharing courses and content
  - PLC's – Professional Learning Communities

## School Recognition and Support

- The 2023 Alaska Teacher of the Year and 2023 Alternate Alaska Teacher of the Year will be announced and celebrated in late August with an assembly and press release.

## Teacher Certification

- Alaska Teacher Recruitment & Retention (TRR) Action Plan Implementation  
Since June, the TRR efforts have been focused on contracting and organizing subcommittee facilitators, researchers, and technical support. Subcommittee meetings are being scheduled for this fall. Subcommittee membership is still open to all interested stakeholders. More information concerning the TRR Action Plan Implementation can be found [here](https://education.alaska.gov/trr) (<https://education.alaska.gov/trr>).
- 2022-2023 Certified Recruitment  
Districts are continuing to rely on an alternative certificate to fill their vacant positions for the 2022-2023 school year. The chart below shows the alternative certificate types and the number of each certificate issued as of August 1, 2022. Teacher Certification anticipates that additional requests for the school year will be made during the next two to three months.

Certificate Types	Number
Emergency	83
Initial Program Enrollment	46
Special Education Alternative Path	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>139</b>

*Source: Teacher Certification Database. August 8, 2022*

- TEACH-AK Update  
The Educator Application and Certification Hub of Alaska (TEACH-AK) project to move most of the Teacher Certification Office's applications and other services to a web-based environment has experienced a slight delay due to staffing changes, high application volume, and the anticipate office move. Staff training will begin in late September 2022. The new system will be operating this fall.

## Alaska's Education Challenge Priority #5:

**Improve the safety and well-being of students through school partnerships with families, communities, and tribes.**

### COVID Support Team

- DEED is partnering with the Department of Health (DOH) to provide districts and private schools with funding for in-school COVID-19 testing for the 2022-2023 school year.
  - This money may be used for testing and portable air filters.
    - These actions will support families and communities, especially in rural Alaska, maintaining and improving both physical and mental health.

### Health & Safety

- Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (PBIS)
  - Health & Safety staff along with IEE leadership started the implementation of a three-year cohort for PBIS. The purpose of this is to expose school teams to a behavioral

framework that will support growth in positive behavior and school culture, leading to systemic change in schools.

- The first cohort of this project attended the NWPBIS conference in Tacoma.
- Alaska had over 70 people attending.
- It gave school staff the opportunity to hear from national experts as well as begin their training on PBIS.
- Monthly training will begin in August and coaching will begin in September.
- The Trauma Engaged schools professional learning community (DEED, AASB, DOH) continues to meet twice monthly to support Transforming Schools: Trauma Engaged schools resources, training, evaluation, and coordination.
- DEED has also entered into a partnership with the new REL Northwest
  - Now that the Transforming Schools Framework has been widely distributed, REL Northwest is conducting research to better understand how schools and districts are implementing recommendations and identify additional supports that would improve the uptake of trauma-engaged best practices.
  - As of mid-July, we are midway through our first project to develop a survey to assess the current implementation of the Transforming Schools Framework in schools.
  - After DEED administers the survey during the fall of 2022, we will carry out an applied research study to establish indicators of impact of the Transforming Schools Framework that can be used to measure progress towards widespread adoption.
  - In future years, the partnership will continue to use data to support schools and districts as they implement trauma-engaged approaches in a variety of local contexts.
- Through technical assistance, applied research, and dissemination supports, the Trauma-Engaged School Partnership aims to improve long-term student behavioral outcomes, including feelings of safety, attendance, and decreased nonviolent suspensions. We expect this Partnership will inform implementation, speed adoption of evidence-based practices, and provide actionable insights for researchers, practitioners, policymakers, parents, students, and other community members.
- Healthy School Learning Collaborative
  - Healthy Students Learn Better: Two days of free professional development to support the health, safety, and academic achievement of Alaskan students will be held October 25-26.
  - This joint effort between the DOH and DEED is focused on addressing many new emerging school health and safety topics while providing important professional development opportunities for school staff. This year the virtual format will make the sessions more readily available to those across the state.
  - We welcome teachers, parents, school nurses, counselors, school administrators and staff, school board members, school nutrition staff, and others who work with schools interested in learning to cultivate healthier and more successful students.
- Office of School Health and Safety
  - The Office of School Health and Safety was established to formalize and strengthen the existing partnership between the DEED and DOH to enhance school health and safety programs and services that improve student health and safety, which are critical to successful learning.
  - The vision of the office is that students are healthy, safe, and ready to learn. The purpose of the office is to:
    - promote the health, safety and well-being of students;

- work collaboratively between the two departments and continue joint programming;
  - provide a greater opportunity to partner and support schools in various aspects of physical and mental health which can impact a child's ability to learn;
  - promote the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child framework; and,
  - provide a central access point for school staff to access health specific training, technical assistance, resources, and subject matter experts.
- The office is housed within the Section of Women's, Children's and Family Health, Division of Public Health, DOH. The office can be reached at [healthyschools@alaska.gov](mailto:healthyschools@alaska.gov).
- Council on Human and Sex Trafficking:
  - Health and Safety staff are representing DEED on the Governor's Council on Human and Sex Trafficking and is the Chair of the advisory subcommittee on Education and Public Awareness. This council was created to combat the exploitation of Alaskans.
  - The council will put forth recommendations to the Governor in a final report by September 30, 2022.
- Alaska Safe Children's Act:
  - The team has completed the state authored student training to support districts with the implementation of the Alaska Safe Children's Act in grades 7-12. DEED, in consultation with school districts across Alaska, developed the online curriculum entitled *Bree's Law Education*, to better support teachers and to create consistency in content and messaging for all students in Alaska.
    - The curriculum contains three grade bands (7-8, 9-10, and 11-12). Each grade band has a version A and a version B, and each version includes five modules on dating violence awareness and prevention and sexual assault/abuse awareness and prevention. The curriculum meets the full requirements for student training under the Alaska Safe Children's Act, including requirements for Bree's Law and Erin's Law and is designed to help prevent childhood sexual abuse and teen dating abuse.
    - The curriculum is housed in the eLearning Classroom and is available to all districts.
- The team is also working to develop evaluation tools to gather feedback from educators that will include a survey as well as regional listening sessions.

### **Special Education**

- The Special Education team is currently revamping the relationship with the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education for the Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) to ensure federal requirements are supported with this agency. This is necessitated by a high number of new staff on the council.