



## MEMORANDUM

**To:** State Board of Education & Early Development  
**Date:** June 4, 2025  
**Thru:** Deena Bishop Ed.D, Commissioner  
**Telephone:** (907) 269-4583  
**From:** Division of Innovation and Education Excellence  
**Subject:** 11A. Division of Innovation and Education Excellence Standing Report

## Division of Innovation and Education Excellence 2025 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.

### Career and Technical Education

- Proposals for three competitive CTE grants were due to DEED in May. Federal Perkins grants for Post-Secondary Institutions (3 years), Non-Traditional Occupations (3 years), and staff Professional Development (1 year) will be scored and awarded in July 2025. DEED expects to award 12-20 grants depending on proposals received.
- Nominations were received for 2025 SBOE CTE Recognition Awards. Nominations were compiled and forwarded to the CTE Subcommittee for consideration.
- DEED jointly presented a legislative Lunch-n-Learn March 31<sup>st</sup> on the Career Advising Project and Alaska's Workforce Future Plan - <https://www.alaskasafetyalliance.org/workforce/plan/>. Partnering organizations include the Alaska Department of Labor & Workforce Development, Bristol Bay Regional Career and Technical Education Program, Sealaska Heritage Institute, Association of Alaska School Boards, and Alaska Workforce Alliance.

### **Data and Accountability**

- The spring OASIS data collection was closed on April 14, 2025. One of several annual collections the Data Team manages, the Spring OASIS collection assists in the reporting of student demographics and allows DEED to calculate participation rates.
- The Data Team finalized the certified staff accounting data collection in March 2025. They provided technical assistance to the districts and completed data quality checks. Finalized data from this collection was used to satisfy the Administrator and Teacher ratio requirement of the Alaska Reads Act. The published report, 2024-25 Teacher Admin and Student Counts, can be found on the [Data Center](#) under the Alaska Reads Act Reporting tab.
- The Data Manager attended the Anchorage convening of the arts data project. The statewide group is composed of superintendents, State Arts Council employees and non-profit leaders. They are working to ascertain the state of arts education in Alaska through annual statewide surveys of districts. The results of these annual surveys have been communicated out at various conferences including the 2024 superintendent fly-in and a lunch and learn for Alaska legislators.

### **Early Learning**

- Funding allowed for two districts to be awarded the District Wide Early Education Program Grant (EEP Grant) for the 2024-2025, 2025-2026, and 2026-2027 school years:
  - Northwest Arctic Borough School District
  - Alaska Gateway School District
- The Application for Early Education Program Approval and .5 Average Daily Membership (EEP-ADM Application) was updated and posted on November 14, 2024, and will close on May 15, 2025.
  - To date, twelve school districts have requested an EEP-ADM Application for FY26.
- Training and professional development continue to be offered to districts and Head Start programs using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3) overall developmental screen with students, TS GOLD, grantee support meetings and calls, webinar training, and community of practice meetings around early education program standards.

### **ESEA Federal Programs**

- On February 4<sup>th</sup> and March 25<sup>th</sup>, DEED's Title I-C Migrant Education Program staff and stakeholders from across Alaska met to identify the needs of Alaska's migratory children. Over the next year, DEED will continue to meet with the stakeholder working group to develop a State Service Delivery Plan that addresses the identified needs of migratory children and will drive the allowable uses of Title I, Part C Migrant Education Program funds for Alaska's school districts.
- DEED's Title II-A Program Manager and Reading Team have been meeting with NWEA regularly to support their work building an asynchronous Science of Reading for Leaders course. The final course is scheduled for delivery at the end of May. DEED's Teacher Certification Administrator, Reading Team, and Title II-A Program Manager held two Alaska Reads Act reading endorsement informational webinars on April 22<sup>nd</sup>.
- DEED's Title III-A Program Manager recently awarded Kodiak Island Borough School District a \$10,000 Title III-A Distinguished District Award to recognize its performance

on Accountability Indicators for the English learner (EL) subgroup. Fairbanks North Star Borough School District was awarded \$5,000.

- DEED's Title III-A Program Manager is currently collaborating with DEED's Content Specialists and Assessments team to create a crosswalk showing how Alaska's content standards (ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies) relate to Alaska's English Language Proficiency standards (WIDA's ELD Standards Framework, 2020 Ed.). This will help educators better plan rich lessons that support ELs both learning academic content and develop their English language skills.
- Alaska students in grades 1-12 participating in DEED's 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) programs during the 23-24 school year who had a school day attendance rate at or below 90% in the prior school year demonstrated an improved attendance rate of 70% in the current school year.

### **Health & Safety**

- In 2019, DEED and partners designed [Transforming Schools: A Framework for Trauma-Engaged Practice in Alaska](#) and supplementary resources to help schools address the negative impacts of childhood trauma. DEED wanted to understand whether Alaska schools were aware of and able to implement the recommended trauma-engaged practices. The Regional Education Laboratory – Northwest (REL-NW) partnered with DEED to study how Alaska's schools were implementing trauma-engaged practices consistent with the framework and supplementary resources. REL-NW recently released a report titled [Exploring Implementation of Trauma-Engaged Practices in Alaska Schools](#). This report includes survey results from hundreds of Alaskan schools.

### **School Recognition and Support**

- On January 9 and April 3, 2025, Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant 2019 (CLSD) subgrantees attended No Cost Time Extension virtual convenings where participants from subgrantee districts received state updates, shared progress, and provided feedback. The sessions were recorded for those who were unable to attend.
- The No Cost Time Extension Year started October 1, 2024, following the federal fiscal year calendar. There is currently \$3,156,602.06 remaining to spend by September 30, 2025, for subgrantees. Four projects have already closed out their 2019 CLSD grant funding.
- The nomination period for 2026 Alaska Teacher of the Year closed on January 31, 2025. 52 responses were received, resulting in 40 nominees representing 14 districts across the state. Using an established rubric and a cross-division review team, DEED narrowed down the completed applications to the final 6 nominees. These nominees will be reviewed and scored by the Selection Panel Committee, comprised of partners outside of DEED, during the month of April to make their Top 4 recommendations to the Commissioner. Final choice and an alternate will be announced by the Commissioner during Teacher Appreciation Week (May 5-9). The recipient of this honor will be Alaska's representative in CCSSO's National Teacher of the Year.
- The School Improvement Team continues to provide guidance and information to schools designated under ESSA to receive additional state support. This comes in the form of site visits, bi-weekly webinars, conferences, regular meetings, and ad-hoc calls.
- On May 1st DEED hosted the School Improvement Spring Convening, a pre-conference to the Science of Reading Symposium. The school improvement team collaborated with

the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB) on hosting this event with a focus on family and community engagement. These convenings work to keep districts connected and informed on where they should be in their school improvement plan implementation. District travel to the Spring Convening and Science of Reading Symposium was supported through travel grants from 1003a grant (SIG) funds.

- The SRS team collaborated with the ESEA team to present “Using a School Improvement Plan as a Title I Schoolwide Plan Assurances” (DEED form [05-23-065](#)), to the Committee of Practitioners to gather stakeholder feedback on the ease of use of the form as well as its benefits and challenges. The goal of the form is to reduce duplication of efforts for schools that have a schoolwide plan and are designated under ESSA for improvement. The same information was presented at the ESEA Technical Assistance workshop in Anchorage on April 9th as well as a webinar format on April 29th with a recording and slide deck posted to the [SRS Webinars page](#). The SRS and ESEA team will use any feedback provided to make improvements to the form.
- DEED Empowerment Specialists have continued training on the Student Focused Coaching model, providing continuity in professional development with how communication and support of Alaska schools and districts is approached.

### **Special Education**

- Compliance/Special Education Monitoring – Monitoring for the current fiscal year has been completed for all scheduled districts. The department is finalizing the process as corrective materials are received. The previous fiscal year has been fully closed out.
- Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) Memorandum of Agreement – A draft Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) has been received from DVR. This model agreement is provided to districts to assist in formulating their required agreements with DVR under special education assurances, where applicable.
- Staffing Updates – The special education program has filled its one vacancy, with the new hire set to begin after completing their current district contract. The position is an Education Specialist 2, specifically focused on special education certification.
- Communication Access Realtime Transcription (CART) Captioning Services Coordination – The special education team continues to assess the statewide need for CART services for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing in state public meetings and other applicable settings. DEED teams are encouraged to contact the special education team to coordinate these services as needed, with advance notice required.
- Per the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Approval - Indicator 17, the department is currently developing a revised State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP). The current plan focuses on graduation rates and coordination with other agencies to improve student success. The department has requested to shift the focus to early literacy to align with state initiatives aimed at improving reading outcomes for students with disabilities. Graduation rate activities will continue but without federal reporting, and once approved by OSEP, the state will begin reporting on early literacy progress.
- Federal Audit for Special Education – OSEP’s audit, conducted in 2021, is still pending completion. All required materials have been submitted for the identified areas, and no further documentation requests have been made, suggesting that the corrective actions may be considered complete.

- The special education section has been informed that it will undergo a fiscal compliance audit as part of the state's regularly scheduled fiscal review. Previous audits have resulted in no significant findings.
- The review process for state intensive funding claims is ongoing, with a 30-day window for districts to submit additional materials for claims that were not initially approved. To expedite the process, Anchorage was reviewed separately, with a later 30-day resubmission period. This year, the department received 825 new claims, with over 200 initial rejections, many of which were corrected within the correction window. Starting next year, a new process will be implemented requiring annual reviews of all intensive funding claims, rather than just new claims. This will necessitate new procedures and training for districts to meet the department's goal of reviewing all claims comprehensively.
- The special education team is seeking updates to 4 AAC 52.250 and 4 AAC 52.252 (Special Education Aide and Program Supervision) to allow the use of video conferencing technology for supervisory requirements and potentially mandate monthly supervision of staff responsible for delivering special education services. Additionally, OSEP has requested a revision to 4 AAC 52.130(i)(1)(B) (Criteria for Determining Eligibility - Vision Impaired) to remove the word "physical" from the description of an eye condition. The current wording implies eye trauma rather than neurological issues and may inadvertently limit student eligibility for this disability classification.

### **Standards and Assessment**

- The Assessment Team has supported teachers, schools, and districts through another successful testing season. They will begin working with other teams across the Division to examine data to create meaningful reports for education stakeholders.
- Additionally, the Assessment Team in cooperation with Content Specialists and other teams are actively recruiting educators to participate in the content and bias review as well as the data review for both AK STAR and the Alaska Science Assessment.

### **Teacher Certification**

- The Teacher Certification Office continues to improve processing efficiency by refining standard operating procedures within TEACH-AK, Alaska's online teacher certification system. These efforts have successfully reduced processing times to four weeks.
- Teacher Certification is actively issuing Alaska Reads Act endorsements to educators who have completed DEED-sponsored Science of Reading coursework or applied through TEACH-AK. As of April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2,347 endorsements have been added to educator certificates and this project will be completed before the end of April.
- The Teacher Registered Apprenticeship Program (T-RAP) currently includes a pilot cohort of five actively engaged apprentices in the program. To support implementation, DEED has developed a tracking tool to monitor Related Technical Instruction (RTI) coursework, on-the-job learning hours, and competency progression—ensuring clear documentation and support for both apprentices and mentors. This Spring, DEED has run a series of webinars to support additional districts in joining Apprenticeship, three additional districts have registered so far this Spring.
- DEED is working with stakeholders to develop a Principal Registered Apprenticeship Pathway, with the hope of launching a pilot in 2026.

## **Teaching & Learning and Academic Support**

- The submission of District Reading Improvement Plans (DRIPs) by all districts marks a significant step in ensuring successful implementation of the Alaska Reads Act. To support ongoing implementation, DEED is currently refining the DRIP/MTSS template in preparation for the Fall submission window. The updated template will provide clearer guidance and include a new section focused on student attendance, an essential factor in monitoring progress and strengthening reading outcomes.
- The first year of DEED's Department Reading Program is concluding, with reading specialists delivering intensive, data-informed support through goal setting, on-site coaching, and targeted reading plans. For school year 2025–2026, seven districts and 42 schools will join the program.
- From May 2–4, more than 900 educators gathered at the Dena'ina Center for the fourth annual Alaska Science of Reading Symposium. The event comprised of three days of sessions led by national presenters and Alaskan educators focused on evidence-based reading practices.
- DEED has announced the anticipated availability of subgrants through the 2024 Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) Grant. This federal initiative supports literacy from birth through grade 12, with a focus on underserved student populations. The program aligns with and supports the Alaska Reads Act. Over 25 subgrants are expected to be awarded, with estimated amounts ranging from \$250,000 to \$450,000. Selected districts will receive technical assistance and participate in both virtual and in-person sessions to support implementation.
  - CLSD 2024 Key Dates:
    - Applications Due: May 30, 2025
    - Awards Announced: June 18, 2025