

Dr. Michael Johnson
Commissioner



Department of Education
and Early Development

www.Education.Alaska.Gov

Juneau, Alaska

STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 20, 2020

DEED Releases 'Alaska's Smart Start 2020' Framework for Reopening Schools

JUNEAU – In mid-March, Alaska's schools closed their doors to students to protect against the spread of COVID-19. Now, as this school year comes to a close, the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), in partnership with the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), has developed a framework for the reentry and reopening of K-12 schools for the 2020-2021 school year. The framework, branded '[Alaska's Smart Start 2020](#)', is centered on student learning and how the delivery of education will continue under guidelines developed by DHSS for how schools can safely operate in low, medium, and high-risk environments.

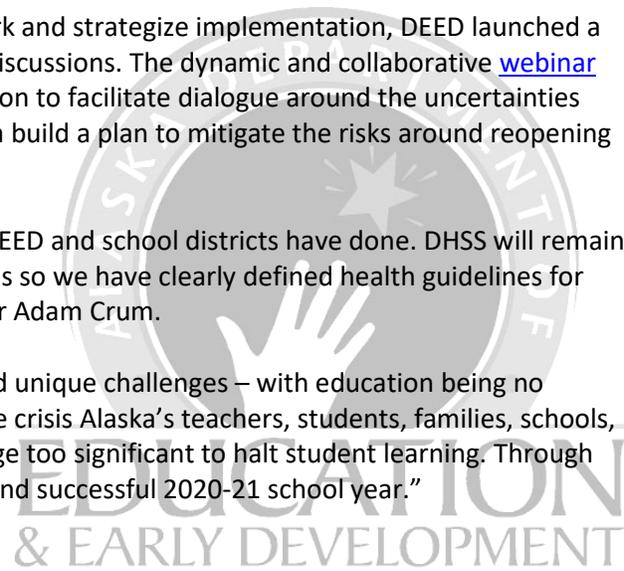
"Without safe and healthy students, teachers, and staff – learning cannot continue," said DEED Commissioner Dr. Michael Johnson. "Unlike this spring when we needed to suddenly shift the delivery of education, school districts now have the opportunity to spend several months working with partners to build a comprehensive pandemic preparedness plan for the 2020-2021 school year. Together we will ensure schools and staff are prepared to safely and successfully address the conditions, continuity, and capacities for learning across our state."

Following the CDC's guidelines issued to date, DHSS will define and establish guidelines for the Alaska's Smart Start 2020 framework for how schools can safely operate in low, medium, and high-risk environments. DEED will work with districts to build modular plans for how they will deliver education – focusing on three primary areas centered around student learning. District plans submitted to DEED will address common elements under each of the three areas. These elements were determined by education stakeholders, including superintendents, principals, and teachers, in meetings held last week.

To help guide school districts through the framework and strategize implementation, DEED launched a seven-week series of workshops and expert panel discussions. The dynamic and collaborative [webinar series](#) will host guest speakers from around the nation to facilitate dialogue around the uncertainties that face Alaska's school districts and how to build a plan to mitigate the risks around reopening schools.

"We appreciate the ongoing innovative work that DEED and school districts have done. DHSS will remain in close conversation with DEED and Alaska's schools so we have clearly defined health guidelines for Alaska's Smart Start 2020," said DHSS Commissioner Adam Crum.

"The COVID-19 pandemic opened Alaska to new and unique challenges – with education being no exception," said Commissioner Johnson. "During the crisis Alaska's teachers, students, families, schools, and communities demonstrated there is no challenge too significant to halt student learning. Through our strength in partnership, we will plan for a safe and successful 2020-21 school year."



*The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development provides information, resources, and leadership to support over 130,000 students in 503 public schools across Alaska. The mission of the department is to ensure an “**Excellent Education for Every Student Every Day.**”*

###

Media Contact: [Rochelle Lindley](#), Information Officer, (907) 465-6535