

State Board of Education & Early Development

Report to the Alaska Legislature

January 2013



State Board of Education & Early Development

Jim Merriner, Chair

Esther Cox, First Vice-Chair

Janel Keplinger, Second Vice-Chair

Geri Benshoof

Carol Schaeffer

Phillip Schneider

Patrick Shier

Madison Manning, student advisor

Major Michael Wrey, military advisor

Table of Contents

Education Clause	1
Board Mission Statement	1
Regulations, Resolutions, Other Board Actions	2
Assessments and accountability	2
Teacher quality	2
Student transportation	3
Correspondence programs	3
Students with disabilities	4
Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS)	4
Chart of Accounts	4
The 70% instruction requirement	4
Resolutions	5
Charter school approvals	5
New officers, member and staff	5
Relations with the University of Alaska	5
Significant steps	7
Moore settlement	7
New standards in English/language arts and mathematics	8
No Child Left Behind waiver application	9
Selected K-12 topics	11
State System of Support	11
Career and technical education	11
Early learning	12
Teacher mentoring and administrator coaching	12
Alaska’s Learning Network	13
Suicide Awareness and Prevention Training	13

Other department functions	14
Mt. Edgecumbe High School (MEHS)	14
Alaska State Council on the Arts	15
The Division of Libraries, Archives and Museums	16
Alaska State Archives and Records & Information Management Service	16
Alaska State Library.....	16
Alaska State Museum and Sheldon Jackson Museum	17
Alaska Professional Teaching Practices Commission.....	18
Student data	19
Graduation and dropout rates	19
Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)	20
State assessment results.....	21
National Assessment of Educational Progress	22
WorkKeys assessments	23
Recommendations	24
Graduation.....	24
Distance learning.....	24
Reading skills	25

Alaska State Constitution Education Clause

Section 7.1 - Public Education.

The legislature shall by general law establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all children of the State, and may provide for other public educational institutions. Schools and institutions so established shall be free from sectarian control. No money shall be paid from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or other private educational institution.

Mission of the State Board of Education & Early Development

To ensure quality standards-based instruction to improve academic achievement for all students.

REGULATIONS, RESOLUTIONS, OTHER BOARD ACTIONS

Assessments and accountability

The State Board adopted amendments to 4 AAC 06.775 regarding the WorkKeys assessments, which are produced and scored by ACT, a non-profit educational testing corporation. The Board approved additional guidelines for allowing accommodations and modifications for students with disabilities and students with limited proficiency in English. The Board responded to school districts' requests for the state to negotiate with ACT for more flexibility in accommodating those students.

The State Board adopted amendments to 4 AAC 34 regarding plans of service for students with limited proficiency in English. Alaska administered a new assessment for English language proficiency in spring 2012. Consequently, Alaska must use that test's scores to determine when students have improved sufficiently to no longer need language support services.

The State Board adopted amendments to 4 AAC 06 regarding schools' and districts' targets for student proficiency under the federal No Child Left Behind Act. The regulation froze the targets, known as annual measurable objectives, for the 2011-2012 school year at the levels used in the prior school year. The targets had been scheduled to increase, triggering consequences for schools and districts that did not meet the targets. The federal government offered the freeze to states that intended to submit an application for a comprehensive waiver from No Child Left Behind, as Alaska has done. Such a waiver would replace the accountability system of No Child Left Behind with one developed by the state and approved by the federal government. Alaska's waiver application is addressed on page 19 of this report.

The State Board adopted amendments to 4 AAC 33 regarding a public school growth and proficiency index. The regulations repealed the Public School Performance Incentive Program, a discontinued pilot program, and amended an index that calculates the aggregate growth and proficiency of a school's students. The index will be used to implement the Moore settlement and Alaska's accountability system under a waiver, if approved, from No Child Left Behind.

Teacher quality

The State Board continued to implement through regulation some of the recommendations of the state's Teacher Quality Working Group. The group was first convened in November 2009 by the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development (EED) and includes representatives of rural and urban school districts, NEA Alaska, universities in Alaska, the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project, and the department.

The State Board adopted amendments to 4 AAC 12 regarding universities' educator-preparation programs. The amendments maintained all current in-state pathways, including alternative pathways, to become a certificated Alaska educator and broadened the standards by which educators from out-of-state programs are accepted for certification. The purpose was to put the standards for preparation programs in one clear regulation.

The State Board adopted amendments to 4 AAC 04 regarding the Praxis II tests, which are used to qualify teachers for the state's Professional level of certification, which follows the Initial certification level, and for highly qualified status under No Child Left Behind. The regulations update the names of Praxis II tests and change the required minimum scores on certain tests to match new scoring scales.

The State Board approved new programs in teacher preparation at the University of Alaska Southeast. The programs offer a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in special education. The Board approved the closure, caused by low enrollment, of early-childhood education programs at UAS. The programs' current students will be allowed to complete the programs.

The State Board adopted amendments to 4 AAC 12 regarding the state's approval of college programs that prepare providers such as schools' counselors, librarians, psychologists, and social workers. The regulations adopted by reference the standards of the relevant accreditation agency for each field.

Responding to recommendations from a statewide group of K-12 and college educators called the Teacher Quality Working Group, the State Board adopted amendments to 4 AAC 04 and 4 AAC 19 that would require districts to assess whether teachers, principals and special service providers (such as school psychologists) are exemplary, proficient, basic or unsatisfactory in each of the state's professional content standards and in overall performance. Districts must consider the state's standards for culturally responsive educators, as well.

Districts may place teachers who are rated basic in two or more standards under a plan of growth, and must place teachers who are rated unsatisfactory under a plan of improvement (the latter is required by state law). In evaluating educators, districts must observe the educator at work; consider information from parents, students and others; and incorporate data about student growth in learning. Data about student growth will compose at least 20% of a teacher's evaluation in the school years 2015-2016 and 2016-2017; at least 35% in the school year 2017-2018; and at least 50% in the school year 2018-2019 and thereafter. Districts must consult with their educators in determining the measures of student growth and must have two to four such measures. State assessments must be one of these measures only if the subject and grade directly relate to the teacher's position. Educators' evaluations remain confidential, as required by state law. The department expects to work with districts to implement the regulation.

Student transportation

The State Board adopted amendments to 4 AAC 27 regarding the minimum standards for school buses. The regulations adopted the latest national specifications from 2010 and 2011.

Correspondence programs

The State Board adopted amendments to 4 AAC 33 to require full-time correspondence students to enroll in at least two different core courses a semester. Core subjects are English, math,

science, social studies, world languages, and technology. The purpose is to encourage full-time students to take a diverse course load.

Students with disabilities

The State Board adopted amendments to 4 AAC 52 regarding students with disabilities. The regulations set a new timeline for completing a student's evaluation for eligibility and for devising an individualized education program for eligible students. Both processes must be completed within 90 calendar days. The regulation meets federal requirements while giving school districts a reasonable period of time.

Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS)

The State Board adopted amendments to 4 AAC 43 regarding the Alaska Performance Scholarship. The regulations changed the minimum WorkKeys scores required for an APS that will be used for a postsecondary certificate program. The new scores align with recommended minimum entry scores in occupations requiring a certificate, such as the trades.

The State Board adopted amendments to 4 AAC 43 regarding the Alaska Performance Scholarship that: 1) allow high school-level courses taken prior to high school to count toward scholarship eligibility, if the courses are on a student's high school transcript; 2) allow International Baccalaureate courses as approved courses for scholarship eligibility, just as Advanced Placement courses are now treated; and 3) clarify the ACT (reading, writing, math and science) and SAT (reading, writing and math) tests that may be used for scholarship eligibility. The amendments support a new state law and respond to concerns from school districts and families.

Chart of Accounts

The State Board adopted amendments to 4 AAC 06 regarding the Uniform Chart of Accounts used by school districts to code expenditures. The regulations provided school districts with clarity about the allowable types of in-kind services and how to determine their value.

The 70% instruction requirement

The State Board approved waivers to 23 school districts from the state requirement that they budget 70 percent of their operating funds for instruction in fiscal year 2013. Districts seeking waivers generally have operating budgets of \$3 million or less or have operating and maintenance costs that exceed 20 percent of the operating fund budget.

The State Board granted waivers to two school districts from the state requirement that their audits, for fiscal year 2011, met their budgeted goal of spending at least 70 percent of operating funds for instruction. The State Board denied such a waiver to the Yupiit School District. The State Board later approved a settlement with Yupiit in which an independent accountant will oversee the district's budget and will train budget personnel for three years, and will evaluate the

district's organization and staffing -- at a cost of up to \$300,000 over that period, to be paid from the district's funds.

The State Board discussed the benefits of the 70 percent requirement in providing oversight for districts' budgets and expenditures. The State Board voted to rescind resolutions from 2007 and 2009 that had asked the Legislature to reconsider the statute that established the 70 percent requirement.

Resolutions

The State Board approved a resolution thanking Cynthia Curran, who retired from the state as Director of Teaching & Learning Support at the department.

Charter schools

The State Board approved the renewal of charters for all of the applicants in 2012. State law requires the State Board to review applications for new and renewed charters following their approval by local school boards. The approved charters are: Soldotna Montessori Charter School, Fireweed Academy Charter School in Homer, Aurora Borealis Charter School in Kenai, Family Partnership Charter School in Anchorage, Aquarian Charter School in Anchorage, Alaska Native Cultural Charter School in Anchorage, Ketchikan Charter School, Birchtree Charter School in Mat-Su, and Fronteras Spanish Immersion Charter School.

New officers, member and staff

The State Board elected Jim Merriner as Chair, Esther Cox as First Vice-Chair, and Janel Keplinger as Second Vice Chair, effective July 1, 2012, through June 30, 2013. Major Michael Wrey joined the State Board in December as military advisor.

The State Board approved the appointments of Mark Lewis as the department's Administrative Services Director and Chris Simon as Rural Education Coordinator.

Collaboration with the University of Alaska (UA)

The State Board and Commissioner Hanley met with the UA Board of Regents and President Gamble on June 6, 2012, to discuss teacher preparation, college-readiness of high school graduates, and dual credit, among other topics. It was the first such meeting in a decade.

President Gamble, Commissioner Hanley, and the Chairs of the UA Board of Regents, Pat Jacobson, and the State Board of Education, Jim Merriner, met on July 25, 2012. The group decided to pursue strengthening the alignment of K-12 education and higher education in the following areas: student advising; assessment; standards (not standardization); and teacher education/professional development and support.

The group reconvened on December 10, 2012, and refined the Alignment Initiative. Its next meeting is planned for early June 2013. Among the topics:

Connect high school student advisors with college academic and career counseling advisors, including linking workforce development advice. The P-20W state longitudinal data system is the vehicle to help facilitate this high-potential retention initiative.

The Accuplacer college-readiness assessment can be given as early as the high school sophomore year, then again in junior year, and thus normed to create academic progress waypoints over multiple years, rather than score a single endpoint. UA currently funds Accuplacer for high school juniors and would support funding for sophomores as well.

UA could offer first-year core courses (example: MATH 107) online for free so that middle school and high school teachers, tutors and parents could build the course fundamentals into the middle school and high school curricula. Students could take the Math 107 final exam for free with an authorized proctor. If the student passed, the student could then pay to receive full college credit. Even high school students who do not pass the final test would be better prepared for college math.

On September 25, 2012, Commissioner Hanley, Board Chair Merriner, and Board member Phil Schneider attended the first meeting of the newly-formed UA Alaska Teacher Education Consortium. President Pat Gamble invited educational leaders and interested Alaskans for an all-day meeting.

SIGNIFICANT STEPS

Moore settlement

The State Board adopted by reference the settlement of the longstanding *Moore v. Alaska* lawsuit, which questioned whether the quality of public education met the state Constitution's requirements under Article VII, Section 1. The plaintiffs were especially concerned about rural school districts.

A state Superior Court judge established a four-part test for constitutionality: 1) adequate funding; 2) adequate standards for education; 3) a system of state assessments; and 4) oversight and accountability by the state.

The judge ruled in the state's favor on funding, standards and assessments, but she said the state: 1) did not provide sufficient oversight of school districts and 2) did not assure that all students had a meaningful opportunity to pass the high school graduation exam.

The settlement created four programs, funded with an \$18 million legislative appropriation, to address low achievement in struggling schools. The funds will be disbursed over three school years, with all funds to be obligated by June 30, 2017. The settlement set forth specific requirements for each grant.

- A.) Two-year kindergarten or related pre-literacy programs, offering standards-based instruction for 4-year-olds to prepare them for kindergarten. The state's 40 lowest-performing schools will be eligible. Although student enrollment is voluntary, grantees must demonstrate community support. Grantees must implement the district's intensive reading program; spend part of the grant on research and evaluation; have benchmarks for student gains; and include the program's performance as part of the superintendent's evaluation. At least one-third of the \$18 million appropriation will be reserved for these programs. Districts will be funded as if the participating students were 0.75 of a full-day student.
- B.) A noncompetitive grant fund to support proven educational strategies, such as purchase of intensive programs or trainings. The state's 40 lowest-performing schools will be eligible. Participating school districts must contribute matching funds ranging from 10% to 40%, depending on the district's size; spend part of the grant on research and evaluation; have benchmarks for student gains; and include the program's performance as part of the superintendent's evaluation.
- C.) A teacher retention competitive grant fund for initiatives or physical improvements to reduce teacher turnover, such as culture camps, professional development, and housing improvements. This fund will not be restricted to the 40 lowest-performing schools, but they will receive preference. Districts must provide assurances that students and parents

are aware of the district's discipline policies. Districts will contribute matching funds or hours.

- D.) A program to reimburse districts for the cost of providing remedial support for juniors and seniors who fail the Alaska High School Graduation Qualifying Exam while attending one of the 40 lowest-performing schools. The state will provide up to \$3,000 for each student in the program. To be eligible, students must have an attendance record of at least 85% for the previous school year.

To award the grants, the settlement established a seven-member Moore Collaborative Committee. It is composed of three members selected by the Executive Director of the Citizens for the Educational Advancement of Alaska's Children (one of the lawsuit's plaintiffs), three members selected by the Alaska Commissioner of Education & Early Development, and a non-voting chairperson appointed by mutual agreement. The members are: Brad Allen, Ed McLain, Kerri Boyd, Rich Mauer, Sandy Kowalski, Sue Liebner, and non-voting chairperson Rhonda Gardner.

The Commissioner of Education & Early Development will provide funding based on the committee's recommendation unless the Commissioner determines that the recommendations are contrary to the public interest. The committee also will serve as the setting for broad collaboration on establishing and implementing effective programs.

As of the October 1 deadline, six of twelve districts with Moore settlement-eligible schools have submitted applications for available money. The Moore Collaborative Committee has established a fall and spring timetable for reviewing these applications. Three of the four programs established by the Moore settlement are in place.

New standards in English/language arts and mathematics

The State Board adopted new student standards in English/language arts and mathematics for kindergarten through grade 12. The impetus was that Alaska's high school graduates must be prepared to compete for jobs, even within Alaska, with people from across the United States and the globe.

Alaska's former standards stopped at grade 10, and they were not rigorous enough. Approximately half of the University of Alaska's first-time freshmen need remedial courses in English or mathematics. Those students are more likely to drop out of college. Employers say high school graduates are not fully prepared for the workplace.

For nearly two years, the department worked on the standards with rural and urban Alaskans from around the state, including representatives of universities, career and technical programs, and industries. Working groups included teachers of career and technical subjects and teachers who work with students with disabilities, English language learners, economically disadvantaged students, and students of diverse ethnicities.

The result is standards created by Alaskans but comparable in rigor to new standards that are being adopted around the United States. Instructional materials, assessments and parent guides for the new nationwide standards will apply equally to Alaska's standards.

Here is what is new:

- They are Alaska's first standards that cover kindergarten through grade 12.
- They are Alaska's first language arts standards that include speaking and listening.
- They are Alaska's first language arts standards that expect students to master language in the context of science, social studies and technical subjects, as well as English classes.
- The standards expect students to learn certain math topics in earlier grades than they do now.
- The standards expect students to know *about* math and know how to *apply* math.

Alaska's new standards are very similar to the Common Core State Standards, which have been adopted by 46 states and the District of Columbia.

That means:

- Alaska's graduates will be able to compete with graduates nationwide for higher education and jobs.
- Over time, teachers across America will be trained in the common standards. No matter where Alaska's schools find their teachers, they will be familiar with standards similar to Alaska's.
- States can share best practices in teaching, assessments, instructional materials, and ways to help parents support learning.
- Parents -- knowing the schools' expectations for their children -- can work with teachers toward shared goals.
- If families move into or out of Alaska, their children will most likely transfer to a school that is on the same track as Alaska's schools.

The standards take effect and will begin to be implemented this school year. The department expects that students will first be assessed in the new standards in spring 2015 or 2016. The State Board regularly reviews the department's detailed efforts to help districts implement the new standards. The work plan operates in three phases: to create awareness of the new standards, transition to them, and fully implement them.

No Child Left Behind waiver application

In September 2012, the department applied for a waiver from major provisions of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, commonly known as No Child Left Behind. The application is under review. If granted, the waiver would take effect next school year.

Under the U.S. Department of Education's offer of an NCLB waiver, states must agree to:

- 1) adopt standards in English/language arts and mathematics that prepare students for education and training after high school, often referred to as college- and career-ready standards;
- 2) devise their own system for holding schools accountable for students' academic success, including student populations that traditionally underperform; and
- 3) require school districts to evaluate teachers and principals partly on student achievement.

In exchange for meeting these and more detailed requirements, states are allowed to forgo NCLB's accountability system known as Adequate Yearly Progress. States also are freed from the requirement that districts submit plans to increase the percentage of teachers who are rated highly qualified as defined by NCLB.

Alaska was in a position to apply for a waiver because it has been working for two years on new standards and on methods of evaluating educators.

In its application for a waiver, Alaska proposed an accountability system for schools based on data about student achievement and growth in reading, writing, and mathematics; attendance; participation in state assessments; work-ready assessments; and graduation. This formula, called the Alaska School Performance Index, would rank schools from one star to five stars.

Each school would have the goal of reducing its percentage of non-proficient students by half over six years, including in each major subgroup of students such as economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, and ethnic groups. Districts would be required to implement improvement plans in one-star and two-star schools and in any school with substantial achievement gaps among subgroups of students.

As required by the U.S. Department of Education, the state would recognize high-performing schools and intervene in the lowest-performing 5 percent of Title I schools (recipients of federal anti-poverty funds) and to a lesser extent in the next 10 percent of Title I schools that are low-performing.

Parents would continue to receive reports about their children's results on state assessments. Assessment results for schools and districts, broken down by subgroups of students, would continue to be made public.

SELECTED K-12 TOPICS

State System of Support

The State System of Support continues to promote and strengthen school improvement efforts across the state through the following efforts:

Three content specialists continue to promote awareness of the new English/language arts and mathematics standards with presentations at the Superintendents Fly-in, Principals Conference, Special Education Director's Training, Title I Grant recipient trainings, and Alaska State Literacy Association Institute, as well as a webinar posted on the department website.

Ten SSOS coaches are working on-site one week each month and providing ongoing distance support to schools in three intervention districts to strengthen the implementation of school and district improvement plans. In addition to six days of initial training in August, coaches engage with the department on a monthly basis through reports and training activities. Coaches are working at the following sites: Lower Yukon School District - Alakanuk, Hooper Bay, Kotlik, and Pilot Station; Yukon Flats School District – Circle, Fort Yukon, Venetie, Arctic Village, and the district office; and Yupiit School District – Akiachak, Akiak, and Tuluksak.

The Spring Curriculum and Alignment Institute was held on March 8-9, 2012. Its topic was districts' six-year cycles of curriculum reviews. The Fall Curriculum and Alignment Institute was held on November 8-9, 2012, (and the spring institute will be held on March 10-11, 2013) in partnership with facilitator Dr. Susan McCauley and the Alaska Comprehensive Center. The latter two institutes emphasize the awareness and transition phases for implementation of the new English/language arts and mathematics standards.

Besides training its own coaches, SSOS offers training to school districts in instruction-related coaching. Six districts have participated in four days of training with plans to complete four more days in February.

Career and technical education

The State Board received a report about the multi-agency committee (including EED) that approved grants to implement the Alaska Career and Technical Education Plan. Grants for fiscal year 2012 included \$568,297 to assist 10 school districts, the University of Alaska, and the Alaska Center for Rural Health. School projects include developing career pathways; welding training; implementing personal learning career plans; first aid certifications; construction and oil industry courses; and computer-aided design courses.

Early learning

The Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council has completed its Statewide Strategic Report for the Governor.

The department is in the third year of the Alaska Pre-Kindergarten Program, which provides the framework and funding for local model programs in urban, rural, and remote settings. Participating districts, often with local partners, provide a voluntary half-day preschool program for 4-year-olds and 5-year-old children who do not meet the cutoff date for kindergarten entry; districts also provide services for parents who care for their children at home.

The programs are based on the Alaska Early Learning Guidelines and national developmentally appropriate practices. The programs emphasize school readiness, language development, early literacy, mathematics, and cognition.

The FY 2013 grants are serving approximately 350 children and families in the following eight districts: Anchorage, Dillingham, Juneau, Lower Kuskokwim, Mat-Su, Nome, North Slope, and Yukon Koyukuk.

The FY 2013 Parents as Teachers grants have been awarded. The first training from the National Center for Parents As Teachers took place in October. Approximately 250 families with young children will receive services from Kids Corps Inc., and RurAL CAP in Anchorage; Sprout Family Services Inc. in southern Kenai Peninsula communities; and the Association for the Education of Young Children-Southeast Alaska in Juneau.

The Teaching Strategies Gold child-outcomes assessment is being implemented with Alaska's Head Start programs and all eight of the new Alaska pre-kindergarten program grantees. Additional school districts and early childhood educational entities use the system on a voluntary basis.

The department continues to implement the informational phase of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System and its use in Head Start to guide teacher professional development. It focuses on the interactions between adults and children, and assesses the emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support provided in the classroom.

The Department of Health and Social Services' Background Check unit is fully operational and serving pre-elementary schools in its system. It serves multiple program types with the highest standards and greatest depth of information of all the background check processes available in the state in real time.

Teacher mentoring and administrator coaching

This school year under the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project, 35 mentors are serving 410 early-career teachers in 190 schools in 44 school districts. The University of Alaska and the department are partners in the project. Participating rural teachers have shown an 80 percent retention rate, compared with a 68 percent rural retention rate before the project began.

UA recently received a \$15 million federal grant to study of the effects of best practices integrated into an expanded and highly disciplined mentor program. As a result, effective mentoring programs are now being tested in rural and urban Alaska schools.

This school year, the Alaska Administrator Coaching Project is using 10 coaches to serve three superintendents, 17 interns in the Rural Alaska Principal Preparation and Support Project (RAPPS), and 65 principals. RAPPS provides scholarships to promising teacher-leaders in high-need rural districts so they can become principals.

Alaska's Learning Network

Alaska's Learning Network is a coalition of the state's 54 school districts and is managed by an advisory board with coordination from the department.

In the fall semester of 2012, 218 high school students from 23 school districts participated in 32 online and blended courses taught by highly qualified Alaska teachers in Alaska's Learning Network. "Blended" refers to courses taught partly in person. The courses included topics such as English composition, literature, algebra, geometry, precalculus, biology, chemistry, earth science, geographic information systems, history, economics, French, Spanish, health, and computer literacy.

Participating districts in the fall semester were: Alaska Gateway, Aleutians East, Anchorage, Bering Strait, Chatham, Copper River, Craig, Dillingham, Fairbanks, Galena, Haines, Hoonah, Iditarod, Kake, Klawock, Lake and Peninsula, Lower Kuskokwim, Lower Yukon, Northwest Arctic, Pelican, Sitka, St. Mary's, Unalaska, Wrangell, and Yakutat.

Suicide Awareness and Prevention Training

To implement SB 137, signed into law in September 2012, the department has assigned a staff member to suicide awareness, prevention and "postvention" (responses after a suicide), and has established a webpage geared to educators, student and parents. The department is a member of the Alaska Statewide Suicide Prevention Council and helped develop the State Suicide Prevention Plan FY 2012-2017.

In accordance with the new law, the department has provided educators with a commissioner-approved list of suicide awareness and prevention training tools. For example, among the tools now used by Alaska educators is an online interactive training simulation – called At-Risk for High School Educators, created by Kognito -- that has been used by 120,000 high school teachers nationwide. The program teaches educators how to identify students exhibiting psychological distress, approach those students, and refer them to support services. The Alaska Statewide Suicide Prevention Council provides the program to Alaska's teachers at no cost.

OTHER DEPARTMENT FUNCTIONS

Mt. Edgecumbe High School (MEHS)

The State Board is also the board of education for Mt. Edgecumbe High School, a state-operated 400-student boarding school in Sitka. The State Board approved revisions to the school's policy manual. Topics included suspension and expulsion, student travel, non-retention, curriculum cycles, non-discrimination, and others. The State Board also reviewed the school's mathematics curriculum and approved the school's new strategic plan.

MEHS provides a broad range of academic and extra-curricular opportunities that often are unavailable to students in home schools and small communities. Academic expectations are high, and students who attend are expected to enroll in higher education.

Students from 100 or more villages attend Mt. Edgecumbe, where 60 to 65 percent of the student body is female and 35 to 40 percent is male. Of the school's 87 graduates in the 2011-2012 school year, 84 percent were accepted into a university or training program. In the 2012-2013 school year, Alaska Native students comprise 77 percent of the student population; 5 percent are Caucasian, and 18 percent are of mixed ethnicity. Two-thirds of students meet federal guidelines for free and reduced-price lunches.

Mt. Edgecumbe students, like all of Alaska's public high school students, take state assessments in reading, writing and mathematics in grades 9 and 10. In the 2011-2012 school year, 96 percent of MEHS 9th-graders scored proficient or advanced in reading, 86 percent in writing, and 84 percent in mathematics. In 10th grade, 80 percent of MEHS students scored proficient or advanced in reading, 81 percent in writing, and 68 percent in mathematics.

Along with a high school's customary academic courses, MEHS offers Japanese, Chinese and Spanish; robotics; EMT/ETT; sea tech internships; genetics; welding, construction, small engines; nursing; law enforcement cadet corps; the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program; and the statewide science symposium.

The Mt. Edgecumbe campus is the former site of a World War II naval aircraft base, and the school still uses many of the original buildings. This year's major maintenance project is to upgrade the heating plant for the academic facilities. The dormitories' heating system is in danger of failing and needs updating as well. An aquatics facility is scheduled to open in spring 2015.

Alaska State Council on the Arts

The 2012 Creative Communities Conference was held in Anchorage in January. Every two years the council holds a statewide arts conference that convenes artists, arts organization representatives, and community members. Over 250 people participated in 2012's conference, which included keynotes by national luminaries such as Ben Cameron (Doris Duke Charitable Foundation) and Carol Coletta (ArtPlace), and professional development and networking opportunities.

The Alaska's Living Cultural Treasures Aleut/Unangax Bentwood Hat Residency was hosted at the Smithsonian Arctic Studies Center in Anchorage on March 5-9. This project – a collaboration between the council, the Smithsonian Arctic Studies Center, and the Anchorage Museum -- highlighted the work and cultural expertise of Aleut/Unangax Alaska living cultural treasures. During the residency, the master and apprentice teams created a traditional bentwood hat. In addition, 85 middle school students from three Anchorage schools participated. School groups visited the museum and interacted with the master artists and apprentices while they demonstrated bentwood hat making. Students heard a presentation on the Unangax people and explored the Smithsonian Arctic Studies Center exhibition.

Poetry Out Loud is a national poetry recitation contest for high school students. Regional competitions took place in Fairbanks, Palmer, Ketchikan, Juneau and Anchorage, as well as video adjudication for rural regional competitions in the Far North, Interior, West, Southwest and Southeast. The ten regional winners competed at the state competition, which was held in Juneau on March 27. Aryeh Lax, a student from Stellar High School in Anchorage, won the state competition and represented Alaska at the national finals, which were held in Washington, D.C., on May 14-15. Over 5,400 students from across Alaska participated in the Poetry Out Loud program in 2012.

At the council's Annual Meeting, in June 2012, council members approved over \$785,000 in grant awards to be distributed throughout the state. Ninety grants were made in the following categories: Artists in Schools, Operating Support, Community Arts Development, Workshop grants, Harper Arts Touring, Cultural Collaborations, and Master Artist and Apprentice.

The council manages the state's percent-for-art program. This year the council oversaw the installation of five new works and managed five RFP/commission processes. The council has begun importing the state's public art collection into a national public art database, the Public Art Archive to promote the collection and cultural tourism in Alaska. The full collection, comprising over 1,100 artworks, is expected to be online in 2013.

The council and the Bethel Yupiit Piciryarait Cultural Center partnered to deliver the Partners in Growth program, which trains rural artists and communities to build successful art businesses. The first program was hosted in Bethel on January 27-28.

The Division of Libraries, Archives and Museums

The State Library, Archives & Museums building project (SLAM) expects to begin construction site work in December 2012. The project received \$49 million from the 2012 Legislature: \$20 million from the Governor's budget proposal and \$29 million added by the Legislature. This amount made it possible to begin construction. Funding is adequate for Phase 1 of construction, the collections vault and building perimeter. Phase 2 of construction, the interior of the building and museum exhibits, awaits \$50 million in additional appropriation. In order to proceed without cost escalation to the project, this final appropriation is needed by July 2013.

Alaska State Archives and Records & Information Management Service

The Alaska State Archives initiated a National Historical Publications & Records Commission grant project to appraise, weed, and organize over 3,000 boxes of Department of Law Exxon Valdez Oil Spill litigation records held by the State Archives and evaluate 2,600 boxes still in the Department of Law's custody. This project will organize and make available litigation files that are in the public domain.

The Records & Information Management Service completed a revision of the Local Government Model General Administrative Records Retention Schedule that is a tool that municipal clerks and other officials utilize to manage their information in accordance with statute and other rules.

RIMS implemented a series of one-hour training webinars to state personnel regarding all aspects of records administration, in addition to its Division of Personnel & Labor Relations sponsored courses held face-to-face throughout the year.

Coordinated by the State Archivist, the Alaska State Historical Records Advisory Board sponsored a two-day basic archives training in Anchorage attended by 24 individuals from archives, museums, and heritage centers from all over Alaska.

The Alaska State Archives received a request from the Alaska Energy Authority for 1980s Susitna Hydroelectric Project records preserved in the Archives. These maps, studies, and reports are needed for the \$4.5 billion Susitna Watana Hydro Project, one of Governor Parnell's priorities. By using these archived resources, the state won't have to duplicate work done 25 years ago. The State Archives and the Energy Authority have entered into a memorandum of agreement to make 4,000 maps, 1,300 microfiche, and 30 cubic feet of textual materials available to the project team and the public. The project team estimates that the Archives' preservation of these records will save the state several million dollars.

Alaska State Library

The Online With Libraries (OWL) project continues to bring public libraries up to broadband Internet speed and to enable videoconferencing for Alaskans. This project facilitates citizen engagement, even at remote locations, in online opportunities that have previously been impossible to achieve with inferior equipment and connectivity. This \$8.3 million project is funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce, with matching funds provided by the

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Rasmuson Foundation, and the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development. Funding expires in August 2013, and sustainability is the current pressing concern.

The Alaska Native Libraries, Archives & Museums grant-funded project has carried over into FY 2013. This project has provided educational opportunities for Alaska Native librarians, archivists and museum personnel, and also for staff who work in libraries, archives or museums that serve significant Alaska Native populations. Because Alaska does not have any schools of library, archives or museum studies, professional training is not available locally. This project seeks to partially remedy this lack.

In 2012 the Information Services section focused on outreach and collaboration. It instituted rotating art exhibits and highlighted two local artists on First Fridays; increased use of digital signage, taking advantage of its location to partner with state agencies to publicize wellness, social services, and fisheries; surveyed users; implemented new resources and tools to increase access, working with multiple vendors and libraries around the state to explore options to share electronic resources, especially e-books; expanded classes online, which have reached over 1,000 participants through professional development classes for libraries, state employees, and the general public.

The Historical Collections section collects and preserves significant personal and corporate papers, photographs, audio-visuals and other items of Alaskan history. Recent initiatives include training staff and others in paper and book conservation techniques; public presentations from people with interest in historic subjects; assistance with intense research by historians; processing donations; identifying, preserving and making public some collections of Alaska Native language materials.

Alaska State Museum (Juneau) and Sheldon Jackson Museum (Sitka)

The long standing dispute between the Teeyhittaan Clan and the State Museum over custody of *Yéil Aan Kaawu Naa s'aaxw*, the Leader of All Ravens Hat, was settled in March 2012. The unique agreement was developed under the leadership of the state's Museum Collections Advisory Committee. The State Museum and the clan reached a solution independently of the federal process. The agreement was signed by the clan custodian and the museum, and then ratified by the Museum Collections Advisory Committee. Under the agreement, the clan and state share in the responsibility, care and custody of the object. The hat will remain in the collection of the State Museum but be fully accessible at any time by the clan and will be located in Wrangell, the traditional homeland of the Teeyhittaan Clan, at the Wrangell Museum.

In September 2012, the court case *Anderson v. State of Alaska*, regarding moon rocks given to Alaska but removed by a private citizen, was resolved. The case was settled with the state regaining possession of the moon rocks. The display with the rocks was returned to Alaska in December and garnered national news coverage.

In October 2012, the State Museum was recognized with a national award from the Heritage Preservation organization. The Ross Merrill Award is given for outstanding commitment to the

preservation and care of collections. The museum was recognized for 25 years of providing collection and conservation stewardship to museums and cultural centers in Alaska. The award was presented at the joint Museums Alaska/Alaska Historical Society annual conference in Sitka by the President of the Heritage Preservation Organization.

The partnership between the museum and Princess Cruise Lines produced a new onboard exhibit that received outstanding reviews from industry representatives and our seasonal visitors. The museum saw an increase in attendance that can be directly attributed to the onboard exhibit.

The Alaska State Museum and Sheldon Jackson Museum brought artists to the museums to study specific works in the collection, to reinterpret the manufacturing technique of ceremonial objects and household materials. The program was in partnership with the Smithsonian Institution and the National Museum of the American Indian, and funded by the latter. The joint effort was the first step in revitalizing practices in manufacturing objects, to reintroduce the techniques to a new generation of artists.

Alaska Professional Teaching Practices Commission

The Professional Teaching Practices Commission governs educators' ethical and professional standards and educators' compliance with state law and contractual obligations. The commission reports by fiscal year, not calendar year. For fiscal year 2012, the commission reported 19 sanctions ranging from reprimands to surrender of teaching certificates. Nine sanctions were for professional misconduct, seven for contract violations, and three for sexual misconduct with students. Approximately 8,340 teachers work in Alaska's public school classrooms.

STUDENT DATA

Graduation and dropout rates

The federal government requires all states to use the same method to calculate graduation rates. The Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate was first implemented in Alaska with the 2010-2011 school year.

A cohort graduation year is assigned to each 9th-grade student in the fall of his or her initial entry. The expectation of the adjusted cohort graduation rate is that the student will graduate within four years. For example, a student who entered 9th grade in the 2009-2010 school year would be considered part of the 2013 graduation cohort group. A student may be added to the cohort as a transfer into the public school system or removed from the cohort upon transfer to an education program with a secondary school diploma track. A deceased student would be removed from the cohort group.

A graduate is defined as a student who has received a regular diploma from a state- or district-approved education program, as evidenced by receipt of a secondary school diploma from school authorities. Any student that receives a diploma under a waiver from the competency examination required under AS 14.03075(a), as specified by the state board, is considered to be a graduate. This does not include a student who receives a certificate of achievement (those students who complete their credits but do not pass the graduation exam) or a general educational development (GED) certificate.

The Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate is reported as a fraction. The numerator is the sum of the number of graduates within the cohort who receive a regular diploma on or before June 30. The denominator is the sum of all students assigned to the cohort.

School Year	Graduation Rate*	Graduate Count
2005	61.4%	6,905
2006	61.6%	7,361
2007	63.0%	7,666
2008	62.6%	7,855
2009	67.5%	8,008
2010	67.4%	8,245
=====		
2011	68.0%	8,064
2012	69.4%	7,987**

*Note: Prior to the 2011 school year graduation calculation utilized the methodology below: The Graduation Rate is reported as a fraction. The numerator is the sum of the number of graduates receiving a regular diploma before June 30. The denominator is the sum of the number of graduates, plus the number of dropouts in grade nine three school years prior, plus the number of unduplicated dropouts in grade ten two school years prior, plus the number of unduplicated

dropouts in grade eleven in the prior school year, plus the number of unduplicated dropouts in grade 12 during the current year, plus the number of grade 12 continuing students.

**Graduate count represents any student who graduated with a regular diploma during the school year (July 1-June 30).

Alaska also calculates the graduation rate for a five-year cohort of students, which includes students who graduated in four years and five years. In 2012, the five-year graduation rate was 73.2%.

There is often confusion between graduation rates and dropout rates. Dropout rates are event rates, meaning they are calculated across a single year. The graduation rates are measures of cohort groups across four years. Dropout rates are calculated by dividing the total number of students dropping out of public school, in grades 7-12, by the October 1 enrollment count for all students in grades 7-12. Graduation rates and dropout rates are calculated independently from each other and are not the inverse of each other. Also, a student counted as a dropout in one reporting year may be counted as a dropout in another year. Preliminary information for the 2011-2012 school year shows a grade 7-12 dropout rate of 4.8%.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

“Adequate yearly progress” is the basis of the accountability system for schools and districts under the federal No Child Left Behind Act. The phrase refers to expectations that schools are making progress in increasing the percentage of students proficient in language arts and mathematics, with the ultimate goal that all students be proficient by spring 2014. Each year there are targets for student proficiency called annual measureable objectives.

To make adequate yearly progress, schools and districts must meet up to 40 targets. The targets for language arts, mathematics, and participation in assessments apply not only to a school’s assessed students as a whole, but to nine subgroups of students (for subgroups that include at least 26 students in a school): African-American, Alaska Native/American Indian, Asian, Caucasian, Hispanic, Multi-Ethnic, Economically Disadvantaged, Students with Disabilities, and Limited English Proficient Students. New this year is a federal requirement that subgroups of students meet the graduation rate target.

A total of 236 Alaska public schools made AYP in the 2011-2012 school year, 46.5 percent of the state’s 507 public schools. This is an increase of 0.8 percentage points over the prior school year.

Seventy-one schools that did not reach their targets in the 2010-2011 school year sufficiently improved to meet the targets in 2011-2012. Eight other schools no longer face consequences under No Child Left Behind after making adequate yearly progress for two consecutive years.

The 2011-2012 targets for language arts and math proficiency were 82.88 percent and 74.57 percent, respectively. The other targets were a 95 percent participation rate in state-required

assessments, an 85 percent attendance rate (for schools that do not serve grade 12), and an 85 percent graduation rate (for schools serving grade 12).

For the second year in a row, a five-year graduation rate was considered for each school that did not meet the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate. If schools did not meet the 85 percent target for either the four-year or five-year graduation rates, they could still meet the target by showing improvement of either two percentage points for the four-year rate or three percentage points for the five-year rate.

A total of 235 schools were required to report graduation rates for AYP. Of those, 184 (78.3 percent) schools met the target. Of the 184 schools, 114 (62 percent) met the four-year rate either by exceeding 85 percent or by improving by at least two percentage points. The remaining 70 schools (38 percent) met by the five-year rate, either by exceeding 85 percent or by improving by at least three percentage points.

State assessment results

Alaska students take the state's standards-based assessments in reading, writing and mathematics in grades 3 through 10, and science in grades 4, 8 and 10.

In the reading assessment administered in spring 2012, the percentage of students who scored proficient or advanced ranged from a high of 83.6 percent in grade 9 to a low of 77.1 percent in grade 4.

In the writing assessment, the percentage of students who scored proficient or advanced ranged from a high of 76.6 percent in grade 4 to a low of 70.9 percent in grade 6.

In the mathematics assessment, the percentage of students who scored proficient or advanced ranged from a high of 74.5 percent in grade 3 to a low of 61.0 percent in grade 10.

Overall, taking all assessed students statewide, 80.1 percent scored proficient or advanced in reading; 74.2 percent proficient or advanced in writing; and 68.6 percent proficient or advanced in math.

In the science assessment, the percentage of students who scored proficient or advanced ranged from a high of 62.8 percent in grade 10 to a low of 49.9 percent in grade 4.

In the 2012 Alaska High School Graduation Qualifying Examination, 84.2 percent of 10th-graders, taking the test for the first time, passed the reading portion; 74.4 percent passed the writing portion; and 77.5 percent passed the mathematics portion.

Of the 11th-graders re-taking the test in 2012, 48.4 percent passed the reading portion; 42.5 percent passed the writing portion; and 39.2 percent passed the mathematics portion.

Of the 12th-graders re-taking the test in 2012, 42.5 percent passed the reading portion; 37.1 percent passed the writing portion; and 34.7 percent passed the mathematics portion.

National Assessment of Educational Progress

Every two years the U.S. Department of Education, through the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), tests large samples of 4th-graders and 8th-graders in each state in reading and mathematics, including about half of Alaska's students in those grades.

A science test is given to a much smaller sample of 8th-graders, including about a fifth of Alaska's 8th-graders.

Alaska has participated in the reading and math tests since 2003 and in the science test since 2011. The most recent NAEP assessments were in 2011.

Students do not receive reports of their scores. Scores are reported only in the aggregate, for student populations as a whole and the subgroups of ethnicity, income, disability status, and English language learners. Scores are reported by state and a nationwide total.

NAEP's state and nationwide results are presented as average scores on a scale of 000 to 500. The "scale scores" fall into four categories of achievement as defined by NAEP: advanced, proficient, basic, and below basic. Thus NAEP also reports the percentage of students who fall within those categories of achievement.

In general, NAEP's definition of proficiency is more rigorous than that of many states, including Alaska. In NAEP, "basic" refers to partial mastery of the subject. "Proficient" refers to competency in challenging material. "Advanced" is superior performance.

To put the scores in context: In the highest-scoring state, Massachusetts, 46 percent to 58 percent of students scored proficient on the various NAEP tests in 2011. Similarly, researchers say that in the nations that score highest on international assessments, approximately 46 percent to 58 percent of their students would score proficient on assessments comparable to the NAEP.

The following data, comparing Alaska results to the national average, are from the 2011 tests. The phrase "significantly lower" refers to statistical significance. It does not mean that Alaska's scores were a great deal lower than other states' scores.

Math

Alaska 4th grade: 78% basic or above; 37% proficient or above; 6% advanced.

Nation 4th grade: 82% basic or above; 40% proficient or above; 7% advanced.

Alaska's average scale score is 236, which is significantly lower than 33 states. The national average is 240.

Alaska 8th grade: 74% basic or above; 35% proficient or above; 7% advanced.

Nation 8th grade: 73% basic or above; 35% proficient or above; 8% advanced.

Alaska's average scale score is 283, which is significantly lower than 22 states. The national average is 283.

Reading

Alaska 4th grade: 56% basic or above; 26% proficient or above; 5% advanced.

Nation 4th grade: 67% basic or above; 34% proficient or above; 8% advanced.

Alaska's average scale score is 208, which is significantly lower than 46 states. The national average is 220.

Alaska 8th grade: 73% basic or above; 31% proficient or above; 3% advanced.

Nation 8th grade: 76% basic or above; 34% proficient or above; 3% advanced.

Alaska's average scale score is 261, which is significantly lower than 33 states. The national average is 264.

Science

Alaska 8th grade: 68% basic or above; 34% proficient or above; 1% advanced.

Nation 8th grade: 65% basic or above; 32% proficient or above; 2% advanced.

Alaska's average scale score is 153, which is significantly lower than 25 states. The national average is 151.

NAEP also released data specifically about vocabulary scores in the 2011 reading tests.

In the 4th grade, Alaska's average scale score is 207, which is significantly lower than 44 states.

The national average is 217. In the 8th grade, Alaska's average scale score is 263, which is significantly lower than 24 states. The national average is 263.

WorkKeys assessments

The state requires 11th-graders to take WorkKeys assessments in reading for information, applied mathematics, and locating information (in visual formats). The assessments were developed by ACT, the nonprofit education company that also produces college-preparation tests.

Students who earn a combined score of at least 13, with no score lower than 4, have met the assessment requirement for an Alaska Performance Scholarship for a postsecondary certificate program, such as in the trades. In addition, students who score well receive a nationally recognized career-readiness certificate in one of four categories: bronze, silver, gold, and platinum.

A total of 8,573 students in the high school Class of 2013 took the WorkKeys tests in the 2011-2012 school year. Of those students, 7,257 (84.6 percent) earned a career-readiness certificate: bronze, 2,089 (24.4 percent of test-takers); silver 4,014 (46.8 percent); gold, 1,148 (13.4 percent); and platinum, 6, (0.1 percent).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The State Board believes that implementing the new English and math standards and educator-evaluation regulations will lead to improved student performance.

To further improve student performance, the State Board recommends passage of the Governor's K-12 education budget, which includes a graduation initiative, more funding for distance learning, and funding to identify low-performing readers in grades kindergarten through 3.

Graduation

With the goal of reaching a 90 percent graduation rate by 2020, the state would implement a Jobs for Alaska's Graduates program, a model used successfully in 33 states. State funding of \$800,000 would allow a graduation specialist in each of eight schools to serve 35 to 45 at-risk students daily for one year. The specialists would offer a comprehensive program of services, including classroom instruction, mentoring, tutoring, work-based learning, and leadership development. The goals are to remove barriers to high school graduation and prepare students for postsecondary training or jobs. The statewide program is a partnership of EED, the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, and Anchorage United for Youth.

Distance learning

The Governor's budget increases funds for distance learning in three components:

- Alaska's Learning Network, a distance-delivery consortium of all of the school districts and EED, at \$1.1 million. AKLN offers rigorous courses that help students fulfill the requirements for a college-ready/career-ready education and the Alaska Performance Scholarship.
- Broadband support for the Alaska Online With Libraries (OWL) program at \$761,800 and Live Homework Help at \$138,200. OWL provides local libraries with bandwidth, enriching their services to Alaskans. Live Homework Help provides students at all grade levels with live online tutors. In 2012, Alaskans logged 5,359 hours of tutoring.
- A partnership, with a state investment that grows over four years, with the Association of Alaska School Boards to place digital devices in the hands of all of Alaska's public school students. In Year 1 the state would provide \$3.96 million, or 60% of the total cost for that year. Districts would provide the other 40%.

Reading skills

The Governor's budget would fund \$320,000 for grants to all school districts to identify students in grades K-3 who are falling behind in their reading skills. The assessments are short and inexpensive. The grant would provide a systematic basis for knowing which students need intervention. This investment will support the department's work to fully implement the Alaska State Literacy Blueprint, which was approved by the State Board in 2011.