

State Board of Education and Early Development  
Report to the Alaska State Legislature

January 2019



## **State Board of Education and Early Development**

James Fields, Chair

Barbara Thompson, First Vice-Chair

Rebecca Himschoot, Second Vice-Chair

Dr. Keith Hamilton

Sandra Kowalski

Tiffany Scott

Lorri Van Diest

Tanis Lorrington, student advisor

LTC Spencer Van Meter, military advisor

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## **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.

### **AS 14.07.168. Report to the legislature**

Not later than the 30<sup>th</sup> legislative day of each regular session of the legislature, the board shall prepare and present in person to the legislative committees having jurisdiction over education an annual report that describes the efforts of the board to develop, maintain, and continuously improve a comprehensive quality public education system, as provided for under the bylaws of the board. The report must include:

- (1) a summary of the resolves and rationales provided in support of policy decisions made under AS 14.03.015;
- (2) program and curriculum changes made, discussed, or recommended in meetings held under AS 14.07.125;
- (3) additional information relevant to efforts made to improve and maintain the public education system.

## **Mission Statement for Public Education in Alaska**

An excellent education for every student every day.

## **Vision Statement for Public Education in Alaska (AS 14.03.015)**

All students will succeed in their education and work, shape worthwhile and satisfying lives for themselves, exemplify the best values of society, and be effective in improving the character and quality of the world about them.

## **Strategic Priorities of the State Board of Education and Early Development**

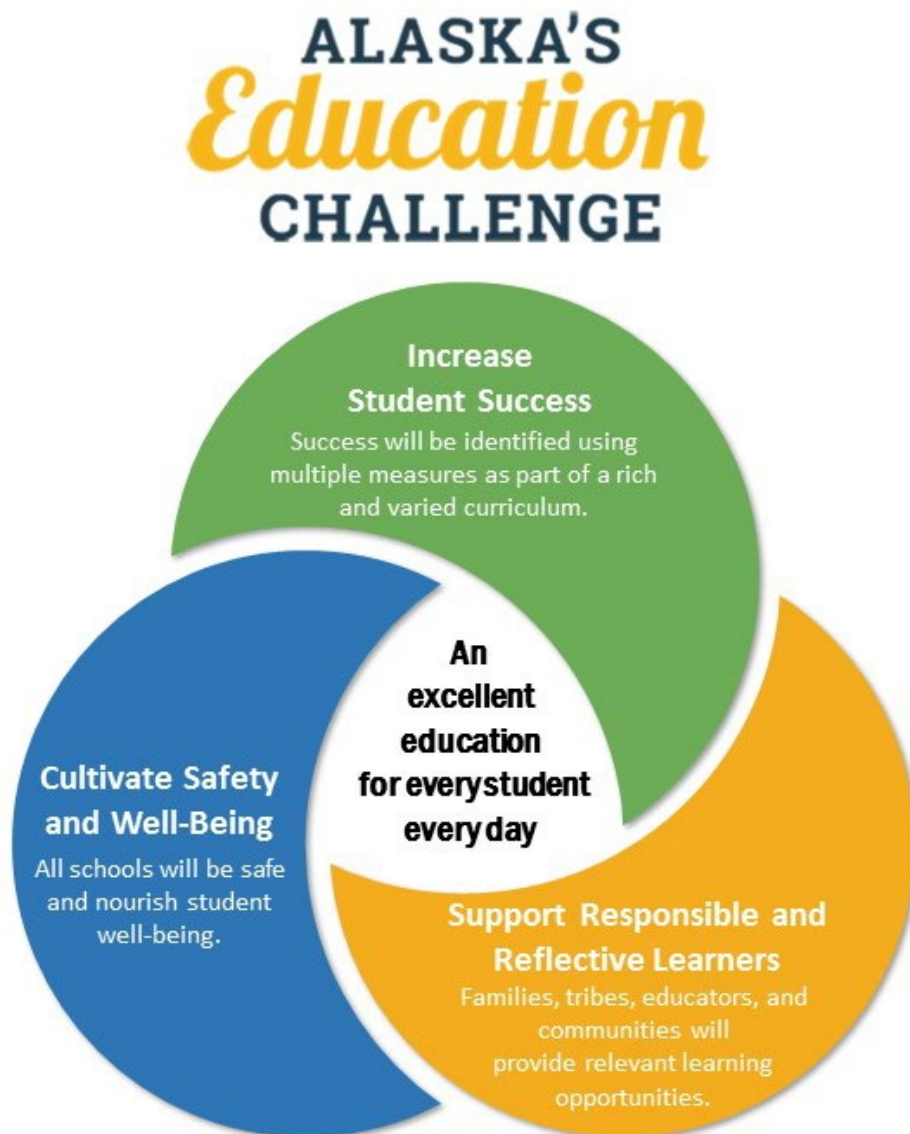
- Amplify student learning
- Inspire tribal and community ownership of educational excellence
- Modernize the education system
- Ensure excellent educators
- Promote safety and well-being

## **Measurable Goals for Public Education in Alaska**

- Support all students to read at grade level by the end of 3rd grade;
- Increase career, technical, and culturally relevant education to meet student and workforce needs;
- Close the achievement gap by ensuring equitable educational rigor and resources;
- Prepare, attract, and retain effective education professionals; and
- Improve the safety and well-being of students through school partnerships with families, communities, and tribes.

## Shared Commitments

Alaska's Education Challenge brought Alaskans together to think deeply about the education system. Through their recommendations and the development of Alaska's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) state plan, three shared commitments to Alaska's students emerged. The mission, vision, and priorities will guide the board and the department's actions as we remain committed to the Alaska's Education Challenge vision of (1) increasing student success, (2) cultivating safety and well-being, and (3) supporting responsible and reflective learners.



## REGULATIONS AND OTHER BOARD ACTIONS

In January, the State Board and Commissioner Johnson held a press availability event in Juneau to discuss progress on Alaska's Education Challenge. They were joined by Governor Bill Walker, Lieutenant Governor Byron Mallott, and representatives from the Alaska's Education Challenge committees and partner organizations.

In March, the State Board approved a regulation to create a world language expert limited teacher certificate and amended regulations regarding the Uniform Chart of Accounts for school districts.

The creation of a world language expert limited teacher certificate helps fulfill a need for increased staffing in the growing number of language immersion classrooms across the state. Districts would only be allowed to employ individuals holding this certificate to teach in the subject areas that the individual has earned an endorsement. An individual holding this certificate would only be allowed to provide instruction in the language of expertise.

The approved amendments to regulations regarding the Uniform Chart of Accounts clarify how to report technology related activities and expenditures for consistency among districts. The amendments also bring the account codes and definitions into conformity with Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) statements.

In May, the State Board adopted regulations implementing Alaska's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan and approved five measurable goals for Alaska's Education Challenge.

The adopted regulations were required to implement accountability and school support and improvement systems for schools and districts in Alaska, as specified in ESSA and Alaska's state plan. Alaska's ESSA plan was approved by the U.S. Department of Education on May 16, 2018.

The five measurable goals for Alaska's Education Challenge were developed in partnership with key education association leaders. The five measurable goals are:

- 1) Support all students to read at grade level by the end of 3rd grade;
- 2) Increase career, technical, and culturally relevant education to meet student and workforce needs;
- 3) Close the achievement gap by ensuring equitable educational rigor and resources;
- 4) Prepare, attract, and retain effective education professionals;
- 5) Improve the safety and well-being of students through school partnerships with families, communities, and tribes.

In July, the State Board adopted regulations amending the assessment achievement level scores on the Performance Evaluation for Alaska's Schools (PEAKS) test in grade 9 mathematics. Revised score ranges on the achievement levels for grade 9 mathematics were needed as the test was revised to emphasize Algebra 1 concepts.



In September, the State Board amended the Standards for State Accreditation of Schools by adopting the new AdvancED Performance Standards for Schools. The State Board also approved the Statewide English as a Second Language Acquisition, Bilingual, and Literacy Education (SLABEL) endorsement program and approved appointments to the Alaska Museum Collections Advisory Committee (MCAC).

In December, the State Board approved Discovery Peak Charter School's application in the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District for a period of ten years, terminating on July 1, 2029.

### **New Officers, Members, and Staff**

In March, three new board members and Chair Fields were sworn into office. Governor Bill Walker appointed to the State Board Lorri Van Diest of Palmer, Sandy Kowalski of Fairbanks, and Tiffany Scott of Kotzebue, and reappointed James Fields of Glennallen.

Ms. Van Diest was appointed January 29 to fill the seat for the Third Judicial District, replacing John Harmon, who resigned. Ms. Van Diest's term expires March 1, 2020. Ms. Van Diest is a licensed professional counselor and retired educator and school counselor from the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District. She holds a Master of Science degree in guidance and counseling from Oregon State University and a Bachelor of Science degree in mathematics from Seattle Pacific University.

Ms. Kowalski was appointed March 1 to fill the seat for the Fourth Judicial District, replacing Sue Hull, whose term expired. Ms. Kowalski's term expires March 1, 2023. Ms. Kowalski currently serves as the Director of Indigenous Programs for the Office of Rural Community and Native Education at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. She holds a Master of Science degree in educational leadership from National University, and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Iñupiaq language and a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from the University of Alaska Fairbanks. She previously served as the Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education in the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District.

Ms. Scott was appointed March 2 to fill the seat for the Second Judicial District, replacing Kenneth Gallahorn, who resigned. Ms. Scott's term expires March 1, 2019. Ms. Scott is employed by the Maniilaq Health Center as a registered nurse in the emergency department. She holds an associate of applied science degree in nursing from the University of Alaska Anchorage and a bachelor of liberal arts degree in extension studies from Harvard University. Ms. Scott is a former member of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School Board.

Mr. Fields was reappointed March 1, 2018 to fill the seat for the regional educational attendance areas, the school districts in the unorganized borough. Mr. Field's term expires March 1, 2023. Mr. Fields owns The Hub of Alaska and Copper Valley IGA as well as other

buildings in the Glennallen area, and serves as the head high school boys basketball coach and is a member of the Copper River School Board.

In May, State Board members elected James Fields as Chair, Barbara Thompson as First Vice-Chair, and Rebecca Himschoot as Second Vice-Chair.

In July, Tanis Lorring of Soldotna High School began her one-year term as student advisor. The board chooses the student advisor from several students nominated by the Alaska Association of Student Governments.

## **SIGNIFICANT STEPS**

### **Assessments**

Alaska successfully administered the statewide English language arts, math, and science assessments during the 2017-18 school year.

Performance Evaluation for Alaska's Schools (PEAKS) is Alaska's statewide summative assessment, and was administered to students in grades three through nine during the 2017-18 school year. The Alaska Science Assessment is Alaska's statewide summative assessment for Science and was administered to grades 4, 8 and 10. In spring 2018, approximately 78,635 students participated in the second administration of PEAKS and the Alaska Science Assessment. Nearly three quarters of all students taking these assessments took the computer-based version.

In July 2017, the State Board adopted regulations that allow the state flexibility to assess students annually in English language arts and mathematics in grades three through eight and in one or more years, as determined by the commissioner, in grades nine through twelve. PEAKS was administered to students in grades three through nine in spring 2018. In July of 2018, new cut scores for the grade 9 assessment were adopted by the SBOE.

PEAKS is not a pass/fail assessment. Students score on a scale that is divided into four levels of achievement: advanced, proficient, below proficient, and far below proficient.

Statewide, results varied from grade to grade. In English language arts, approximately 33 percent to 47 percent of students were proficient on PEAKS. In mathematics, approximately 22 percent to 48 percent of students were proficient on PEAKS. In science, approximately 44 percent to 53 percent of students were proficient on the Alaska Science Assessment. Overall 42 percent of students were proficient in English language arts, 37 percent of students were proficient in mathematics, and 47 percent were proficient in science.

Neither PEAKS nor Alaska Science Assessment are high-stakes assessments for students. Results do not affect classroom grades, grade advancement, or graduation. Each of the statewide assessments are just one important piece of a balanced assessment system.

The assessment provides important information to parents, educators, policy makers, communities, and businesses about how Alaska's schools and districts are performing. Statewide, district, school, and subgroup level results from the PEAKS assessment and the Alaska Science Assessment are available online at [2018 PEAKS Assessment Results](#). Resources to help the public understand PEAKS are available at [PEAKS Assessment Resources](#).

### Looking Ahead

The assessment team will focus efforts on assessment literacy. This work will support districts, schools, and educators understanding of the variety of state and local assessments administered each year. Coordinated efforts with school improvement and the accountability teams will provide a variety of perspectives that will support work with standards and instruction.

## **Alaska's Education Challenge**

In September 2016, the State Board established five strategic priorities aimed at improving public education for all students in Alaska. Following the State Board's initial actions, then-Governor Walker, in his 2017 State of the State address, spoke of the need to improve public education in Alaska. Governor Walker's comments launched the current effort to craft changes in our education system that will address student achievement gaps and increase graduation rates by making sure that every student across the state has equitable opportunity to learn and succeed.

Following Governor Walker's address, DEED released a public survey in February 2017 asking Alaskans to share their priorities for public education reform. Nearly 1,400 Alaskans in 109 communities submitted over 18,000 ideas for topics to be considered during Alaska's Education Challenge. From April to October 2017, [DEED gathered nearly 100 Alaskans from all corners of the state](#) representing diverse backgrounds, interests, and experiences to work collaboratively and focus their efforts on developing up to three recommendations for each of the five strategic priorities set by the State Board. The State Board reviewed and accepted all 13 committee recommendations. Governor Walker subsequently accepted the recommendations, and a [final report](#) was submitted to the Alaska Legislature in January 2018.

In January 2018, the State Board, Commissioner Johnson, Governor Walker, Lt. Governor Mallott, commissioners, legislators, and representatives from the five committees and partner organizations held a [press availability event](#) and provided an overview of the work completed to date and shared next steps.

Since then, DEED has continued working with partner organizations to develop a plan to meet Alaska’s educational challenges by focusing the work around three components and establishing specific goals that are most likely to improve student outcomes.

The three components are:

1. A call to action: Shared Commitments
  - Increase Student Success
  - Support Responsible & Reflective Learners
  - Cultivate Safety & Well-Being
2. A focus of efforts: Measurable Goals
  - Support all students to read at grade level by the end of 3rd grade;
  - Increase career, technical, and culturally relevant education to meet student and workforce needs;
  - Close the achievement gap by ensuring equitable educational rigor and resources;
  - Prepare, attract, and retain effective education professionals;
  - Improve the safety and well-being of students through school partnerships with families, communities, and tribes.
3. A prioritization of change: Targeted Strategies
  - 13 committee recommendations
  - Additional strategies in Alaska’s Every Student Succeeds Act plan

In May 2018, Commissioner Johnson presented DEED’s progress to the State Board, specifically highlighting the five measurable goals. The State Board subsequently voted to approve the goals. See Appendix B to read DEED’s strategic plan for meeting Alaska’s Education Challenge.

## **School Safety Program**

Unfortunately, 2018 has been a year marked by a series of acts of school violence, including school shootings that resulted in the loss of life. These tragic events have served as a national catalyst to examine efforts that strengthen both school crisis preparedness and other school safety programming that bolster safety like positive school climate efforts, increased provision of school based-mental and physical health services, and enhanced social emotion learning. In Alaska, DEED has been methodically improving its school safety supports to districts for years through a series of federal grants it secured to provide state of the art school crisis response training to all interested districts in Alaska and to expand student mental health supports. It also established Cultivating School Safety and Well-Being as one of its three foundational educational commitments within Alaska’s Education Challenge, which will overlay and inform all of DEED’s work for years to come.

Despite these broad based efforts, DEED was compelled to revisit its school safety program this year and develop an action plan to further strengthen school safety. These efforts were driven by the understanding that the only expectation parents have for public education that is

greater than that it provide every student with an excellent education every day is that it keep their children safe at school each and every day.

### **Highlights of Action Steps from DEED’s School Safety Action Plan**

- School Safety and Well-Being Summit

DEED hosted its first dedicated statewide School Safety & Well-Being Summit in more than 20 years in Anchorage on September 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018. The summit brought together school safety leadership from every district as well as key educational stakeholders from other agencies to acquire new best practices and to share effective existing school safety practices with an emphasis on restorative disciplinary practices, positive school climate, school crisis preparedness, and trauma informed schools.

- School Safety Gap Analysis

DEED conducted a second statewide School Safety Gap Analysis of school safety strengths and needs. This analysis replicates a school safety gap analysis initially conducted by the department in 2013. The gap analysis captures information specific to districts’:

- 1) ability to establish and maintain a single point of entry and exit at each school as well as the capacity to control and monitor access in and out through that single point;
- 2) school safety hardware needs (such as Public Announcement Systems, phone systems, handheld radios, classroom door locks, buzz-in systems, centralized door lock systems, security cameras, blinds for classroom windows);
- 3) quality of both the current school crisis response plans in place as well as the adequacy of the staff training on the plans; and
- 4) current level of training on programs/practices/policies that promote positive school climate and support students who may have emergent mental health issues.

The results of the gap analysis provide vital information to DEED that will inform its school safety programming in the coming years and also provide essential information for other educational stakeholders to determine the most practical and needed measures to strengthen school safety.

- Alaska’s Education Challenge

Alaska’s Education Challenge established three priority strategies to advance its commitment to “Cultivate Safety and Well-Being”. They include increasing the implementation of trauma-engaged practices in schools, increasing positive school climate, and increasing direct access to school-based nursing and counseling services for all students. DEED has partnered with the Council of Chief State School Officers and Education Northwest’s Comprehensive Center to create formal goals and action steps to implement these priority strategies between now and 2025. These steps are all essential

components of comprehensive school safety and create a call to action for all Alaskans to assume an important role in creating and maintaining safe schools.

- Trauma Engaged Schools Framework

DEED has led an interagency cooperative to develop *Transforming Schools: A Framework for Trauma-Engaged Practice in Alaska*. This innovative framework is a tool to use to deepen understanding of trauma, trauma's impact on development, behavior, and learning, social and emotional supports, trauma-informed school environments, and key roles for adults in creating supportive educational environments for students. The tool aims to help schools and communities translate this understanding into action through policies and practices that support the whole child. This tool was created for all Alaskans—educators, parents, and community members who want to be involved in leading their schools to trauma-engaged change. It is anticipated the framework will be available for release in early 2019.

- ACEs/Trauma Informed Schools eLearning Courses

DEED continued its development of distance-delivered trainings to assist districts with becoming trauma informed. DEED provides these trainings to districts at no cost and now serves more than 21,000 school district employees. The most heavily trafficked courses DEED offers are on school health and safety topics. DEED's trauma informed schools course offerings presently include two courses:

- *Overcoming ACEs in Alaska Schools*. This first course defines adverse childhood experiences and explains how they affect children's brains, learning, and behavior.
- *Trauma Sensitive Schools*: The second course provides insight into the paradigm shift schools undergo as they become better equipped to support students' responses to traumatic experiences and the impact they may have on learning and behavior.

In addition to these introductory course, DEED has three more trauma informed focused courses planned for production. *Trauma Engaged and Practicing Schools*, is a course that builds on the first two courses and provides a roadmap to assist districts seeking a broader scale implementation of trauma informed practices. This course will highlight the steps necessary to become trauma-engaged on a school-wide or even a district-wide basis. The course is slated for release later this fall.

Finally, DEED intends to create two additional courses *Trauma Engaged Educators Tools and Techniques* and *Trauma Engaged Counselors Tools and Techniques* in 2019. These courses will provide educators and counselors with hands on tools and techniques for use in the classroom and other school settings.

## Implementing the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

In December 2015, the president signed into law the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which is authorized for four years. ESSA replaces the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 (NCLB) and the Obama administration's waiver program under NCLB.

ESSA maintained some provisions of NCLB, but intentionally provided more flexibility and authority to the states. No longer is a school required to be designated for improvement simply by missing one academic achievement target for one subgroup of students in a single year. ESSA requires states to develop plans that address standards, assessments, school and district accountability, and support for struggling schools, giving states more flexibility in the process of how to hold schools accountable and how to provide support to schools in the greatest need of support.

On December 15, 2017, the U.S. Department of Education (U.S. ED) provided feedback based on its initial review of Alaska's plan that was submitted by DEED on September 18, 2017.

On February 28, 2018, DEED submitted revisions to U.S. ED that addressed the details requested and clarified the state's plan and proposed accountability system.

On May 16, 2018, Alaska's plan to implement ESSA was approved by U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos. Approval of the state plan was required for Alaska to continue to receive approximately \$80 million annually in funding from the federal government to support the state's public schools.

Highlights of Alaska's ESSA plan include:

- Setting goals for each school and district to reduce the number of non-proficient students by half in ten years, for all student groups.
- Providing flexibility for the State and districts to target strategies for school improvement based on the unique needs of each school.
- Measuring and rewarding both academic performance and growth for all students.
- Reporting rates of chronic student absenteeism to encourage statewide discussions about its impacts on student learning.
- Reporting per-pupil spending at the school and district level to increase financial transparency.

Comments:

*Commissioner Dr. Michael Johnson: "ESSA has provided a chance for Alaska to build on our ongoing commitment to increasing student success, supporting responsible and reflective learners, and cultivating safety and well-being. Alaska's plan includes new accountability components and establishes a more well-rounded education system – this includes prioritizing the importance of reading proficiently. We know students who read on grade level by the end of third grade are much more likely to have success in school and graduate."*

Alaska's ESSA plan went through a number of revisions as DEED staff worked with federal reviewers to clarify how the plan met ESSA's statutory requirements.

Alaska's approved plan and approval letter by U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos are available on DEED's [ESSA webpage](#).

On May 31, 2018, the State Board adopted regulations implementing Alaska's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan. The adopted regulations were required to implement accountability and school support and improvement systems for schools and districts in Alaska, as specified in ESSA and Alaska's state plan.

On October 23, 2018, DEED released 2018 school designations to the public as a part of the *System for School Success* – Alaska's new accountability system for public schools. There are three types of school designations: Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI), Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI), and Universal Support. The primary purpose of these school designations is to provide information for families, tribes, communities, educators, and policy makers to plan and support an equitable education for each student in Alaska's public school system. School designations can be viewed on [DEED's System for School Success webpage](#).



## OTHER DEPARTMENT FUNCTIONS

### **Mt. Edgecumbe High School (MEHS)**

[Mt. Edgecumbe](#) is the state-operated residential school in Sitka. The State Board serves as the MEHS board. Parents and others participate on an advisory board. In fall 2018, 442 students were accepted at MEHS. 75 percent of accepted students were from home high schools of 150 students or less. 43 percent of accepted students were from home high schools of 50 students or less. Alaska Native/American Indian students compose 90 percent of the student population. 73 percent of the students meet federal guidelines for free and reduced-price lunches. See Appendix A for a recent report on MEHS.

### **Alaska State Council on the Arts**

The [Alaska State Council on the Arts](#) supports educators, artists, community-based organizations, and statewide partners in delivery of arts education in schools and communities. The council awards funding to Alaskan schools, districts, educators, and organizations in several categories. Other grants to communities also serve students through school outreach and education programs provided by Alaskan arts and culture organizations.

### **The Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums (LAM)**

The [Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums](#) offers library and information services to state agencies and the Legislature, provides for the orderly management of current state records, preserves non-current public records of permanent value for study and research, and operates the state museums.

Additionally, LAM provides a range of services that benefit lifelong learners and K-12 and postsecondary students. Examples are:

- [Hands-on Loan Program](#): As part of LAM's outreach to students in rural areas across the state, the Sheldon Jackson Museum maintains a collection loan program for schools, libraries, and museums in Alaska.
- [Live Homework Help](#) provides live tutoring for students in grades four to early college, seven days a week, from noon to 2 a.m. Use has grown exponentially in the past several years.
- [Alaska's Digital Archives](#) shares historical Alaskan videos, photographs, and documents with students and researchers.
- [Alaska's Statewide Library Electronic Doorway \(SLED\) Databases](#) and [Digital Library](#) contain hundreds of full-text online books, magazines, newspapers, and other research resources targeted to elementary, middle school, high school, and college students' academic needs.

- Through [OWL \(Online with Libraries\)](#), nearly 100 rural libraries have high-speed internet access, including videoconferencing.

### **Professional Teaching Practices Commission (PTPC)**

The [Alaska Professional Teaching Practices Commission](#) governs educators' ethical and professional standards and their compliance with state law and contractual obligations. It is funded by certificate holders. The commission reports by fiscal year. In fiscal year 2018, it accepted 60 cases. 18 educators were sanctioned. Sanctions vary from warnings to suspensions and revocations of certificates. One of the final orders was related to sexual harassment of staff, two for sexual misconduct with students, two for fraudulent certificates/applications, seven for contract violations, and six for professional misconduct. View the FY2018 Annual Report at [2018 PTPC Annual Report](#).

# SCHOOL AND STUDENT DATA

## Graduation and Dropout Rates

All states report a four-year graduation rate for cohorts of students. Alaska has reported this data since the 2010-2011 school year. A student who entered 9<sup>th</sup> grade in the 2014-2015 school year would be a member of the 2018 cohort. Cohort groups include students who transfer into an Alaska public school.

The graduation rate is calculated as the number of graduates in the cohort who receive a regular diploma by June 30, divided by the number of all students assigned to the cohort.

Year	4-yr. graduation rate	Graduate count*
2011	68.0%	8,064
2012	69.4%	7,987
2013	71.8%	7,795
2014	71.2%	7,672
2015	75.6%	8,251
2016	76.1%	8,108
2017	78.2%	8,385
2018	78.5%	8,454

\*Graduate count is the number of students who graduated with a regular diploma during the school year (July 1-June 30). This count includes all students who graduate during the school year, regardless of cohort year.

**In 2018, the preliminary five-year graduation rate was 82.9%.** This refers to a cohort of students who were 9<sup>th</sup>-graders five school years previously. Many of the students graduated in four years, but others needed all or part of a fifth year.

Dropout rates are calculated by taking the total number of students in grades 7-12 who drop out of public school during the school year and dividing by the October 1 enrollment count for all students in grades 7-12.

Preliminary information for the 2017-2018 school year shows a grade 7-12 dropout rate of 3.1% compared to 3.5% in 2016-2017. The dropout rate has gradually declined from 6.0% in 2004-2005 to its current level.

## National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

Every two years the U.S. Department of Education, through the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), tests large samples of 4<sup>th</sup>-graders and 8<sup>th</sup>-graders in each state (plus the District of Columbia and Department of Defense schools) in reading and mathematics. The most recent NAEP results were released in 2017.

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 achievement categories.

NAEP's definition of proficiency is rigorous. In NAEP, *basic* refers to partial mastery of the subject. *Proficient* refers to competency in challenging material, including knowledge, application, and analytical skills. *Advanced* is superior performance.

- In the highest-scoring state, 51% of its students scored proficient or advanced in 4<sup>th</sup>-grade reading;
- In the highest-scoring state, 49% of its students scored proficient or advanced in 8<sup>th</sup>-grade reading;
- In the highest-scoring state, 53% of its students scored proficient or advanced in 4<sup>th</sup>-grade math; and
- In the highest-scoring state, 50% of its students scored proficient or advanced in 8<sup>th</sup>-grade math.

NAEP summarizes a state's results by the number of states (plus D.C. and Department of Defense schools) it has scored *lower than*, *statistically the same as*, and *higher than*.

- In 4<sup>th</sup> grade math, Alaska scored lower than 44 states, statistically the same as 7 states, and higher than 1 state.
- In 8<sup>th</sup> grade math, Alaska scored lower than 33 states, statistically the same as 11 states, and higher than 8 states.
- In 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading, Alaska scored lower than 50 states, statistically the same as 1 state, and higher than 1 state.
- In 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading, Alaska scored lower than 41 states, statistically the same as 9 states, and higher than 1 state.

The following data, comparing Alaska results to the national average, are from results released in 2017. Alaska's performance on the NAEP is poor. It is similar to the national average because that also is poor. Some states perform notably better than Alaska and the national average. The department has cited Alaska's performance on NAEP as one indication of the need to implement higher standards in English language arts and math.

### Math

Alaska 4<sup>th</sup> grade: 71% basic or above; 31% proficient or above; 5% advanced.  
Nation 4<sup>th</sup> grade: 79% basic or above; 40% proficient or above; 8% advanced.  
Alaska's average scale score is 230. The national average is 239.

Alaska 8<sup>th</sup> grade: 66% basic or above; 29% proficient or above; 8% advanced.  
Nation 8<sup>th</sup> grade: 69% basic or above; 34% proficient or above; 10% advanced.  
Alaska's average scale score is 277. The national average is 282.

### Reading

Alaska 4<sup>th</sup> grade: 56% basic or above; 28% proficient or above; 6% advanced.  
Nation 4<sup>th</sup> grade: 67% basic or above; 36% proficient or above; 9% advanced.  
Alaska's average scale score is 207. The national average is 221.

Alaska 8<sup>th</sup> grade: 70% basic or above; 26% proficient or above; 1% advanced.  
Nation 8<sup>th</sup> grade: 74% basic or above; 35% proficient or above; 4% advanced.  
Alaska's average scale score is 258. The national average is 265.

For more information, see <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/> and

[Alaska 2017 NAEP Results - 4th Grade Mathematics](#)

[Alaska 2017 NAEP Results - 8th Grade Mathematics](#)

[Alaska 2017 NAEP Results - 4th Grade Reading](#)

[Alaska 2017 NAEP Results - 8th Grade Reading](#)

# APPENDIX A

# Mt. Edgecumbe High School

*Explore your Talents • Discover your Dreams • Learn to Lead*

Mt. Edgecumbe High School serves all students of Alaska with a priority of providing a quality comprehensive high school program to students from small rural schools.

## **Mission:**

To provide a challenging, unique education in a residential setting that values rich cultural diversities and traditions, inspiring Alaskan students to become successful, responsible, global citizens

## **Targets:**

As part of a strategic plan, MEHS has come up with five goal areas.  
MEHS students will demonstrate accelerated or appropriate academic growth  
MEHS students will demonstrate proficiency (grade or post-secondary readiness)  
MEHS students will have a clear postsecondary plan and be prepared to pursue it  
MEHS students will demonstrate readiness for their postsecondary plan  
MEHS students will participate in activities that build healthy life skills

## **A look at the 2018 Graduates:**

### Class of 2018

100 Graduates

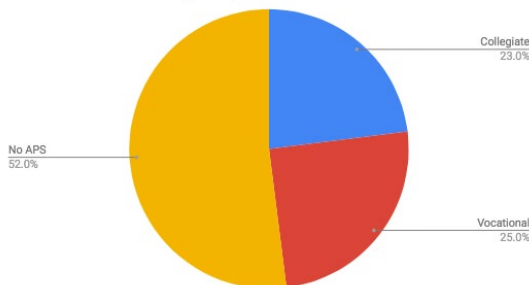
48 Graduates eligible for Alaska Performance Scholarship  
23 eligible for collegiate APS

63 Graduated with college credit  
20 Graduated with college credit in a core Math&/or English course

63 of Class of 2017 attended college fall 2017



Class of 2018 APS Eligibility



## **Students**

The students of MEHS come from every corner in the state. The current student body represents 129 different communities.

90% Alaska Native  
73% Economically Disadvantaged

About 75% of students come from schools with 150 or less high school students and

43% come from 50 student or less high schools. Nearly 15% of students are from large home schools. Every region is represented, however nearly half of the students come from Southwest Alaska, which is home to a large number of small high schools.

## **Applications:**

Each year MEHS receives more applications than capacity. This summer 358 students submitted applications, of those 229 were completed with necessary transcripts, test

scores, and educator assessments. A full review process is used and 173 new students were accepted, 120 Freshman and 53 upper classman.

MEHS has improved retention of students and reached a fall to spring retention rate of 91%. Only 14 did not return after summer, resulting in an 88% retention rate fall to fall.

### Focus on Growth

MEHS places a focus on accelerated growth. Through a school improvement process, adjustments have been made in tutoring and several intervention courses. Using the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) results, Fall 2017 to Spring 2018 average growth levels in Math and Reading place MEHS in the top 10% of schools nationally.

### Growth Indicators

It is typical for students attending Mt. Edgecumbe High School to demonstrate above average growth in a year's time compared to peers across the country (NWEA MAP).

Percent of students making more-than-average growth in 2017-18:

81% of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students in math

84% of 10<sup>th</sup> grade students in math

62% of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students in reading

68% of 10<sup>th</sup> grade students in reading

86% of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students in language usage

76% of 10<sup>th</sup> grade students in language usage



### College Going Culture

MEHS strives to give students the opportunity to choose whatever post-secondary path interests them the most. Students at MEHS take courses designed to help them be college-ready. Nearly ½ of the students are eligible for the Alaska Performance Scholarship, about 20% leave high school with college credit, and 63% of the class of

2017 enrolled in a 2 or 4 year university in the fall of 2017.

### Dorm Life

405 students live in the dorms. Dorm students participate in study time Sunday-Thursday each night and enjoy a variety of activities to participate in throughout their non-school hours. Recreational aides provide opportunities for hiking, sewing, kayaking, open gym, and a variety of other fun events.

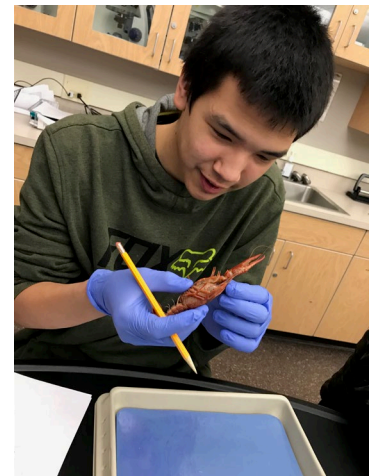
### Key School Improvement measures

MEHS is committed to a cycle of continuous improvement, here are some of the targeted initiatives for the 2018-19 school year:

Partnership with UAS and Sitka School District to pilot a Dual Credit program

School-wide upper level reading development in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade

Building College Persistent skills





## APPENDIX B



Alaska Department of Education & Early Development Strategic Plan

Meeting  
**Alaska's  
Education  
Challenge**  
Together

*Together, we will meet Alaska's education challenge by honoring our heritage, innovating for the future, and prioritizing for today's fiscal challenges*



# OUR MISSION

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**An excellent education  
for every student  
every day.**

A group of diverse children, including a young girl in a blue jacket and a boy in a grey hoodie, are looking intently at something held in a gloved hand. The background is blurred, showing other children and an adult. The scene is outdoors, possibly during a field activity or science lesson.

## OUR VISION

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**All students will succeed in their  
education and work, shape  
worthwhile and satisfying lives  
for themselves, exemplify the best  
values of society, and be effective  
in improving the character and  
quality of the world about them.**

**Alaska Statute 14.03.015**

# POSITIVE TRAJECTORIES

**Support ALL students to read at grade level by the end of third grade**

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

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

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**Prepare, attract, and retain effective education professionals**

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

# A Shared Commitment

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Alaska, in many ways, is still a frontier. We have opportunities that no other state in our country can claim. Our uniqueness is a strength, as it has been for many generations. This is not just true with resource development, natural beauty, and culture, but also with the opportunity to transform our education system into a relevant, high-achieving, and family-friendly network of learning opportunities.

A quality education system was not an afterthought in Alaska, it has always been foundational. Centuries before Alaska became a state, Alaska's indigenous people taught culture, science, language, and other elements of rich traditional knowledge. The framers of the Alaska Constitution were also clear that education was a cornerstone of statehood.

Whether it be a 1,000-mile trek on a dogsled or a 20,000-foot climb up one of the world's tallest mountains, Alaskans have a long history of facing even the most ardent challenges with determination. Clearly, educating our students is a challenge we must face. The fact is, even though many of our students are getting a good education, historically Alaska has some of the largest achievement gaps in the country. Compared to other states in America, Alaska ranks at or near the bottom in reading and math scores. We must be dissatisfied with these numbers.

This document is a call to action. Thousands of Alaskans have stepped up to answer this call and have demonstrated through Alaska's Education Challenge that they are unwilling to accept our current results. Parents, students, educators, policymakers, tribal leaders, partner organizations, and local school boards have worked together to create a shared plan for improving our system of public education. This document outlines the three primary components of that plan.

- 1. Public Commitments - An invitation to all Alaskans to support a thriving and successful public education system**
- 2. Positive Trajectories - Measurable targets that will hold us accountable to our students**
- 3. Prioritized Strategies - A menu of options for districts, schools, and families to drive improvement**

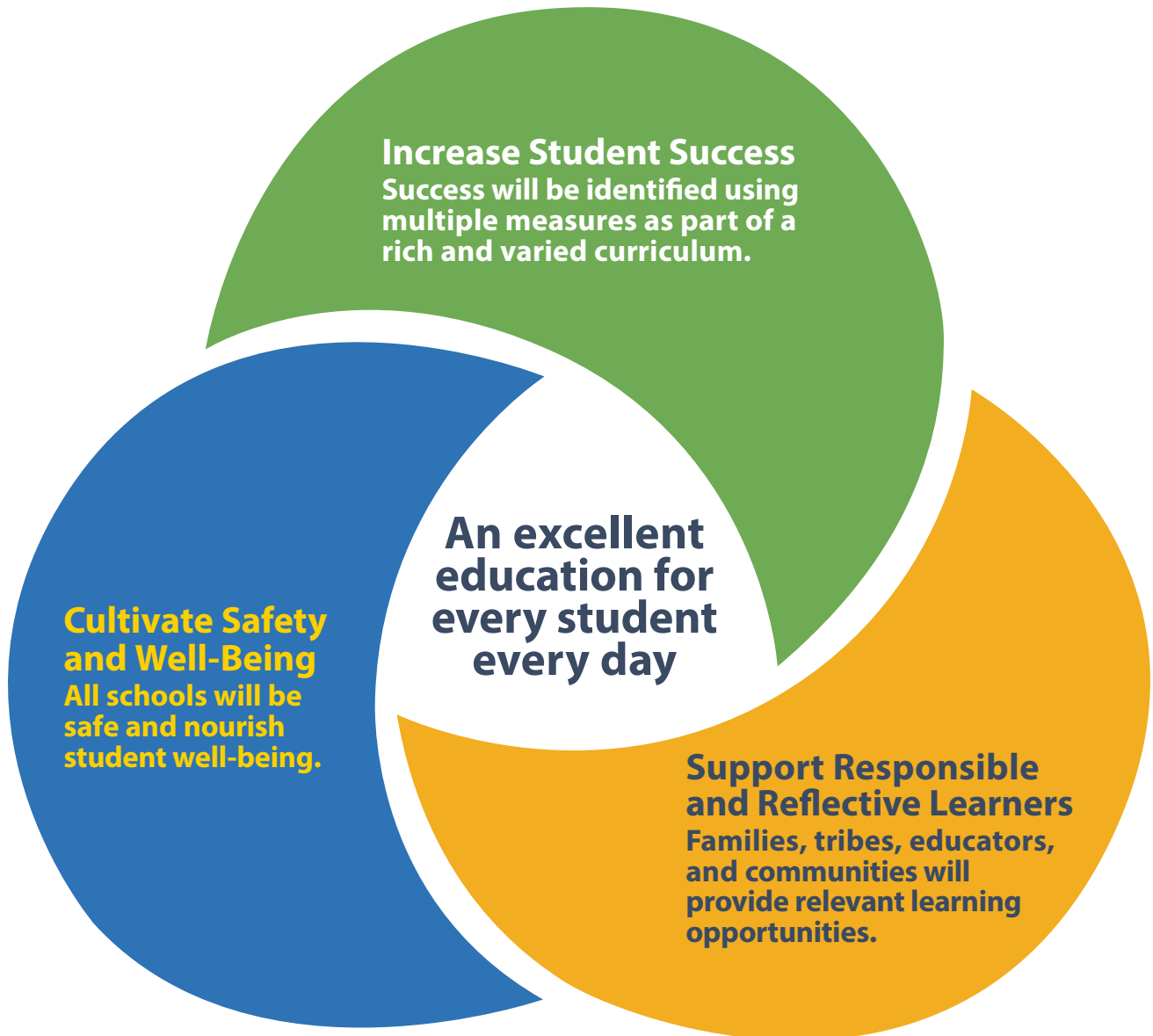
With this document we are calling on all Alaskans to meet the educational challenges of our state together. A better education system built on our values and successes will not be possible without the involvement of all Alaskans. Each community must want a great school enough to invest the hard work and take the action necessary to make it happen. We will never legislate, regulate, spend, cut, blame, promise, excuse, or wish our way to great schools. We must have the character and commitment needed to share a vision and work together to support it. I am confident The Last Frontier has what it takes to pioneer a new kind of public education system for the 21st century.

Alaskans should only be satisfied when every student has the opportunity to receive an excellent education every day.



Dr. Michael Johnson  
Commissioner

# Public Commitments





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**Children who read well at an early age are more likely than their peers to experience later academic success.**

*Photo courtesy of the Department of Education & Early Development.*

# Support ALL students to read at grade level by the end of third grade

Research suggests that school readiness at an early age is one critical strategy for improving future student outcomes and closing racial/ethnic and socioeconomic achievement gaps. Children with an early basic knowledge of reading are more likely than their peers to experience later academic success, attain higher levels of education, and secure employment. When reading ability is lacking, it is an early indicator that the student will be at risk of not making yearly progress toward successful graduation. Reading well in the early grades is particularly important for students with high levels of socioeconomic risk, such as poverty and high mobility.



**37%**

**of third-graders read at  
or above grade level**

Source: 2018 PEAKS grade 3 ELA statewide results (<https://education.alaska.gov/assessment-results/Statewide/StatewideResults?schoolYear=2017-2018&isScience=False>)



## Prioritized Strategies

*These are examples of strategies that DEED, school districts, and individuals will use to meet the trajectories.*

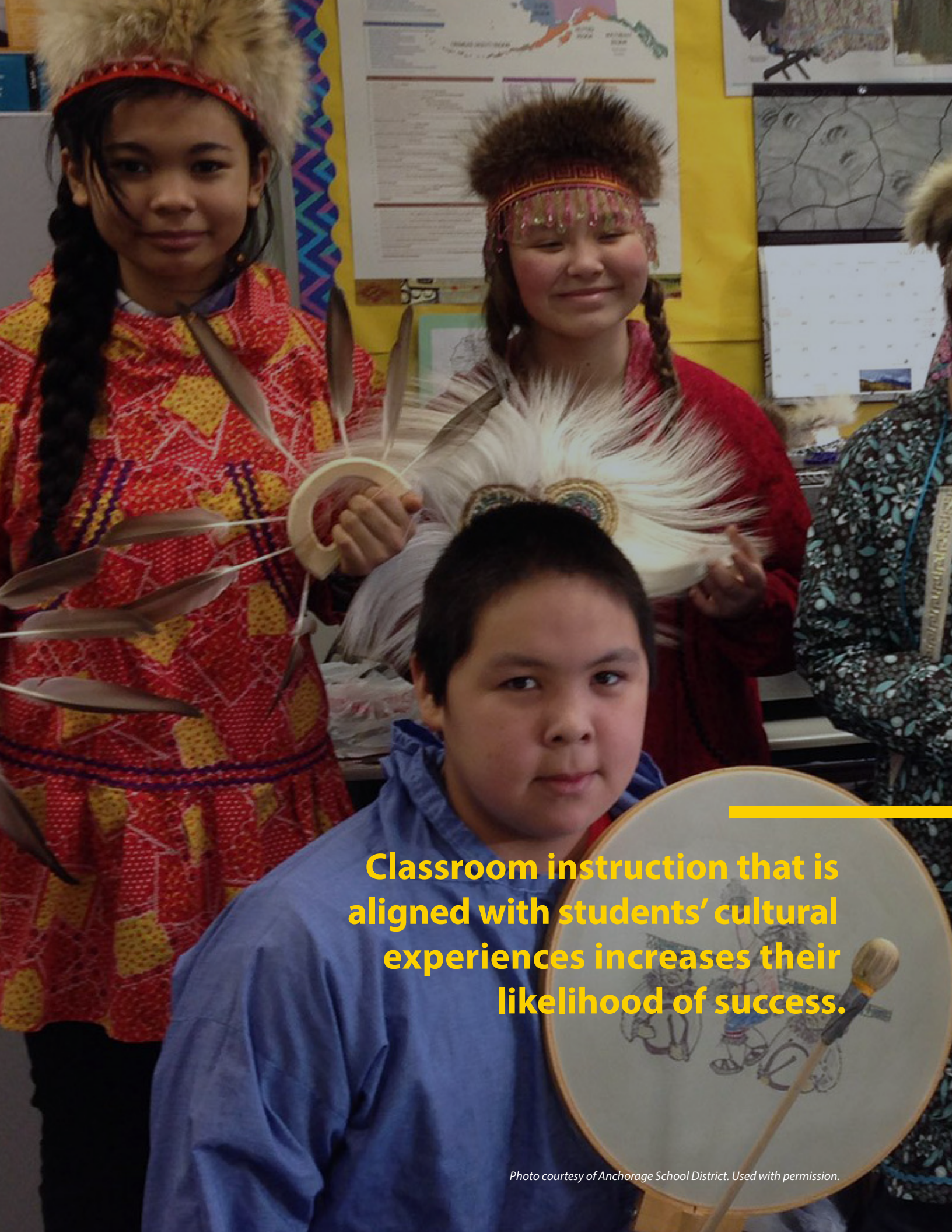
How can we achieve the goal of supporting all students to read at grade level by the end of third grade?

- Prioritize early reading in all elementary schools, including K–12 schools
- Adopt and implement effective reading programs and materials
- Incentivize districts to adopt and implement effective curriculum and teaching strategies
- Adopt 60- or 90-minute reading blocks in grades K–3 in all districts
- Encourage district review of different K–3 models, including movement through individual grades
- Create and disseminate materials for parents and community members on how they can support the development of their children’s reading skills
- Provide consistent, ongoing professional development for educators and community members on the effective use of adopted reading curricula
- Implement effective early screeners in K-3
- Train teachers on state standards and on how to align instruction to these standards
- Assist school leaders in using data and classroom walkthroughs to ensure implementation of aligned curricula
- Use valid and reliable formative assessments to monitor students’ progress
- Identify and implement effective interventions for struggling readers
- Inform and train educators, parents, and community members on how to understand reading data and on how it can be used to support students in their reading skills attainment
- Establish voluntary district reporting to the state on K–3 reading measures

# What Progress Looks Like By 2025

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- ✓ **K–3 reading measures submitted to the department will show positive trends**
- ✓ **The number of students in grades 3–5 who are proficient on the statewide English language arts assessment will double**
- ✓ **The number of students in grades 3–5 who are proficient on the statewide math assessment will double, since research suggests that reading ability is one of the best predictors of strong math skills**
- ✓ **Student absenteeism rates will be reduced by at least 20 percent**

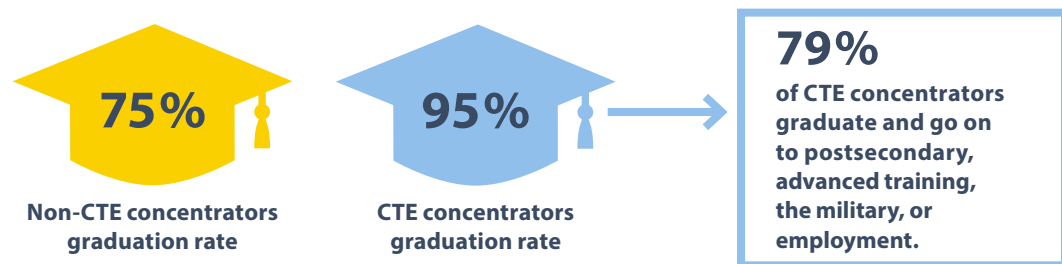


**Classroom instruction that is aligned with students' cultural experiences increases their likelihood of success.**

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

Many Alaska superintendents have a success story to share about a student who benefitted from a career and technical education (CTE) program. CTE offers an opportunity to provide students of all ages with career choices that meet local business needs and a chance to lead a productive life in one's own community.

There is evidence that classroom instruction that is aligned with students' cultural experiences increases their likelihood of success. Finding ways to engage students, with place-based learning, CTE, or STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) courses that incorporate local culture and industry, is critical in making learning more relevant for students, teachers, and the community.



*Source: 2016-17 graduation data compiled by the Department of Education & Early Development. A CTE concentrator is defined as a student who has completed at least two high school credits of CTE study, including at least one credit of content-specific, progressively rigorous study. The non-CTE graduation rate is a subset of the overall four-year state graduation rate minus CTE concentrator graduates; therefore, this number will differ from the overall statewide graduation rate for the same time period.*

## Prioritized Strategies

*These are examples of strategies that DEED, school districts, and individuals will use to meet the trajectories.*

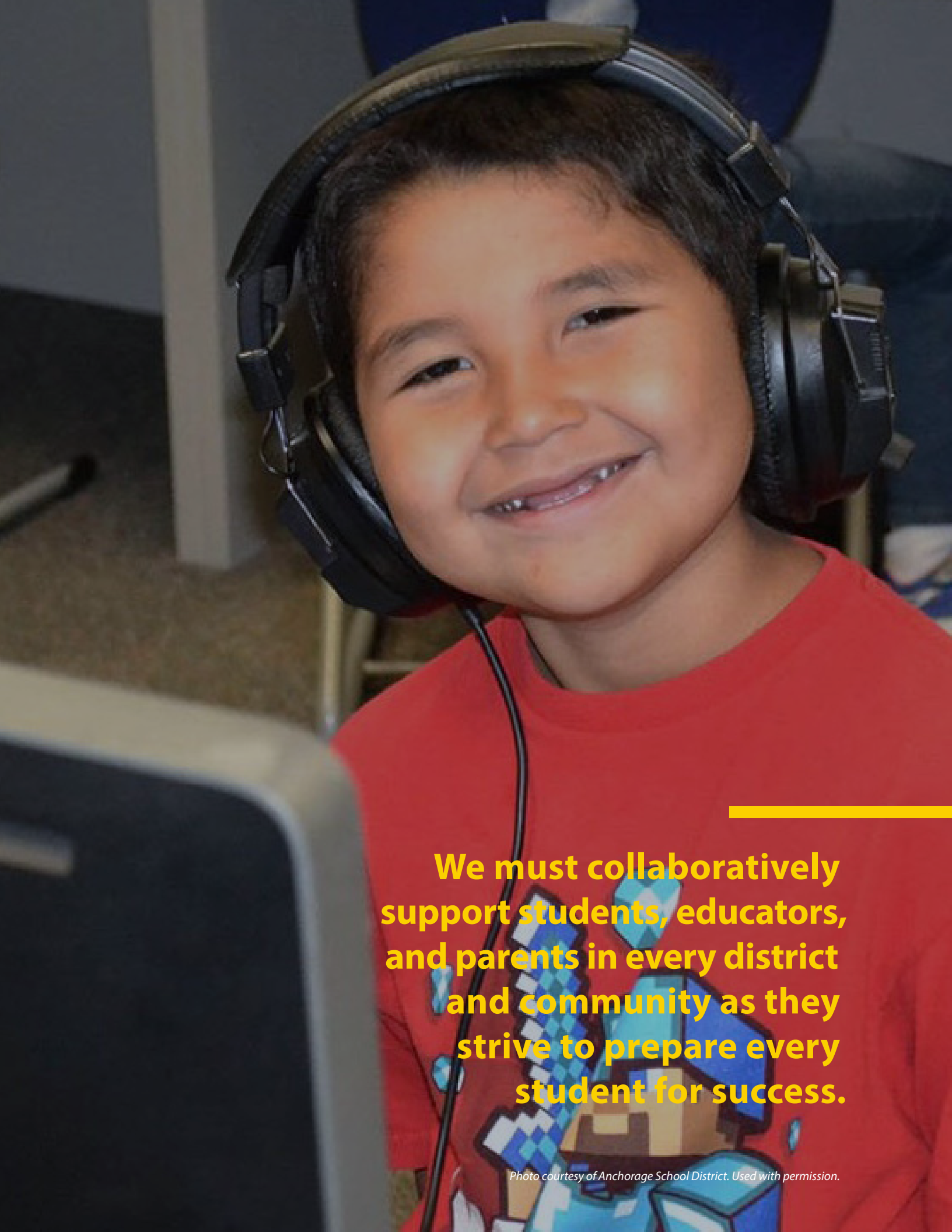
How can we achieve the goal of increasing career, technical, and culturally relevant education to meet student and workforce needs?

- Expand high-quality CTE courses and programs of study
- Foster collaboration between districts to create innovative and relevant experiences for students
- Establish partnerships among local industry, districts, and the state
- Increase awareness of the positive benefits of CTE for student engagement and academic success
- Create opportunities for local talent to engage with students
- Promote dialogue among local and state partners to increase opportunities for students
- Advance CTE educator professional development through partnerships and collaboration
- Encourage community involvement in CTE program development
- Support district exploration of diverse high school models such as distance delivery education in high school and access to off-site opportunities such as regional high schools, career and technical schools, and supported intern programs
- Provide industry more opportunities for input in career pathway curriculum

# What Progress Looks Like By 2025

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- ✓ **The number of students who, upon graduation, have earned dual credit, obtained an industry certification, or completed Advanced Placement coursework will increase by at least 15 percent**
- ✓ **The overall four-year graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent**
- ✓ **The overall five-year graduation rate will increase to at least 93 percent**
- ✓ **The number of students participating in CTE programs of study will increase by at least 20 percent**



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**We must collaboratively support students, educators, and parents in every district and community as they strive to prepare every student for success.**

*Photo courtesy of Anchorage School District. Used with permission.*

# Close the achievement gap by ensuring equitable educational rigor and resources

All means all. Our mission is to provide an excellent education for every student every day. This means that we refuse to accept the achievement gaps that currently exist. An equitable education system means every Alaska family has access to high-quality, rigorous, culturally relevant learning experiences and the resources needed for an excellent education, regardless of inequities in the system. Using a variety of culturally appropriate methods and multiple measures to track progress and identify needs, we will close the achievement gaps. This will require the commitment of all Alaskans. Tribal compacting and/or chartering are examples of the kind of commitment and family ownership of education that will help ensure that all Alaska students receive an excellent education every day.



**Alaska has achievement gaps between student groups, such as a 54 point gap in average grade 4 reading scores.**

Source: 2017 Alaska NAEP grade 4 reading results by race/ethnicity ([https://education.alaska.gov/tls/assessments/naep/NAEP2017GR4RD\\_snapshot.pdf](https://education.alaska.gov/tls/assessments/naep/NAEP2017GR4RD_snapshot.pdf))



## Prioritized Strategies

*These are examples of strategies that DEED, school districts, and individuals will use to meet the trajectories.*

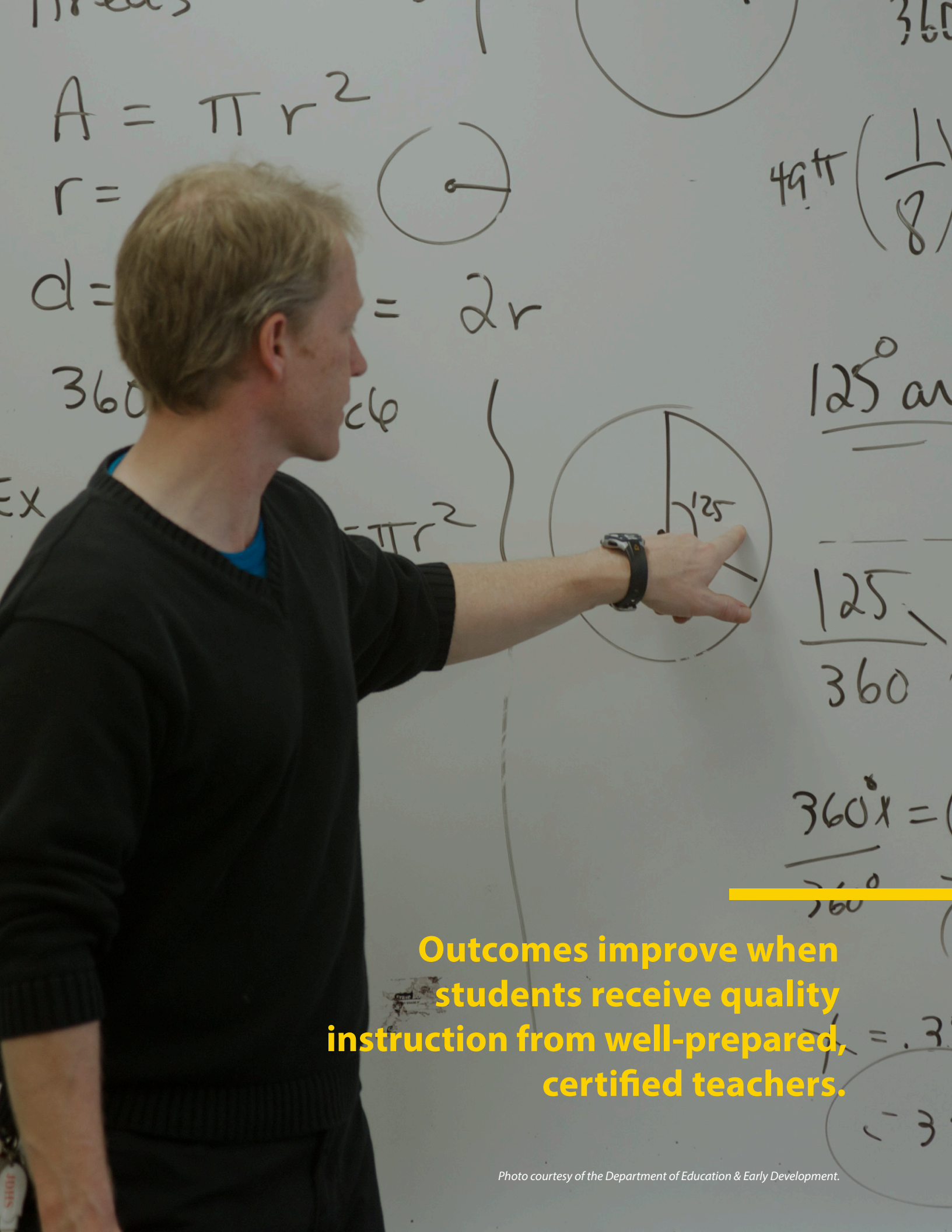
How can we close the achievement gap by ensuring equitable educational rigor and resources for all students?

- Provide evidence-based strategies and resources for teachers on implementing standards-aligned and student-centered instruction and curricula for preschool through grade 12
- Institute instructional models that promote deeper hands-on learning (for example, CTE/STEM)
- Implement supportive strategies that boost attendance for all students
- Provide flexibility in school calendars, the traditional school structure, and the length of the school year
- Facilitate access to high-quality instructional materials and learning experiences for all students, preschool through postsecondary
- Expand the use of culturally appropriate methods, technologies, and measures for identifying success, mitigating underperformance, and accelerating student learning
- Engage in regular consultation with stakeholders who represent the full range of cultures, languages, geographical locations, resources, abilities, interests, and goals of our students
- Establish legislation for a tribal compacting and/or charting compact that outlines the authority, accountability, and fiscal responsibility of the tribal entities and the State of Alaska to carry out agreed-upon educational services for K–12 students
- Align school improvement, accountability, and standards
- Align instruction, curriculum, standards, student success expectations, and assessments
- Reconsider current education funding connected to seat time; redefine instruction and hour
- Promote cross-district partnerships and sharing of resources, such as courses, materials, professional development, guidance documents, and forms
- Fund correspondence students at the same level as non-correspondence students

# What Progress Looks Like By 2025

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- ✓ **The current performance gaps in English language arts and math for all student subgroups will be reduced by at least 45 percent**
- ✓ **The current gaps in graduation rates for all student subgroups will be reduced by at least 50 percent**
- ✓ **The proficiency rate for English learner students will increase to at least 65 percent**
- ✓ **The number of students in each subgroup who are required to take remedial classes upon entering college will be reduced by at least 50 percent**

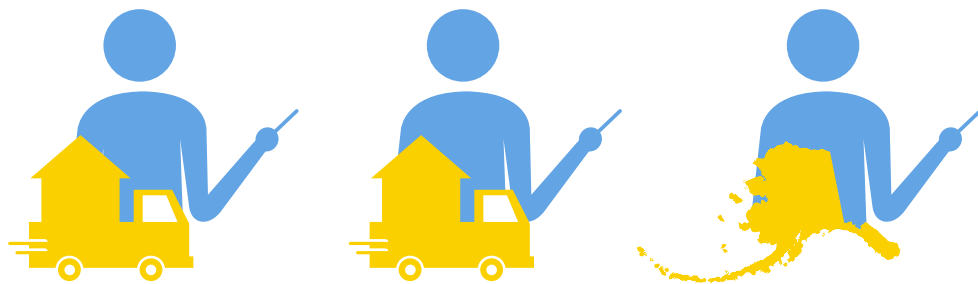


**Outcomes improve when students receive quality instruction from well-prepared, certified teachers.**

# Prepare, attract, and retain effective education professionals

National research suggests that outcomes improve when students receive quality instruction from well-prepared teachers, and that teacher turnover negatively affects student outcomes. Therefore, well-prepared and committed teachers are key to improving education outcomes. In Alaska, rural districts with high teacher turnover rates often graduate fewer than half of their students, and their students have significantly lower reading proficiency.

With fewer individuals entering Alaska teacher preparation programs and applying for teaching jobs, most of our teachers still come from out of state. Our state can learn from the workforce development approaches of public and private industries that focus on developing local talent and intentionally recruiting, training, supporting, and retaining their workforce. By adopting effective human capital development strategies, we can ensure that every student has access to effective educators.



**Nearly two-thirds of all new teachers hired in Alaska each year come from out of state**

*Source: Data provided by the Department of Education & Early Development.*

## Prioritized Strategies

*These are examples of strategies that DEED, school districts, and individuals will use to meet the trajectories.*

How can we better prepare, attract, and retain effective education professionals?

- Increase the number of districts offering an Educators Rising program
- Support Alaska's educator preparation programs through accreditation and partnerships
- Provide induction programs for educators new to Alaska and/or the profession
- Reimagine Alaska studies and multicultural curriculum requirements through the lens of cultural literacy
- Add supports for new and veteran administrators
- Develop micro-credentialing opportunities for educators in high-impact areas such as cultural literacy, trauma-informed instruction, STEM, Alaska's English language arts and math standards, and text analysis
- Emphasize support and professional growth through district educator evaluation systems
- Continue to recognize and utilize Alaska's master educators (for example: National Board-Certified Educators)
- Create an Educator Preparation Standards Board for licensing

# What Progress Looks Like By 2025

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- ✓ **90 percent of new teachers in Alaska will have completed their teacher preparation program through an Alaska university**
- ✓ **90 percent of educators new to Alaska or the profession will be actively engaged in a cohort-based induction program that includes training around culturally responsive and trauma-informed instruction and the regular support of a mentor, teacher leader, or master teacher**
- ✓ **All Alaska school districts will experience less than 15 percent turnover of educators each year**

*Note: Turnover rates include teachers who have moved to another school within their district or to another district.*



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**Children who come to school healthy and safe are better able to learn.**

*Photo courtesy of Anchorage School District. Used with permission.*

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

Alaskans have no greater shared responsibility than to create the conditions that enable our children to be happy and healthy and to achieve their fullest potential. We know that student safety and well-being are essential for success in learning.

Research and practical experience both suggest that children who are safe and well are better able to learn, make friends, and set ambitious goals for their future. Research also indicates that schools that are warm and inviting, build meaningful relationships with every student, address students' physical and mental health needs, and enjoy broad community support see more student success than schools without these assets. Together, through partnerships with families, communities, and tribes, we can all improve the safety and well-being of Alaska's students and create a brighter future.



*Source: 2016-17 school year K-12 student suspension data compiled by the Department of Education & Early Development. A review of the data suggests that most of these suspensions and expulsions were for nonviolent and non-safety-related incidents.*



## Prioritized Strategies

*These are examples of strategies that DEED, school districts, and individuals will use to meet the trajectories.*

How can we improve the safety and well-being of students?

- Create sustainable and positive school climates that are safe, supportive, and engaging for all students, staff, and communities
- Provide supports for schools, communities, and families that are responsive to the needs of children who have experienced serious hardships in their lives
- Increase health- and safety-focused partnerships between schools and their communities
- Increase access to nursing and counseling services
- Increase awareness of, and provide supports for, the mental and physical health needs of children in our schools
- Provide and encourage training for schools on best practices to improve school climate
- Provide supports for all public schools to keep students and staff members safe
- Increase and promote partnerships between schools and community and tribal nursing/health and counseling services
- Increase and support partnerships between schools and law enforcement agencies

# What Progress Looks Like By 2025

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- ✓ **The number of students who report on the 2025 Alaska Youth Risk Behavior Survey that they did not go to school on one or more of the last 30 days because they felt unsafe will decrease by 35 percent**
- ✓ **The number of students suspended from school for nonviolent and non-safety-related incidents in a given school year will decrease by at least 15 percent**

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## Partner With Us

Thousands of Alaskans have provided input, worked collaboratively, and shared their support for meeting Alaska's Education Challenge.

We will achieve success for our students by working together and focusing our efforts on meeting their needs.

You can make a difference for Alaska's students by supporting Alaska's Education Challenge.

**Get involved! To learn more, visit [education.alaska.gov/akedchallenge](https://education.alaska.gov/akedchallenge)**