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Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 18, 2008

Statewide Education Summit sets goals for Alaska

The Alaska Statewide Education Summit concluded November 14 in Anchorage with a list of 44 goals and a vision and mission statement that will form the basis for the first education plan in Alaska's history.

"Now we have the start of a beginning that will be meaningful and will change the lives of Alaska students," said Alaska Education Commissioner Larry LeDoux, who convened the summit. "Our students will lead Alaska. The next 50 years will be led by the students who are in our schools today. Our guidance will make sure they are ready. I believe we have the resources and expertise that will help every child become successful. If we do everything right and have a clear focus, we can achieve our goal. But we must work together."

The summit, dubbed "Building Alaska's Future One Student at a Time," was sponsored by the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development with support from the University of Alaska and the nonprofit organization America's Promise Alliance.

Nearly 450 Alaskans from all walks of life convened at the Dena'ina Civic & Convention Center on November 13 and 14 to discuss education issues that affect Alaskans from birth through postsecondary education and the work place. Attendees included members of the University of Alaska; the Department of Labor and Workforce Development; educators, local and state school board members; parents; students; businesspeople; representatives of Native organizations and nonprofits; and legislators.

Participants met in subgroups to discuss in detail issues related to early childhood; world-class schools and world-class students; college-, work- and life-ready; school finance, facilities and planning; technology; place-based education; student health and safety; and partnerships for learning.

Attendees also heard addresses by Commissioner LeDoux and University of Alaska President Mark Hamilton, a panel discussion among six legislators, panels on postsecondary education and high school graduation, and a summary of a recent survey of Alaska residents about education.



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“You’ve got to believe, as I do, that if a third-grader can’t read or a sixth-grader can’t do math, it’s my problem,” President Hamilton said. “It’s a problem for all Alaskans.”

President Hamilton called on Alaskans to promote a culture that values learning. The skills that students need to succeed in their kindergarten to high school education are the same skills they need in the work place or college, he said.

The next steps are for the Department of Education & Early Development to collate the goals produced at the summit, post them on its web site at www.eed.state.ak.us, and call for public comment. The goals and comments will be presented to the State Board of Education & Early Development and the University of Alaska Board of Regents.

The department will convene smaller work groups after January to flesh out details of the education plan and produce strategies to implement the goals. The department will report annually on its actions to implement the plan.

Among the draft goals produced at the summit are the following.

Early education: Alaska will create a seamless education system from birth to 12th grade in which parents have access to affordable, high-quality early child care and education, staffed by well-trained people.

World-class schools and students: Students will be prepared to pursue the next level of education in their chosen field and be proficient in 21st century skills, including communication, math, problem-solving, civic engagement, the arts, a second language, and science and technology.

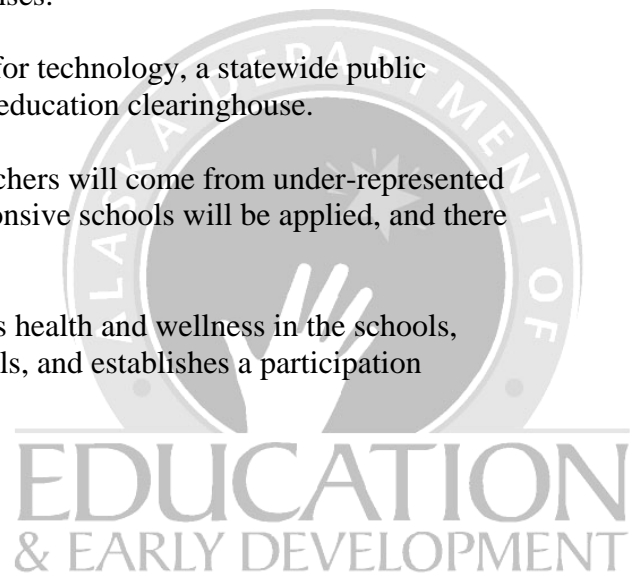
Student readiness for college, work and life: Alaskans will value education and graduation from high school. Schools will create partnerships that enhance student readiness, and students will have equal access to resources and services that promote post-secondary education, careers, and life-long learning.

Finance, facilities and planning: There will be funding equity, a greater public understanding of the state funding system, adequate technology and career and technical education, energy-efficient schools, and separate funding for energy expenses.

Technology: There will be a long-term funding source for technology, a statewide public telecommunications network, and a statewide distance-education clearinghouse.

Place-based, or community-based, education: More teachers will come from under-represented populations, existing state standards for culturally responsive schools will be applied, and there will be more community involvement in the schools.

Health and safety: There will be a system that integrates health and wellness in the schools, promotes a safe and secure environment in the schools, and establishes a participation program for families, schools and communities.



Partnerships: Students will know about greater opportunities to interact with adults in a variety of interest areas, and there will be more opportunities for teachers to be exposed to experiences outside traditional academics, such as externships at businesses.

The draft mission statement is that Alaska’s education system fosters creativity, curiosity, and embraces diversity. Alaska’s students have the skills and knowledge to contribute to their local and the global community by understanding the past and present, and are prepared for the future.

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