



## MEMORANDUM

**To:** State Board of Education & Early Development  
**Date:** June 28, 2023

**Thru:** Heidi Teshner, Acting Commissioner  
**Telephone:** (907) 269-4583

**From:** Susan McKenzie, Director  
Division of Innovation and  
Education Excellence  
**Subject:** Agenda 14A. Division of  
Innovation and Education  
Excellence Standing Report

### Division of Innovation and Education Excellence 2022 Board Report

The Division of Innovation and Education Excellence (IEE) is dedicated to providing an excellent education for every student every day by focusing division efforts around the five priorities of the [Alaska's Education Challenge](#); providing oversight of state and federally funded programs to ensure quality and equity of student services; and providing excellent technical assistance and support to districts statewide.

The IEE Division encompasses nine teams that manage a wide range of programs and activities for the State. These teams include the Assessment Team, the Career and Technical Education Team, the COVID Support Team, the Early Learning Team, the ESEA Federal Programs Team, the Health and Safety Team, the Reading Support Team, the School Recognition and Support Team, the Special Education Team, and the Teacher Certification Team. In addition, staff from each of these teams have been very involved in supporting the department COVID Fiscal Team work.

Included in the IEE Board Report are highlights of work with initiatives, compliance work, and support to districts as it relates to the Alaska Education Challenge priorities.

## Message from Director McKenzie

The Division of Innovation and Education Excellence (IEE) includes eleven teams that provide leadership and resources for PK-12 education systems across the state to support excellent education for every student every day. We intentionally strive to relate our work to the Alaska Education Challenge.

In May 2022, administrators and division leadership met to formulate a strategic plan for our division. We identified a division mission, vision, and three goals as a team: 1) Effective internal and external communication, 2) Streamlining processes, and 3) Effective relationships and partnerships. Over the past year, teams made good progress on our goals, with 2025 as our timeline for completion.

In July 2023, administrators and division leadership will meet to review the strategic plan progress and adjust as needed. Additionally, each administrator has identified 2-3 strategic priority areas to focus on for 2023-2024. Priority areas will directly relate to the Alaska Education Challenge and teams will engage in increased cross-team collaboration.

As IEE Director, we want to focus our efforts on achieving the Alaska Education Challenge and continue to make progress internally in providing effective and efficient support and leadership to those we serve.

### Innovation and Education Excellence Teams:



## Alaska's Education Challenge Priority #1:

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

#### Academic Support Team

- The June Alaska Reading Newsletter marks the 11<sup>th</sup> publication of this document that has been key in communication for all things reading.
  - The August 2022 Alaska Reading Newsletter was sent to 169 readers. The June 2023 Alaska Reading Newsletter was sent to 1,390 readers.
- DEED contracted with Amplify in the fall of 2022 to provide the mCLASS with DIBELS 8<sup>th</sup> edition literacy screener for all Alaska public schools. Districts can choose to use the state-adopted literacy screener free of charge or to seek approval for an alternate literacy screener through a waiver process.
  - In anticipation of the Alaska Reads Act implementation July 1, 2023, DEED created a literacy screener pilot program that was extended to all Alaska public schools in late 2022.
  - Eighteen school districts chose to participate in the pilot program. These districts agreed to participate in required training and administer benchmark assessments and progress monitoring measures in the second half of the 2022/2023 school year. Frequent communication, including formal monthly meetings, with participating districts, Amplify and DEED, provided a collaborative approach to the creation of an implementation plan for the AK Reads Act literacy screener requirement.
  - In mid-April, 100% of Alaska public school districts shared their literacy screener decision with DEED. 96% of districts have committed to using mCLASS with DIBELS 8<sup>th</sup> Edition and 4% are seeking a literacy screener waiver.
  - Amplify is working with individual districts to schedule staff training. Training options available to districts are Initial Training, Understanding Your Data, and Train the Trainer. Anyone responsible for administering mCLASS with DIBELS 8<sup>th</sup> Edition will need to participate in the Initial Training. Understanding Your Data training will be offered to district leadership after two benchmark data points are collected. This training will allow district leadership to dive into the data to learn how to interpret the data and to adapt school literacy implementation based on student data. The Train the Trainer sessions allow districts to become self-sustaining in their training for mCLASS with DIBELS 8<sup>th</sup> Edition.  
Benchmark windows for the 2023/2024 school year are:
    - Beginning of Year (BOY): 9/4/23 – 9/29/23
    - Middle of Year (MOY): 12/11/23 – 1/19/24
    - End of Year (EOY): 4/22/24 – 5/17/24
- The update to the Alaska Literacy Blueprint is complete. DEED contracted with a facilitator, partnered with Region 16 Comprehensive Center, and recruited a stakeholder group.
  - The stakeholder group comprised 13 members from across Alaska with expertise in birth to post-secondary education.
  - It was revealed at the 2023 Alaska Reading Symposium. Physical copies were distributed to Symposium attendees. Digital copies are available via the DEED

Reading Resource page, <https://education.alaska.gov/Alaska-Reading-Resources>.

### **Assessment**

- The Assessments Team continued to collaborate with the Reading Team and vendor Amplify to assist districts to develop their training and administration plans in preparation for the fall administration of the screener.
  - The pilot group of 18 districts were provided with a training session on understanding and using the mCLASS data. An additional session is planned for pilot districts in early August.

### **COVID Support Team**

- The COVID Support Team has been contacting districts concerning expenditures, expiring funds, and requirements to use funding to address the impact of lost instructional time.
  - Offering suggestions, one-on-one meetings, and resources for districts to target spending that is supported by the Strategic Reading Initiative and other evidence-based initiatives.

### **Data and Accountability**

- The Data and Accountability team is pleased to announce Nancy Eagan as the new Data Manager overseeing the Data and Accountability Team. Nancy comes to DEED with many years of experience as a Data Analyst for the state and will bring her expertise to supporting and ensuring DEED data is current and accurate.

### **Early Learning**

- Grants
  - The District-Wide Early Education Program 30 year grants for the Alaska Reads Act were evaluated and intent to award letters were sent to grantees. The appeal period ends on July 3.
  - The Pre-Elementary competitive 3-year grants were evaluated and intent to award letters were sent to grantees. The appeal period for these grants ends on July 3 as well.
  - Grant award notifications will go out during the week of July 3 for both grants.
  - Grants in the amount of \$2.5 mil were awarded to districts that applied for the District-Wide Early Education Program or the Pre-Elementary grants who had complete applications but were not chosen for awards in either program. This one-time funding for FY2024 was allocated based on the number of students served noted in their grant applications.
  - The legislature added \$1.5 million one-time funding for Head Start programs for FY2024. Intent to award letters were sent to Head Start Programs.
- New Personnel
  - Becky Moren, the new Early Learning administrator, will begin on July 3, 2023. Becky comes to us from the Mat-Su School district and will be working from Talkeetna.
  - Jayne McFarland, an Education Specialist 2, was added as part of the Alaska Reads Act to help facilitate early literacy and manage the Alaska Reads Act

grants and associated activities. She is returning to Alaska and will be working from Palmer.

### **School Recognition and Support**

- DEED is entering the fifth and final year of the Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) Grant for the 2023-2024 school year. The final year of the grant will run from 10/01/2023 - 09/30/2024.
  - Initial funding for year five was for \$3,945,933.00. In April of 2023 Alaska received an additional \$11,811,510.00 in supplemental grant funds to be spent by 09/30/2024 for a total of \$15,757,443.00 for the budget period of year five.
    - 95% of funding to be competitively granted to districts
      - 15% birth to 5 years old
      - 40% elementary
      - 40% secondary
    - 5% of funding supports statewide literacy and grant management
  - Supplemental funds were awarded to existing subgrantees after a review process of supplemental proposals.
  - The request for applications was open to the public and announced on May 19, 2023. An informational webinar was held on May 24, 2023 from 3:00-4:00. All applications are due by close of business on June 30, 2023. The review team will review all applications by July 21, 2023 and intent for awards will be delivered by August 14, 2023.
  - DEED proposes supplemental funds to assist local education agencies in addressing the impact of lost instructional time in literacy caused by the pandemic and continue our mission to support all students reading at grade level by the end of third grade.
  - Funding for subgrantees will be awarded to applicants that demonstrate a complete plan for students with the highest need. DEED will prioritize awards based on the results of a comprehensive application review process. Criteria is established for eligibility of subgrantees who must demonstrate they will serve children in Alaska who are living in poverty (more than 50 percent of students eligible for free lunch, or children at the 200 percent poverty level).

### **Special Education**

- The procurement contract for the Literacy Training program, which seeks to provide teachers with essential skills, has been successfully processed. The Neuhaus Company has been selected to carry out this training. Currently, efforts are focused on finalizing the details of the contract in order to establish the inaugural Cohort group, enabling teachers to benefit from this valuable training opportunity.
  - This program aims to equip teachers with essential skills to enhance their literacy instruction, which also serves Priority #4.
    - Its primary objective is to equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively meet the requirements of the Reading Act. Moreover, the training aims to empower teachers to provide instruction to students using scientifically proven methods.
    - This program incurs no financial burden on the participating teachers.

- This approach has been adopted with the intention of attracting dedicated educators who are eager to enhance their expertise in reading instruction. The ultimate goal is to foster a sense of engagement and commitment among teachers, thereby encouraging their continued involvement with school districts.
- This work will pave the way for the establishment of the inaugural cohort group, ensuring that teachers have access to this highly valuable training opportunity.

**Alaska’s Education Challenge Priority #2:  
Increase career, technical and culturally relevant education to meet student and workforce needs.**

**Career and Technical Education**

- The CTE Team is wrapping up support to Skill/Career Camps by September 30, 2023. In addition to supporting school districts, a number of non-district partners have delivered skills camps directly to students:
  - AHEC-Area Health Education Centers/University of Alaska Anchorage
  - Prince William Sound Campus/University of Alaska Anchorage
  - EXCEL Alaska
  - Bristol Bay Regional Career and Technical Education Program
  - Norton Sound Health Corporation/AHEC-Area Health Education Program
  - Alaska Resource Education Program
  - Educating for Leadership
  - District
- In June, school districts are submitting performance data applications for FY23 Perkins CTE programs. Data is gathered on student counts participating and concentrating in Perkins funded courses, performance of CTE students on statewide assessments, graduation rate, and post program placement, participation in low represented occupation fields by gender, any credentials obtained, and post-secondary credit earned. These data are gathered for Perkins funded programs only and reported to US Department of Education each January.
- Applications for FY24 Perkins funds trickle in starting in June depended on when district staff are working onsite around the summer break.

**COVID Support Team**

- The COVID Support Team has been supporting CTE opportunities for students through the use of COVID funds to provide Skills Camps to districts and organizations across the state.

**School Recognition and Support**

- Catherin Walker has been announced as the 2024 Teacher of the Year.
  - Catherine Walker currently teaches Engineering Essentials, Unmanned Aviation Science, Oceanography, Marine Biology, and has been teaching Biology and 9th-grade science at Dimond High School in Anchorage since 2017.
  - The 2024 Teacher of the Year Alternate is Jennifer Reinhart.

- Jennifer Reinhart is a first-grade teacher and has been an elementary teacher at Paul Banks Elementary in Homer, Alaska since 2008.
- The Alaska Teacher of the Year and an alternate were selected through a rigorous nomination, application, and review process. The Teacher of the Year was announced in a school assembly at Dimond High School by Acting Commissioner Heidi Teshner, followed by press releases for both the Teacher of the Year and the Alternate.
  - Catherine Walker will serve as Alaska’s nominee for the National Teacher of the Year and will be able to participate in programs and activities with other State Teachers of the Year coordinated by the Council of Chief State School Officers.

### **Special Education**

- DEED has engaged in a collaborative endeavor with the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education and the Department of Health, embarking on a grant application process. The objective of this grant, if successfully obtained, is to provide valuable support to students and young adults in their journey of career planning and acquiring essential skills that will ensure financial stability. While this grant application involves the participation of multiple partners, the various components are gradually aligning harmoniously. At present, the application is undergoing final preparations and will be thoroughly reviewed by the department before its anticipated submission in the month of July.

**Alaska’s Education Challenge Priority #3:  
Close the achievement gap by ensuring equitable educational rigor and resources.**

### **Academic Support Team**

- Professional Learning and Development for Math educators and education of students across Alaska is being paid for by DEED from Title II, Part A funds. There have been 121 educators representing 31 districts from grades K-12 enrolled in various courses, training, and other upcoming webinars. These include:
  - 60 educators representing 19 districts for Add+Vantage Math Recovery (AVMR) Course on early numeracy and fractions through US Math Recovery.
  - 33 educators representing 15 districts in Graduate-level-equivalent advancement courses on a wide variety of topics related to classroom instruction in mathematics.
  - 22 educators representing 10 districts in Grassroots Workshops, also on a wide variety of topics, but provided in a shorter format.
- The Social Studies Standards revision project kicked off in May. Three partner engagement groups have been convened to weigh in on the Guiding Principles and begin the drafting process for the new standards.
  - Guiding Principles are the overarching outcomes desired by key partners.
  - A Guiding Principles workgroup, comprised of key statewide stakeholders, convened to begin drafting guiding principles. This group reviewed the final draft of the guiding principles that were provided to the Educator Writing Group and will review the draft standards in the fall.

- An Alaska History Working Group was convened to begin drafting guiding principles. This group reviewed the final draft of the guiding principles that were provided to the Educator Writing Group and will review the draft standards in the fall.
- The Educator Writing Group met to begin drafting the standards and to provide input on the Guiding Principles.
- The Guiding Principles final draft was reviewed by all groups for consensus and have been provided to the Educator Writing Group to guide the next steps of the draft process.
- Throughout the summer an elementary, middle, and high-school writing group will meet to draft standards in alignment to the Guiding Principles. Draft standards will be ready in fall for stakeholders to provide input.

### **Assessment**

- The Assessments Administrator and NAEP Coordinator attended the National Conference on Student Assessment on June 26-28, 2023 in New Orleans, LA. The Assessments Administrator attended the National Assessment Director's Meeting on June 26. The Assessments Administrator, Summative Assessment Coordinator, and District testing Coordinator Liaison attended the CCSSO meeting for the Technical Issues in Large Scale Assessment (TILSA) in New Orleans, LA on June 29-30, 2023.
  - The Assessments Administrator was invited to sit on a panel of states and vendors to discuss the planning and implementation of through-year assessments at the TILSA meeting. It was an opportunity to highlight the strengths and challenges in the first years of the innovative, connected solution AK STAR.
  - Both meetings also provided an opportunity to network and collaborate with other state assessment leaders, vendor partners, and national measurement experts to learn about innovations in the field, projects across states, and guidance from the US Department of Education.
- In collaboration with vendors NWEA and DRC, DEED conducted a validation study for both the Alaska System of Academic Readiness (AK STAR) and the Alaska Science Assessment in May 2023.
  - The purpose of the validation study was to evaluate whether the assessment cut scores approved in summer 2022 remain appropriate for 2023 and future test administrations. Cut scores are those scale scores that sit at the borders of two achievement levels and allow us to define proficient and non-proficient performance. This process will allow DEED to ensure the cut scores are an accurate reflection of student performance in Alaska.
  - As part of the validation study, DEED invited stakeholders to participate in meetings.
    - 38 educators participated in the Standard Setting process for ELA, Math, and Science.
    - Panels were comprised of primarily classroom teachers and also included participants in each of the following positions: Curriculum Specialist, Principal, School Board Member, District Assessment and Evaluation Director, Former Superintendent
    - Panelists predominantly had ten or more years of experience working in education, with 60% reporting at least ten years of experience. 7%

had between 5 and 10 years of experience in education; 21% had 3-5 years of experience; 7% had 1-2 years of experience; and the remaining 2% didn't disclose their years of service.

- Panels were made up of 71% white/Caucasian, 5% Alaska Native, 8% Asian or Asian American, 8% Black or African American, and 8% two or more races and included educators from the following districts: Anchorage Schools, Bering Strait Schools, Cordova City Schools, Delta-Greely Schools, Fairbanks North Star Borough Schools, Iditarod Area Schools, Ketchikan Gateway Borough Schools, Kenai Peninsula Borough Schools, Kodiak Island Borough Schools, Kuspuk Schools, Lower Yukon Schools, Mat-su Borough Schools, Nome Public School, Northwest Arctic Borough Schools, Sitka Borough Schools, Valdez City Schools
- The Assessments Team is working with technical advisors (national measurement experts comprising the Technical Advisory Committee for Alaska) and DEED leadership to evaluate the outcomes from the 2022 standard setting and the 2023 validation study to determine next steps in the potential refinement of cut scores for AK STAR and the Alaska Science Assessment.
- By continuing the work on the AK STAR test design and reporting specifications, DEED is moving forward with the goal to develop a balanced and instructionally-connected assessment system that provides meaningful results for Alaska stakeholders.
- The Assessments Team continues to work with NWEA and DRC to develop reports and interpretive resources to support the dissemination of results of the Spring 2023 assessments. It is expected that results will be shared with districts in September and will be available to the public by early October.
- The Assessments Team collaborated with Denali Daniels & Associates to carry out the [Assessment Outreach Project: Identifying Connections and Opportunities with Entities Serving Alaska Native Students](#). Project activities during May and June included:
  - Two (2) parent discussion groups – DDA only
  - Two (2) educator discussion groups – DDA only
  - One (1) outreach session with parents – DEED & DDA
  - One (1) outreach session with educators – DEED & DDA
  - Completion of the [Issue Paper](#)
  - Creation of a [survey](#) to collect insights about Alaska's K-12 student assessments and the perspectives Alaskans have in their roles as parents, educators, and interested community members.
- The Assessment Advisory Panel convened on June 13, 2023. Discussion and engagement topics for the meeting included:
  - Assessment updates, including spring 2023 administration, standard setting validation studies, and reporting 2023
  - MAP Growth statewide reporting
  - Assessment Outreach Project

- AK Reads Initiative – mCLASS literacy screener implementation
- Opportunities for stakeholder engagement

By engaging with stakeholders for assessment outreach and development activities, DEED continues to foster trust and buy-in for the new assessments and their outcomes.

### **COVID Support Team**

- The COVID Support Team has been creating and updating resources for districts and organizations to assist them in the planning of activities that provide resources and rigor for all students and allows them to emerge stronger post-pandemic. The emphasis of these resources and tools is to ensure that districts are able to maximize the use of COVID resources to meet student needs.

### **Data and Accountability**

- The US DOE required changes to the Alaska Report Card to the Public. Required changes were identified by DEED staff and an initial response to the public reporting requirements has been submitted.
  - The Data and Accountability Team are preparing for a monitoring and evaluation visit in July.
- Preliminary Participation Rates for AK STAR have been calculated based on early testing data. Final rates will be completed and made available in September.
- The Summer OASIS data collection is currently underway. The data team has been assisting school districts with their data questions and access issues to ensure current and accurate data.

### **ESEA Federal Programs**

- The Title I, Part C Migrant Education Program will be providing their statewide annual training on the identification and recruitment of migratory children to school district staff virtually during the months of August and September. Once migratory children are recruited, districts provide them with Title I-C funded instructional and support services that address the unique educational needs resulting from their migratory lifestyle and permit them to participate effectively in school.
- District's FY24 (23-24) ESEA Federal Programs allocations will be finalized mid-July and uploaded to the ESEA Consolidated Application in DEED's Grants Management System (GMS). ESEA Federal Programs within the ESEA Consolidated Application are Title I-A, Title I-C, Title I-D, Title II-A, Title III-A, and Title IV-A. Most final state-level allocations were received from the U.S. Department of Education at the end of June.

### **School Recognition and Support**

- The School Improvement team is providing technical assistance and reviewing FY23 revisions/end of year wrap up as well as reviewing FY24 School Improvement Applications. Schools currently served include:
  - 54 TSI (targeted support and improvement) schools, which will be receiving \$25,000 per year (until they exit designation or are redesignated as ATSI) to carry out their school improvement plans.
  - 33 CSI (comprehensive support and improvement) Grad Rate schools, which will be receiving \$25,000 for 3 years to carry out their school improvement plans.

- 3 ATSI (additional targeted support and improvement) Schools, which will be receiving \$50,000 per year for 3 years to carry out their school improvement plans.
- 33 CSI 5% (comprehensive support and improvement lowest 5%) schools, which will be receiving \$50,000 per year for 3 years to carry out their school improvement plans.

For FY24 schools and districts will receive a total of \$3,975,000 in 1003(a) grant funding to support school improvement planning, plan implementation, and review.

In addition to funding, all schools receive technical assistance including regular webinars, one-on-one meetings, and (as able) site visits.

### Special Education

- During the summer months, the special education team remains dedicated to holding weekly question and answer sessions for district special education directors and coordinators. While attendance may be lower during this time of year, these sessions provide valuable opportunities for the team to address numerous inquiries related to services provided to students in the Extended School Year (ESY). Additionally, the team engages in discussions concerning parent inquiries received through phone calls and emails. A predominant area for questions during the summer includes Extended School Year (ESY) Issues. The intent is to guarantee that students maintain the progress they have made in their training and instruction throughout the regular school year. This extension of educational services aims to ensure that the valuable knowledge and skills acquired by students are retained and reinforced, even during the summer break.

**Alaska’s Education Challenge Priority #4:  
Prepare, attract, and retain effective education professionals.**

### Health & Safety

- The following chart shows the number of course completions for our highest trafficked health and safety eLearning courses for educators as well as the student facing courses on suicide prevention and those under the Alaska Safe Children’s Act.
  - Course Updates: *Trauma-Sensitive Schools* and all trauma-related courses were updated with new state resources and links to DEED’s Trauma Framework.
  - Other courses updated include *Mandated Reporters of Child Abuse & Neglect, Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Training for Educators*, Suicide prevention and awareness courses parts A-D.

<b>DEED Online eLearning Courses</b>	<b>April-June 2023</b>	<b>Lifetime #'s</b>
Part A: Suicide Awareness	450	22,759
Part B: Suicide Prevention	236	10,807
Part C Suicide Intervention	190	6,550
Part D: Responding to Suicide- Postvention Guidelines	158	4,412

Overcoming ACEs in Alaskan Schools	116	2,587
Trauma-Engaged and Practicing Schools	62	1,355
Trauma-Sensitive Schools	87	1,904
Classroom Practices	70	923
Emotional Intelligence	54	802
Family Partnerships	51	567
Mind-Body Connections	49	692
Childhood Traumatic Grief	81	1,024
Self-Regulation	44	759
Self-Care	49	738
Trauma-Engaged Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health	37	279
Overcoming Stress and Anxiety in Alaskan Schools (Released Spring 21)	61	466
Opioids 101 and the Opioid Epidemic 101	46	246
Narcan Administration for an Opioid Epidemic	15	300
E-Cigarette Use Among Alaska Teens (Released Summer 21)	83	261
Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Training for Educators	597	28,923
Mandated Reporters of Child Abuse & Neglect	853	35,013
Prenatal Alcohol and Drug Related Disabilities	566	25,872
Navigating Transitions (student courses)	16	1,091
Bree's Law (student courses)	275	2,591
<b>Total Course Completions</b>	<b>4,092</b>	<b>150,767</b>

### Teacher Certification

- The Educator Application and Certification Hub of Alaska (TEACH-AK) project to move most of the Teacher Certification Office's applications and other services to a web-based environment has faced a few challenges; competing priorities, staffing issues and technical difficulties. Despite these challenges, the Teacher Certification Team has

received training on the new system and applicants are anticipated to begin using the new system in June.

- The Alaska Teacher Recruitment & Retention Implementation Subcommittee meetings are scheduled to wrap-up by the end of June.
  - Final recommendations are expected this fall and will inform upcoming planning for teacher recruitment and retention activities at the state level.
  - Recordings of subcommittee meeting, research documents, and other information about the TRR Action Plan Implementation can be found [here](https://education.alaska.gov/trr) (<https://education.alaska.gov/trr>).

## **Alaska's Education Challenge Priority #5: Improve the safety and well-being of students through school partnerships with families, communities, and tribes.**

### **Academic Support Team**

- DEED is working to secure a contract with the authors of DIBELS 8<sup>th</sup> Edition at the University of Oregon.
  - This work supports the Alaska Reads Act by creating a literacy screener in indigenous Alaskan languages, based on the evidence-based reading practices outlined in the Alaska Reads Act, that can be used with students to determine proficiency and to detect areas that need additional support and interventions.
  - This project will also include reports for educators and parents to monitor student progress in reading in the language assessed.

### **Health & Safety**

- The DEED Health & Safety Team has been planning the third Safety & Well-Being Summit on September 13-14, 2023 at the Egan Center in Anchorage.
  - DEED is inviting educational leaders, key staff, and strategic stakeholders, including representation from every district across the state, to convene and discuss improvements to school safety and well-being in Alaska by learning and sharing methods to: Promote healthy development through trauma-engaged and restorative practices, improve school climate, and be better prepared for any possible school crisis. [Registration](#) is now open.
- Health & Safety staff along with IEE leadership started the implementation of a three-year cohort for Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). The purpose of this is to expose school teams to a behavioral framework that will support growth in positive behavior and school culture, leading to systemic change in schools. The first and second cohort of this project attended the NWPBIS conference in Portland April 27<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup>. Alaska had over 120 people attending. It gave school staff the opportunity to hear from national experts, begin their training on PBIS, and connect with other Alaska districts implementing the program throughout the state. Monthly training will begin in August and coaching will begin in September.
- The [Alaska Safe Children's Act](#) (informally, known as Erin's and Bree's Law) requires schools to cover the topics of child sexual abuse and teen dating violence. DEED created a curriculum in response to legislative action. This curriculum is for students in grades 7 through 12 and is called Bree's Law Education. Assessment of the curriculum and

associated materials was conducted through focus groups of more than 30 teachers in May of 2023. Results were analyzed in June and this work will be used to assess what needs to be done to improve the resources. A preconference day will be held at the School Safety and Wellbeing Summit in September to help schools learn about DEED's resources and other resources to support the Safe Children's Act requirements. The results of the focus groups and other analysis will be presented at the summit.

### **Special Education**

- The special education team is supporting the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education to provide information on the potential update of two important regulations: 4 AAC 52.250, which pertains to the supervision of special education aides, and 4 AAC 52.252, which relates to program supervision.
  - The aim is to incorporate modern methods that were not available when these regulations were initially written, such as video interfaces like Teams, Zoom, and Skype.
  - By leveraging these technologies, the intent is to enhance the frequency of required supervision for both special education aides and the program services received by students, such as speech services, occupational therapy, or physical therapy.
- The annual federal grant application for special education has been successfully submitted for the 2023-2024 school year. This grant will continue to provide support for school districts, the department, and a wide range of discretionary programs, with a particular focus on fostering partnerships with parent organizations and community resources. These collaborative efforts aim to promote these organizations to work closely with the department to enhance the safety and overall well-being of students with disabilities.