

Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development
Annual Report to the Legislature for 2011

January 2012



Alaska State Board of Education & Early Development

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Table of Contents

Alaska State Constitution Education Clause	2
Mission of the State Board of Education & Early Development	2
Regulations adopted/revised/repealed in 2011	
• Alaska Performance Scholarship	2
• Standards and Assessment	2-4
• Adequate Yearly Progress	4
• School Finance	4
• Teacher Certification	4-5
• Alaska State Museums	5
• Other Topics	5
Resolutions in 2011	5
State Standards	5-6
Graduation Rate	7-8
Assessments	8-9
WorkKeys	9-10
Mentor Programs	10
Teacher Quality	10-11
Career and Technical Education	11
Early Learning	11-12
State System of Support	12
Distance Education	12
The Alaska Literacy Blueprint	13
Mt. Edgecumbe High School	13

Alaska State Constitution Education Clause

Section 7.1 - Public Education.

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

Mission of the State Board of Education & Early Development

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

Regulations adopted/revised/repealed in 2011

Alaska Performance Scholarship

The Board adopted amendments to 4 AAC 43 regarding the Alaska Performance Scholarship. The Board allowed eligible students to receive an Alaska Performance Scholarship during a one-year grace period in which they complete the scholarship's curricular requirements. The Board also allowed school districts to receive state funding for courses taken by students who have a grace period. This provision will be in effect only in the scholarship program's first two years of existence. The rationale is that students in these first graduating classes could not know – and therefore fully prepare for -- the scholarship's credit requirements until the law had passed and regulations were adopted.

The Board adopted amendments to 4 AAC 43.030 regarding course requirements for the Alaska Performance Scholarship. The Board set the allowable courses for scholarship eligibility, and created a process for school districts to submit other courses for eligibility. The regulation would first take effect for the high school graduating class of 2015. The rationale is to maintain the intended rigor of the Alaska Performance Scholarship.

Standards and Assessment

The Board adopted amendments to 4 AAC 06.707 regarding the WorkKeys assessments, which are career-ready tests given to all 11th-graders each year. Students with qualifying scores receive national career-readiness certificates. The tests may be used to qualify for an Alaska Performance Scholarship if the student is going to attend a postsecondary certificate program. In the amendments, the Board required WorkKeys to be administered between August 1 and December 30 of each year, so that the scores will be available in time for scholarship determinations and the state's data-collection deadlines. Additionally, the Board will allow 12th-graders to take or retake the test once at no cost to the student or district. The rationale is that

12th-graders should be encouraged to improve their scores and possibly qualify for a career-readiness certificate or Alaska Performance Scholarship. The Board also allowed districts to determine whether students with significant cognitive disabilities should be required to take WorkKeys assessments. The rationale is that such students' individualized education program teams know best whether WorkKeys meets the students' needs.

The Board adopted amendments to 4 AAC 04.155 regarding standards for English language proficiency for students who are English language learners. The Board adopted the WIDA English Language Proficiency Standards, 2007 Edition, Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12. The rationale is that Alaska has joined WIDA -- World Class Instructional Design and Assessment – a consortium of 27 states. WIDA standards are research-based and known for their high quality.

The Board amended 4 AAC 06.710 regarding the statewide student assessment system. The Board added the new English language proficiency assessment and WorkKeys to the list of assessments. House-keeping.

The Board amended 4 AAC 06.738 and 06.758 regarding state assessments. The Board extended the amount of time districts may take to distribute to classroom teachers results from the state's Standards Based Assessment and the High School Graduation Qualifying Examination. The rationale is that the previous deadline of 20 days was too burdensome to districts.

The Board amended 4 AAC 06.750 regarding state assessments. The Board changed the required grade levels to reflect the current grade levels assessed on the TerraNova assessment. House-keeping.

The Board amended 4 AAC 06.755 regarding state assessments. The Board designated the hours in which the High School Graduation Qualifying Examination would begin, and added clarifying language about test security. School districts asked the state to set the starting time.

The Board amended 4 AAC 06.761 regarding state assessments. The Board added a new section to consolidate multiple references to test security. House-keeping.

The Board amended 4 AAC 06.765 regarding state assessments. The Board added WorkKeys to the list of assessments whose contents are confidential. It also required districts to train relevant staff in test procedures. The rationale is to maintain high standards in test security.

The Board amended 4 AAC 06.771 regarding state assessments. The Board required re-tests of the High School Graduation Qualifying Examination to be administered under the same conditions as the original test. The rationale is to maintain high standards for test security and reliability.

The Board amended 4 AAC 06.775 and AAC 06.776 regarding state assessments. The Board adopted revised participation guidelines for students with disabilities. The rationale is to respond to suggestions from stakeholders, identify new resources, and keep up-to-date on practices in accommodations. Additionally, when districts determine testing accommodations for students

with limited English proficiency, they are required to include a teacher with experience in teaching students with limited English proficiency, when practicable. The rationale is to use the most qualified sources when serving students.

The Board amended 4 AAC 06.805 regarding state assessments. The Board clarified that the state Standards Based Assessment is the assessment used for calculating students' participation rate in reporting Adequate Yearly Progress under the No Child Left Behind Act. House-keeping.

Adequate Yearly Progress

The Board amended 4 AAC 06.830 regarding state assessments. The Board allowed districts, for the purposes of reporting Adequate Yearly Progress, to include in the limited-English-proficiency subgroup those students who exited the program in the prior two years. The rationale is to give credit to districts for successfully transitioning students out of the program.

School Finance

The Board adopted amendments to 4 AAC 09.160 regarding school districts' fund balances. The Board redefined the exceptions to the type of funds that may be in a district's year-end fund balance. The rationale was to align the state's regulation with the nationwide Governmental Accounting Standards Board's new criteria for classifying fund balances into specifically defined categories.

Teacher Certification

The Board adopted amendments to 4 AAC 12.305 regarding renewal of teacher certificates. The Board required teachers moving from an initial (three-year) certificate to a professional (five-year renewable) certificate to have been employed as a teacher for at least two years. Those who have not taught for two years may apply for another initial certificate. The rationale is that no one should hold the state's professional teacher certificate without having worked as a teacher for at least two years.

The Board adopted amendments to 4 AAC 12.345 regarding provisional certificates. The Board will no longer require educators seeking provisional (two-year) administrative, special education administrative and special services certificates to complete six semester hours of credit before receiving the certificate. Such educators still must complete the credits to receive the next stage of certification, which is a five-year certificate. The rationale is that the state similarly gives teachers an initial period to complete credits before receiving a professional certificate.

The Board adopted amendments to 4 AAC 12.405 regarding teacher certification. The Board mandated that teachers fulfill the college credits required for renewal of their certificates in subjects related to their employment, endorsement area, or program leading to an endorsement.

The rationale is that the credits should relate to subjects that the teacher teaches or intends to teach.

The Board adopted amendments to 4 AAC 12.370 regarding limited teacher certificates in specialty subjects, known as Type M. Such certificates may be granted when no teacher with a bachelor's degree in the specialty is available. The Board created new requirements for Career and Technical Education Type M certificates. The Board required CTE-endorsed Type M teachers to demonstrate competency in reading, writing and math within one year of obtaining the certificate and to demonstrate instructional skills. The rationale is that many students use career and technical courses for credit in core academic subjects.

Alaska State Museums

The Board amended 4 AAC 58.010 regarding fees at the Alaska State Museums. The Board increased the summer fee from \$5 to \$7 at the Alaska State Museum in Juneau, and from \$4 to \$5 at the Sheldon Jackson Museum in Sitka. However, the Board added a \$1 discount to visitors age 65 and older. The rationale was to raise revenues to offset labor and operating costs.

Other

The Board repealed 4 AAC 05.070, which required districts to submit an Education Plan under an obsolete state accountability system. House-keeping.

Resolutions in 2011

There were none.

State Standards

The State Board of Education & Early Development has set the direction for developing and implementing student standards for nearly 20 years. Student standards currently include content standards, which are broad, and Grade Level Expectations, which are more detailed; English language proficiency standards; alternate performance standards for students with significant cognitive disabilities; and cultural standards.

The standards for English language arts and mathematics were last revised in 2005. The department's contract for assessments aligned to those standards expires in 2015. Since February 2010, the department, Alaska educators and industry representatives have engaged in a process to replace the current content standards and Grade Level Expectations in reading, writing and math with rigorous grade-level standards. The focus has been to ensure that the standards outline a path for students to graduate high school college-ready and career-ready. The new Alaska standards will be inclusive of all grades, K-12, unlike the current K-10 standards.

In developing the proposed new standards, the department has held the following meetings:

February 2010 – Met with the newly established Standards Review Committee to compare and contrast the current Grade Level Expectations with the national Common Core Standards (recently adopted by many states) for reading/literature, math and writing. The Standards Review Committee consisted of K-12 educators from across Alaska who have an in-depth knowledge of, and experience with, reading, writing and math standards.

October 2010 – Met with the Standards Review Committee and participants of the August 2010 Content Item Review Committee. Together, they reviewed in greater detail the Common Core Standards and identified considerations when transitioning to new standards, such as the need for professional development for teachers.

November 2010 – Met with personnel working in state universities and vocational programs, industry representatives, and high school staff to assist the department in defining what it would take for high school graduates to be prepared to go to college or enter the workforce.

January 2011 – Met with English/language arts teachers in grades 3-12, special education teachers, and English language learner teachers to determine how to refine Alaska's standards so that students are on track to be college-ready and career-ready as they move on to high school.

February 2011 - Met with math teachers in grades 3-12, special education teachers, and English language learner teachers to determine how to refine Alaska's standards so that students are on track to be college-ready and career-ready as they move on to high school.

June 2011 – Met with experienced educators and coaches from the State System of Support, which works with struggling districts, to review recommended revisions to the Alaska standards with a focus on coherence, alignment and clarity.

October 2011 – Met with K-12 English/language arts and math teachers, librarians, and high school career/technology instructors to further refine the new Alaska standards to be college-ready and career-ready.

November 2011 – Met with representatives working with students with disabilities, English language learner students, economically disadvantaged students, and students from ethnic subgroups to ensure that all learners will have equal access to the new Alaska standards.

The Board was briefed on the status of the standards-revision process at each of the quarterly meetings in 2011, culminating with a review of the draft career-ready and college-ready standards in English language arts and mathematics at the December 2011 meeting. The Board opened a period of public comment for the draft standards. The Board anticipates taking final action on the standards in June 2012. If the standards are adopted, students likely will not be assessed on them until spring 2016 at the earliest.

Graduation Rate

The state's graduation rate methodology has recently changed to reflect a federal mandate requiring all 50 states to use a uniform graduation rate that is to be reported for all public high schools. This rate, known as the Four Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate, was first implemented in Alaska with the 2010-2011 school year. All states are required to use the new adjusted cohort graduation rate for accountability purposes in the 2011-2012 school year. Specifically, the accountability measures would include Adequate Yearly Progress calculations at the school, district and state level as well as public reporting of school district report card data.

Under this new methodology, a cohort graduation year is assigned to each ninth-grade student in the fall of his or her initial entry. The expectation of the adjusted cohort graduation rate is that the student will graduate within four years. For example, a student who entered ninth grade in the 2009-2010 school year would be considered part of the 2013 graduation cohort group. Students are included in the cohort if they transfer into the public school system, and are removed from the cohort if they transfer to an education program with a secondary school diploma track.

A graduate is defined as a student who has received a regular diploma from a state-approved or district- approved education program as evidenced by receipt of a secondary school diploma from school authorities. Any student that receives a diploma under a waiver from the competency examination required under AS 14.03075(a), as specified by the state Board, is considered to be a graduate. This does not include a student who receives a Certificate of Achievement or a General Educational Development certificate.

The Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate is reported as a fraction. The numerator is the sum of the number of graduates within the cohort who receive a regular diploma on or before June 30. The denominator is the sum of all students assigned to the cohort. The statewide count of high school graduates has increased significantly over the last seven years.

School Year	Graduation Rate*	Graduate Count
2005	61.4%	6,905
2006	61.6%	7,361
2007	63.0%	7,666
2008	62.6%	7,855
2009	67.5%	8,008
2010	67.4%	8,245
<hr/>		
2011	68.0%	8,060**

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

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

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

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

Assessments

Public school students in Alaska are required to pass the High School Graduation Qualifying Examination -- in addition to meeting minimal state and local curriculum credit requirements -- in order to obtain a high school diploma. The Board discussed the relevancy of the HSGQE to Alaska's students, options for high-stakes testing, and the impact of the HSGQE on graduation rates across the state. In September 2011, the Board agreed to continue support of the HSGQE. The exam was supported both as a measure of student accountability and as an indicator that a student receiving a diploma has demonstrated minimum competencies in essential skills needed to function in our society.

The Board has engaged in multiple work sessions and conversations related to the relevancy and use of each assessment required by law in Alaska's Comprehensive State System of Assessment. In addition to the HSGQE, specific discussions were conducted regarding the Standards Based Assessments, the Development Profile, the TerraNova, WorkKeys, the alternate assessment for students with severe cognitive disabilities, the English language proficiency exam, and the federally required National Assessment of Educational Progress test.

The Board was briefed on preliminary 2011 HSGQE and Standards Based Assessment results at the June meeting. Passage of all three sections of the HSGQE is required in order for a student to receive a high school diploma. The Standards Based Assessment is required by federal law and is the primary assessment used to calculate Adequate Yearly Progress in the No Child Left Behind accountability system.

In the HSGQE, 83.4% of the grade 10 students passed reading, 71.1% passed writing, and 76.9% passed math. Students have two further opportunities each year to pass the exam in grades 11 and 12 and after leaving high school.

In the Standards Based Assessment in reading, grade-level scores ranged from 74.3% proficient in grade 4 to 83.3% proficient in grade 8.

In the Standards Based Assessment in writing, grade-level scores ranged from 70.4% proficient in grade 6 to 77.0% proficient in grade 8.

In the Standards Based Assessment in math, grade-level scores ranged from 60.1% proficient in grade 9 to 75.2% proficient in grade 4.

The Board was briefed on school and district Adequate Yearly Progress results at the September meeting. Three changes to the calculation of 2011 data significantly affected the results: The targets for the percentage of students who should be proficient increased from 77.18% to 82.88% in language arts and from 66.09% to 74.57% in math. Also, the newly adopted Four Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate went into effect in 2011.

In 2011, 12 of 54 districts met Adequate Yearly Progress (22%), a reduction of eight districts from 2010. In 2011, 231 schools met Adequate Yearly Progress (45.7%) and 274 schools did not meet. This marked a decrease of 74 schools meeting Adequate Yearly Progress from 2010.

WorkKeys

WorkKeys is a career-ready assessment that measures fundamental skills employers have identified as critical to success in the workforce. WorkKeys is owned by the not-for-profit American College Testing (ACT) organization. For WorkKeys, ACT created thousands of job profiles, which analyze the level of skills needed for entry to specific jobs. Assessed students are able to compare their skill level with the skill level of those jobs.

The Board had previously approved the implementation of WorkKeys as a tool to measure the career-readiness of students preparing to transition from high school to higher education and employment. The Board held multiple work sessions to discuss the need for the assessment in our public school system. Students in Alaska are required to take this assessment in the 11th grade, and they have the option to re-take the assessment in the 12th grade. The assessment requirement first went into effect during the 2010-2011 school year. Additionally, in 2010 the Board approved the use of WorkKeys as a qualifying assessment for the Alaska Performance Scholarship for those students who are seeking a career or technical certificate in their postsecondary education.

In Alaska, students participate in three WorkKeys assessments: Applied Mathematics, Reading for Information, and Locating Information (in visual formats). Students who attain qualifying scores on the three assessments receive ACT's National Career Readiness Certificate. The certificate is a nationally recognized credential that indicates ACT's assurance that an individual has certain skills that are important across a range of jobs. The higher the level of skills attained, the more jobs for which the individual can expect to be considered. Dozens of employers in Alaska currently either require, request or recognize the certificate or WorkKeys assessments in their hiring or placement processes.

Of the 9,007 Alaska students who took WorkKeys in the 2010-2011 school year, 7,665 (85%) earned a National Career Readiness Certificate. Twenty-one percent of all test-takers received a bronze certificate; 42.6% received a silver certificate; 21% received a gold certificate; and 0.5% received a platinum certificate.

In September 2011, the Board approved the Alaska Supplement for WorkKeys Assessment, 2011 edition. The supplement clarifies the appropriate use of accommodations for students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency. It is a supplement to the Participation Guidelines for Alaska Students in State Assessments.

Mentor Programs

In response to high teacher turnover in parts of the state, the department in 2004 created the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project in partnership with the University of Alaska and school districts. The Board continues to support the project's efforts to increase teacher retention and help ensure that teachers new to the profession are supported in becoming more effective in their instructional practices within their first two years in the classroom.

Similarly, the department's Administrative Coaching Program helps new school administrators in their first two years understand the context in which they work and become effective instructional leaders who support teachers and students as they work toward increasing achievement levels.

This school year, 12 administrator coaches are serving 76 principals and four superintendents. In the previous school year, 12 administrator coaches served 78 principals and 11 superintendents. Additionally, in each of these school years, 15 University of Alaska Anchorage interns receive services through the Rural Administrator Principal Preparation and Support grant in conjunction with the Alaska Staff Development Network.

In June, the Board discussed the Legislature's cuts to the mentor program. Discussion revolved around the program's impact on teacher and principal retention and the promising impact on student achievement. For example, in mathematics, Alaska students in classrooms of mentored teachers perform the same as those in classrooms of veteran teachers, according to a study published in 2010. Board members suggested the department present more program data to the Legislature. This school year, 24 mentors are working with 330 early-career teachers in 142 schools in 34 school districts. In the previous school year, 28 mentors served 401 teachers in 187 schools in 43 districts.

Teacher Quality

The Board has discussed teacher quality at length this year and considered recommendations from the Teacher Quality Working Group (convened by the department) regarding teacher

quality, certification, and preparation. Recognizing the impact that high-quality teachers have on student achievement, the Board acted on the recommendations of the working group to:

- Amend teacher certification regulations to clarify the requirements to renew teacher, administrator and special services certificates; change the name of the Vocational Education Endorsement to Career and Technical Education; require districts to make available to the public the blank forms used in teacher and administrator evaluation; and require district employment applications to require teachers to disclose any prior teaching experience in Alaska.
- Approve teacher preparation programs for Elementary K-5 Math at the University of Alaska Southeast and for an Elementary endorsement at Alaska Pacific University; and add an endorsement in the Career and Technical Education certificate program at the University of Alaska Anchorage.

Career and Technical Education

In December 2010, the Board adopted the Career and Technical Education Plan, created by the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the University of Alaska Statewide, the Department of Education & Early Development, and other stakeholders. The plan outlines actions that can be taken to improve Career and Technical Education opportunities for students from kindergarten through postsecondary.

In June, the Board heard a report on agencies' progress implementing the Career and Technical Education Plan. The Board also discussed the Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Career and Technical Education grants to districts. Board members expressed concern that there would be accountability for the expenditures made and wanted to make sure that these grants benefitted students in Career and Technical Education.

The board continued its support of the plan through the following actions:

- Approving the Graduate Certificate program at the University of Alaska Anchorage for teachers wishing to add an endorsement in Career and Technical Education to their certificates;
- Adopting regulations regarding the qualifications for Type M teachers who obtain endorsements in Career and Technical Education.

Early Learning

In 2009, the Legislature provided \$2 million for a pilot pre-kindergarten program that would include six sites. The purpose was to allow varied school districts to create preschool programs that incorporate Alaska's Early Learning Guidelines in ways tailored to their local communities.

In 2011, the Board heard reports on the Alaska Pre-K Pilot Program, the progress being made with Head Start grantees using a common assessment across the state, and the increasing number of Head Start teachers who are certified. The Board also was informed about the work of the recently formed Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council.

Recognizing the importance of children coming to school ready to learn, the Board endorsed the department's Family Engagement Plan and its Early Literacy Plan. The Family Engagement Plan includes action steps for parents, teachers and community members that will ultimately impact student achievement. The Early Literacy Plan encourages early literacy activities in all settings where young children interact with adults. It provides actions that parents, caregivers, preschool teachers and community members can do that will help students come to school ready to learn. The Board also approved the Birth-Graduation Literacy Blueprint, the culmination of work done by literacy experts in Alaska to provide a roadmap for improving literacy outcomes for all Alaska students. The Blueprint included work previously done on the Early Literacy Plan.

State System of Support

The State System of Support assists districts as they build their capacity to implement sustainable school improvement strategies with fidelity. The State System of Support provides aligned resources, information, professional development, content coaches, and technical assistance within six domain areas that represent aspects of best practices that substantially influence school and student performance.

Throughout the year, the Board heard reports on State System of Support activities: the Third Leadership Institute and the Alaska Literacy Institute, which was sponsored for intervention districts and included representatives from pre-k programs and Head Start programs; the curriculum exposure analysis done by the state; and activities of the Yupiit School District trustee.

The Board received updates to the development of a rubric on Cultural Standards for Educators as a follow-up to their adoption of this section from the publication *Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools*.

Distance Education

The Board received updates on the progress of Alaska's Learning Network throughout the year. Alaska's Learning Network is an outgrowth of the department's Virtual School Working Group. Alaska's Learning Network enhances educational opportunities by providing: 1) distance courses taught by highly qualified Alaska teachers, 2) a network of support for educators and students to collaborate and share resources in a digital repository, and 3) professional development for teachers. Alaska's Learning Network provides rigorous courses that meet eligibility requirements of the Alaska performance Scholarship.

The Alaska Literacy Blueprint

In March, the Board endorsed the Alaska State Literacy Blueprint Birth to Graduation, created by Alaska educators. The blueprint provides guidance to policymakers, educators, community leaders, and families about ways to support all children in becoming literate and therefore prepared to fully participate in their chosen work and activities. The blueprint is organized into the key areas of instruction, assessment, leadership, professional development, and family and community engagement.

Mt. Edgecumbe High School

Mt. Edgecumbe High School is a state-operated boarding school in Sitka for approximately 400 students from around the state, 78 percent of whom self-identify as Alaska Native or American Indians and another 11 percent who self-identify as mixed race. The State Board, which serves as the Board of Education for Mt. Edgecumbe, approved a change to the credits required for Mt. Edgecumbe graduates. The Board reduced the required credits in social studies from four to three and added a required credit of either social studies or math or science beyond courses already required. The total number of required credits remains at 24. The rationale was to provide scheduling flexibility for students who want to meet the credit requirements of the Alaska Performance Scholarship.

The Board appointed an ad hoc committee to review the Mt. Edgecumbe Policy Manual. The rationale is to update the manual and remove outdated policies and procedures.