

Alaska Department of Education and Early Development

Early Learning Report



February 24, 2026

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Early Learning Education Funding Overview

The Early Learning programs consist of two components: Early Learning Coordination and Pre-Kindergarten Grants.

The Early Learning Coordination component includes both federal and state general funds. The Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) receives a federal grant that funds the Head Start Collaboration Office. This five-year grant, totaling \$130,000, comes directly from the U.S. Office of Head Start (OHS). These funds support the Head Start Liaison's salary and state activities that assist Head Start programs. Additionally, unrestricted general funds cover the non-federal match grants for Head Start, as well as grants for Best Beginnings, Parents as Teachers, and Thread.

The Pre-Kindergarten Grants component is funded through state general funds and supports two grant programs: Pre-Elementary Grants and the Alaska Reads Act Early Education Program Grant.

Early Learning Coordination

Early Learning Coordination is made up of the following components:

Grant	Funding Amount in Whole Dollars
<p>Head Start and Early Head Start All federally funded Head Start programs in Alaska currently receive state grant funds to help fulfill their 20 percent non-federal share requirement. The annual state grant award is a straight percentage based on each program’s federal award. For FY2026, this would have been 19 percent.</p>	\$13,038,500
<p>Parents as Teachers Parents as Teachers is a collaboration with the Department of Health Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program that provides support for early learners (birth to five) by empowering caregivers through personal and group visits. Grants are awarded through a competitive application process.</p>	\$474,700
<p>Best Beginnings Best Beginnings is a public-private partnership that mobilizes people and resources to ensure all Alaska children begin school ready to succeed.</p>	\$320,000
<p>Thread Thread houses Learn & Grow, the state’s quality recognition and improvement system (QRIS), and provides early childhood–specific professional development opportunities for professionals across the state.</p>	\$300,000

Pre-Kindergarten Grants

Pre-Kindergarten Grants component provides the following grants:

Grant	Funding Amount in Whole Dollars
<p>Pre-Elementary Grants (PEG) Pre-Kindergarten grants support voluntary, comprehensive, school district-based preschool programs for three-, four-, and five-year old children that are based on the guiding principles and goals set forth in the Alaska Early Learning Guidelines.</p>	\$3,200,000
<p>Early Education Program Grants (Alaska Reads Act Grants, EEP) Early Education Program Grants support the development or improvement of school district, classroom-based early education programs for four- and five-year-old children. Grantees work towards the goal of meeting requirements for approval to count preschool students in the average daily membership count for formula funding by the end of the three-year grant cycle.</p>	\$2,999,900

Early Learning Component Program Details

Head Start Grants

Head Start is a federal program that supports the school readiness of children from birth to age five in low-income families by promoting comprehensive child development services, including health, nutrition, and parental involvement. Head Start programs receive 80 percent of their funding from federal sources and must provide a 20 percent non-federal match.

Since 2001, the State of Alaska has contributed state funding through the Department of Education and Early Development to help meet this non-federal match requirement. In 2024, the legislature formalized this commitment by amending AS 14.38.010, stating:

"The Department shall make a grant to each eligible Head Start agency operating a Head Start program in the state under 42 U.S.C. 9831-9852c in an amount equal to the amount of the Head Start program's non-federal contributions required under 42 U.S.C. 9835. If the amount appropriated to the department is insufficient to meet the authorized grant amounts under this subsection, the department shall distribute the grants on a pro-rata basis to each eligible Head Start agency."

In addition to state funding, Head Start programs can fulfill their non-federal share requirement through in-kind contributions, other local funding sources, or by requesting a waiver.

Under the state funding formula, all Alaska Head Start programs receive the same percentage of their previous federal fiscal year funding allocation. This formula ensures equitable distribution of funds across all 17 Head Start programs, regardless of size, location, or program model (e.g., center-based, home-based, part-time, or full-day).

Notable increases this year: Chugachmiut received a federal Head Start expansion grant to serve additional children in Cordova and Valdez. Cook Inlet Tribal Head Start received a federal Early Head Start expansion grant to serve additional children in Anchorage through home-based services.

Head Start Grant Awards in Whole Dollars

*Please note that the federal funding listed here is from Federal FY24 and does not include "one-time funding" such as for capital projects

	Funded Enrollment	Staff Employed	Communities Served	FY2024 Federal Grant Allocation*	FY2026 State Grant Allocation
Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association	65	22	3	\$1,698,763	\$324,859
Association of Village Council Presidents	183	44	10	\$3,167,101	\$605,653
Bristol Bay Native Association	80	24	4	\$1,807,130	\$345,582
CCS Early Learning	252	145	3	\$6,186,808	\$1,183,120
Central Council Tlingit & Haida	262	55	11	\$5,212,027	\$996,710
Chugachmiut Head Start	22	11	4	\$2,607,135	\$689,802
Cook Inlet Native Head Start	259	81	1	\$5,987,449	\$1,144,996
Cook Inlet Tribal Council	72	35	1	\$3,034,719	\$580,337
Council of Athabascan Tribal Governance	30	10	5	\$670,813	\$128,281
Fairbanks Native Association	303	74	1	\$6,139,724	\$1,174,116
Kawerak	238	111	11	\$5,456,896	\$1,043,536
Kenaitze Indian Tribe	105	39	1	\$2,570,155	\$491,497
Kids' Corp Inc	257	120	1	\$5,314,516	\$1,016,309
Metlakatla	71	28	1	\$2,041,899	\$390,477
Tanana Chiefs Conference	180	63	12	\$3,372,375	\$644,908
ThrivAlaska	165	44	1	\$2,177,251	\$416,361
RurAL CAP Head Start	656	196	22	\$9,736,569	\$1,861,950
Totals	3,200	1,102	92	\$67,181,330	\$13,038,494

Parents as Teachers

The Parents as Teachers (PAT) program provides home-based services to children and their parents or caregivers during the early years of child development. PAT equips parents and caregivers with research-based information on child growth and development, activities and toys that promote learning, positive discipline strategies, problem-solving techniques, realistic expectations of child behavior, and approaches that foster children's self-esteem.

The PAT philosophy is based on the following principles:

- Parents are their children’s first and most influential teachers.
- The early years of a child’s life are critical for optimal development and lay the foundation for future success in school and life.
- Parent education and family support programs should be grounded in established and emerging research.
- All young children and their families deserve equal opportunities to succeed, regardless of demographic, geographic, or economic factors.
- Understanding and appreciating diverse cultural histories and traditions is essential to effectively serving families.

In April 2023, a request for applications was published for a new three-year grant cycle, running from July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2026. A total of nine applications were submitted and reviewed by a multidisciplinary team of three professionals from the Department of Health, Department of Family and Community Services, and the Department of Education and Early Development.

Parents as Teachers Grant Awards in Whole Dollars

Grantee	Locations	State Award
Kodiak Area Native Association (KANA)	Kodiak	\$30,000
Kid’s Corps	Anchorage	\$60,101
RurAL CAP	Haines, Mt. Village, Toksook	\$145,000
SEA-AEYC	Juneau	\$197,000
Department of Health	Anchorage Office	\$42,599
Total:		\$474,700

Since FY2018, the Department of Health, Public Health Division has provided assistance and support to the PAT program through a reimbursable services agreement with DEED.

Best Beginnings

Best Beginnings' mission is to mobilize people and resources to ensure that all Alaska children enter school ready to succeed. Through a partnership with the Department of Education and Early Development, Best Beginnings carries out activities outlined in Sec. 14.03.072 – Early Literacy Information, which states:

"In partnership with local media outlets, the department shall create and implement a communications campaign to educate parents and guardians about the importance of early literacy. The campaign shall include an internet website that provides access to current research on early literacy, book recommendations, and vocabulary-building exercises."

Best Beginnings uses state funds to staff its program and provide young children with access to books through 29 Imagination Libraries, serving 138 Alaskan communities. Alaska has an estimated 53,996 children under the age of five, and 15,398 of them are enrolled in Imagination Library, receiving a free book in the mail each month.

Thread

Thread oversees Learn & Grow, the state's Quality Recognition and Improvement System (QRIS), which certifies the quality level of early childhood programs. This system also supports school districts and Head Start programs in enhancing the quality of their early childhood education services. The Department of Education and Early Development funds help support school districts and Head Start programs that choose to enroll in Learn & Grow.

Currently, 16 school districts and three Head Start programs are actively participating in Learn & Grow. Participation includes professional development for administrators and classroom teachers through cohort meetings, training, and early childhood coaching.

Learn & Grow provides the training and framework for districts to implement the Pyramid Model, an early childhood approach to Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Additionally, Thread offers specialized professional development opportunities for early childhood professionals across the state.

Pre-Kindergarten Grants Component Program Details

Pre-Elementary Grants (PEG)

FY2026 marks the third and last year of a three-year cohort for state Pre-Kindergarten grants. All Alaskan public-school districts were eligible to apply for the FY2024-2026 Alaska Pre-Elementary Grant (PEG) to plan, launch, or support existing programs that align with Alaska’s Pre-Elementary Goals.

The PEG program serves children aged three to five, as well as five-year-olds who either missed the kindergarten age cut-off or were identified as needing an additional year of preschool. Programs may be classroom-based or home-based.

During the spring 2023 competitive application cycle, 22 school districts applied for a PEG, and nine were awarded funding. The total allocation for FY2024 was \$3.5 million, with awards determined using a formula that included a base allocation and a per-student rate, based on projected enrollment figures provided in district applications. FY2025 and FY2026 were allocated \$3.2 million each year.

Pre-Elementary Grant Awards in Whole Dollars

School District	FY2026 Number of Students*	FY2026 Number of Sites	FY2024 Allocations	FY2025 Allocations	FY2026 Allocations
Aleutians East Borough School District	12	2	\$302,648	\$247,920	\$247,920
Bristol Bay Borough School District	14	1	\$460,725	\$227,008	\$227,008
Chugach School District	59**	4	\$188,000	\$262,624	\$262,624
Juneau Borough School District	75	4	\$730,294	\$495,840	\$495,840
Kodiak Island Borough School District	63	1	\$761,729	\$577,018	\$577,018
Lake & Peninsula Borough School District	24	7	\$59,507	\$556,345	\$556,345
Nome Public Schools	27	1	\$148,644	\$123,345	\$123,345
Southwest Region School District	63	8	\$605,294	\$495,840	\$495,840
Yukon-Koyukuk School District	9	7	\$261,313	\$214,060	\$214,060
Total	346	35	\$3,518,154	\$3,200,000	\$3,200,000

*Enrollment numbers based on data provided by district in DEED’s Grants Management System (GMS) in the first quarter of FY2026.

**Includes students enrolled in FOCUS Home School.

Early Education Program Grants (EEP)

Under the Alaska Reads Act, the Early Education Program (EEP) Grant provides funding to develop or improve district-wide early education programs for four- and five-year-old children. The grant supports districts in meeting requirements for approval to count preschool students in the average daily membership (ADM) count for formula funding by the end of the three-year grant period. Approval requirements include meeting the Alaska Early Education Program Standards and employing teacher(s) with the Alaska Reads Act Early Education Lead Endorsement.

In spring 2023, eleven districts applied for the grant, and seven were awarded funds; these districts are operating on a FY2024–FY2026 grant cycle. In spring 2024, nine districts applied, and two were awarded funds; these districts are operating on a FY2025–FY2027 cycle. Recipients were selected through a competitive application process that required prior consultation with each local and tribal Head Start agency operating within the district’s boundaries and prioritized the lowest performing districts based on the System of School Support.

Allocations for each district were determined using a formula that considered the projected number of students per district, the total amount of available funding, funds necessary for program startup, and the amount requested during the application process. According to AS 14.03.410(b), the total allocation was \$2,999,900 for FY2024, FY2025, and FY2026. The full amount was allocated to grantees annually.

A new grant application will be available in winter/spring 2026 to initiate the third three-year grant cycle to begin in FY2027.

Early Education Program Grant Awards in Whole Dollars

School District	*Number of Students	*Number of Sites	FY2024 Allocation	FY2025 Allocation	FY2026 Allocation
Alaska Gateway School District	11	2	N/A	\$200,916	\$150,000
Denali Borough School District	10	3	\$ 623,386	\$398,403	\$500,236
Galena City School District	8	1	\$ 348,365	\$313,864	\$313,864
Hydaburg City School District	4	1	\$ 186,663	\$152,164	\$152,163
Iditarod Area School District	9	6	\$ 568,857	\$499,986	\$499,986
Kake City School District	10	1	\$ 498,503	\$403,550	\$403,550
Kuspuk School District	16	2	\$ 495,326	\$312,082	\$312,082
Lower Kuskokwim School District	17	1	\$ 278,800	\$171,048	\$171,048
Northwest Arctic Borough School District	111	11	N/A	\$547,887	\$496,971
Total	196	28	\$2,999,900	\$2,999,900	\$2,999,900

*Enrollment and site data is based on data provided by each district in DEED’s Grants Management System (GMS) in the first quarter of FY2026.

Application for Early Education Program Approval and 0.5 ADM/Formula Funding

Over three cycles, DEED has used the Application for Early Education Program (EEP) Approval and 0.5 ADM Formula Funding to identify districts that meet eligibility criteria to receive formula funding for four- and five-year-old students, as allocated through AS 14.17.500. To qualify, districts must have demonstrated the district’s level of implementation of the Alaska Early Education Program Standards and employed early education teachers with current, required certification, per AS 14.07.020(a)(8).

In 2023, seven school districts submitted applications. Anchorage School District received conditional approval for implementing 80 percent of components on seven of nine sections of the Alaska Early Education Program Standards. Within one year, they achieved full approval for implementing at least 80 percent of components on all nine sections.

In 2024, four applications were submitted. Of these, two districts, Valdez and Skagway, received conditional approval for implementing half the components of the Alaska Early Education Program Standards. Both Valdez and Skagway achieved full approval within one year.

In 2025, nine districts submitted applications. Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District received full approval and the remaining districts received conditional approval. Successful implementation of the EEP Standards ranged from five percent to 70 percent of components. Demonstration of an intent to implement the EEP Standards was accepted for approval.

Early Education Programs Eligible for 0.5 ADM in Whole Dollars

School District	FY2024 Entitlement	FY2025 Entitlement	FY2026 Entitlement	FY2026 Adjustments
Anchorage School District (SD)	\$1,693,599	\$1,945,128	\$2,141,060	
Annette Island SD			\$37,920	
Bering Strait SD			\$907,602	
Chatham SD			\$3,604	
Fairbanks North Star Borough SD			\$7,811	
Kenai Peninsula Borough SD			\$165,031	
Ketchikan Gateway Borough SD			\$210,161	
Matanuska Susitna Borough SD			\$930,655	*Reduced by \$323,765
North Slope Borough SD			\$629,280	
Petersburg City SD			\$0	*Reduced by \$5,408
Skagway School District		\$15,238	\$0	*Reduced by \$14,553
Southeast Island Borough SD			\$20,228	
Valdez City School District		\$90,417	\$0	*Reduced by \$51,473
Totals:	\$1,693,599	\$2,050,783	\$5,053,352	

*AS 14.17.500(f) establishes a statewide limitation on the total amount of early education ADM aid that may be generated. When the total eligible amount across all approved districts exceeds that statutory growth limit and the available appropriation, the department is not authorized to fully fund every approved district.

Alaska Pre-Elementary Program Goals and Activities

Goal 1	Promote school readiness through developmentally appropriate programs focused on all areas of child development as outlined in the Alaska Early Learning Guidelines .
Goal 2	Encourage collaboration amongst an early childhood mixed delivery system that meets individual community needs with site-based, home-based, and/or community-based programs.
Goal 3	Strong partnership between program and families through two-way communication; incorporating family culture, language and values into the learning environment; on-going family engagement; and celebrating growth together.
Goal 4	Lay the foundation for literacy by embedding science of reading principles throughout each program’s curricula, routines, and schedule. For pre-elementary children, emerging literacy skills are oral language, phonological awareness, and print knowledge.
Goal 5	Utilize the state-supported developmental screening tool to engage families and schools in screening all pre-elementary students in order to identify and provide programming that supports children who are experiencing developmental delay.
Goal 6	Utilize the state-supported formative assessment tool to monitor child progress, provide differentiated activities, and continually improve program efficacy.
Goal 7	Facilitate the transition of pre-elementary children between programs by fostering ongoing collaboration among the family, the current program, and the receiving program.
Goal 8	Promote high-quality learning environments by ensuring that early childhood professionals have access to on-going professional development and on-going opportunities to reflect on and improve their teaching practice.
Goal 9	Recognize the importance of social-emotional development through use of an evidence-based early childhood positive behavior support framework that includes effective teacher-child interactions, relationship-based practices, and social-emotional competence.

Child Pre-Elementary Growth During School Year 2024-2025

Head Start and school district grantees are required to use the same child development assessment. The Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) provides statewide access to the tool, Teaching Strategies GOLD®, along with training and support. Additionally, school districts that are not grant-funded may opt to use the tool; data from these non-grant funded programs are included in the following data sets. In the 2024-2025 school year, licensed childcare programs enrolled in Alaska’s Quality Recognition and Improvement System also had access to this tool, although their data is not included in the graphs.

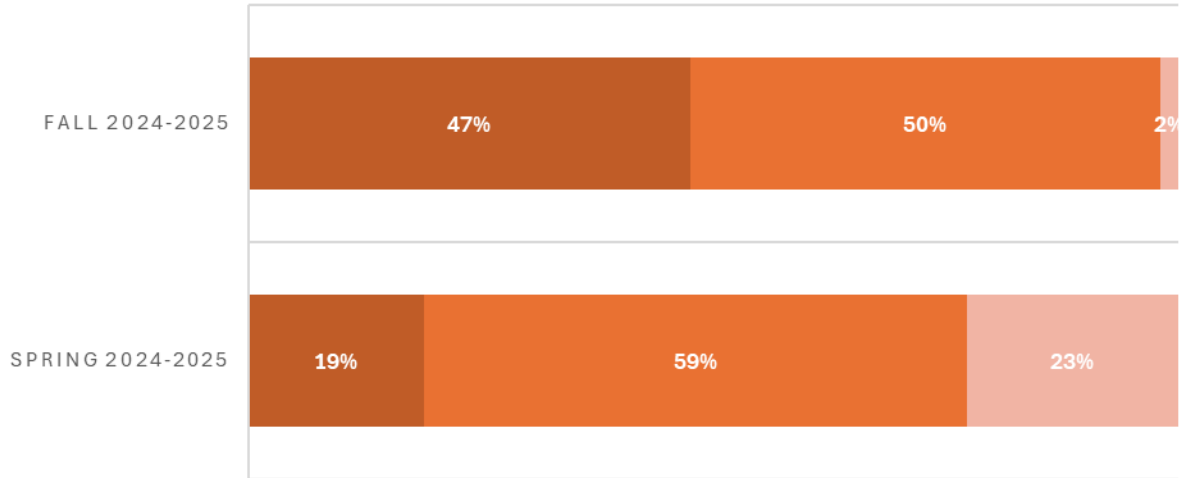
Teachers observe children based on the concept of Widely Held Expectations. In Teaching Strategies GOLD®, Widely Held Expectations refer to a set of criterion-referenced, research-based benchmarks that indicate the typical skills, knowledge, and behaviors for each grade or class. A student’s development is recorded as meeting, exceeding, or falling below these expectations. DEED requires pre-elementary grantees to submit data from five developmental areas: social-emotional, cognitive, language, literacy, and mathematics.

The following graphs display data from two checkpoint periods—Fall 2024 and Spring 2025. They represent three- and four-year-old students from school districts and Head Start programs. These graphs depict “Area-level” scores, which are aggregates of children’s scores based on 4–12 sub-skills, known as dimensions. For example, the Literacy Area is composed of the following dimensions:

- Notices and discriminates rhymes,
- Notices and discriminates alliteration,
- Notices and discriminates discrete units of sound,
- Applies phonics concepts and knowledge of word structure to decode text,
- Identifies and names letters,
- Identifies letter-sound correspondences,
- Uses and appreciates books and other texts,
- Uses print concepts,
- Interacts during reading experiences, book conversations, and text reflections,
- Uses emergent reading skills,
- Retells stories and recounts details from informational texts, and
- Writes name.

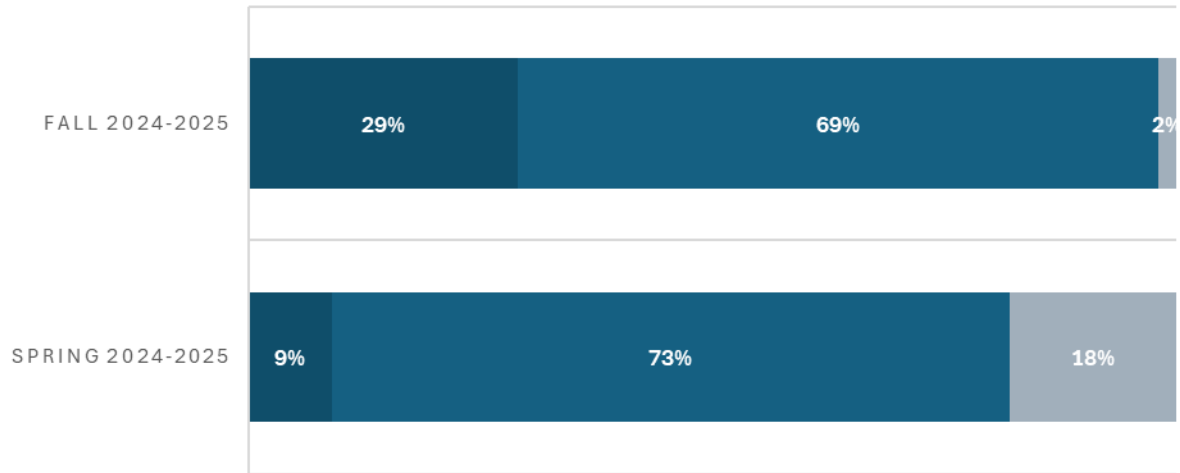
SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL

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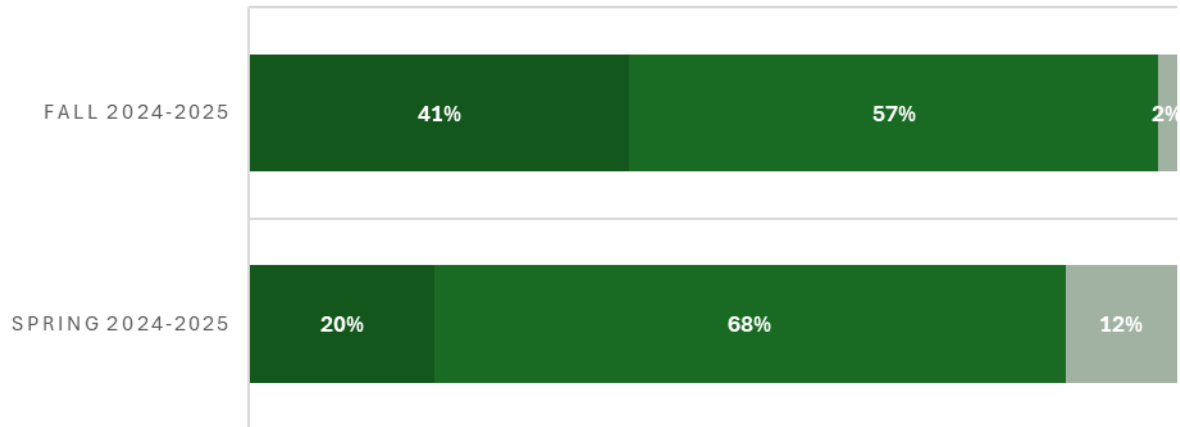
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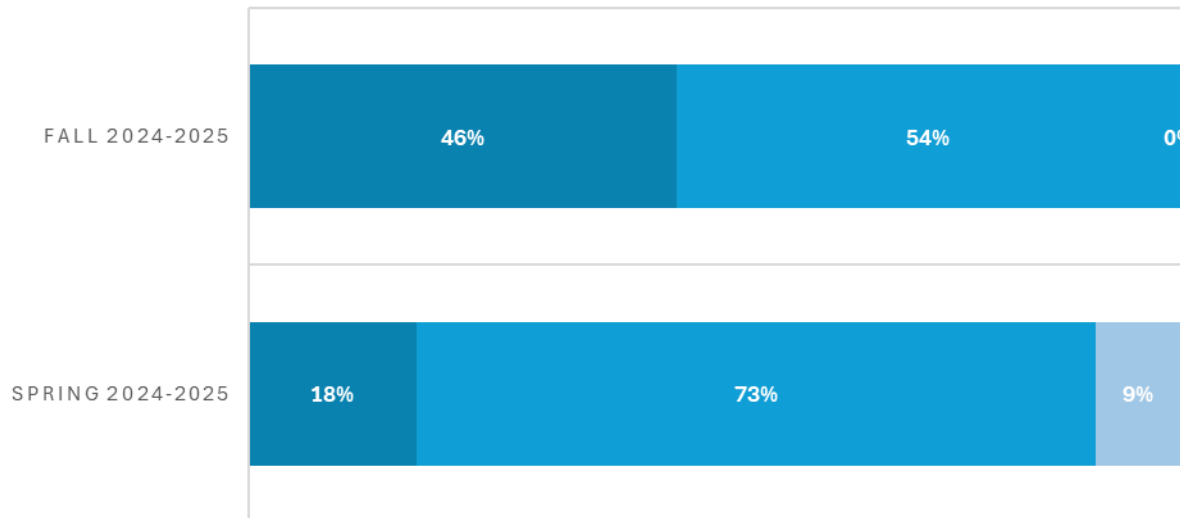
LANGUAGE

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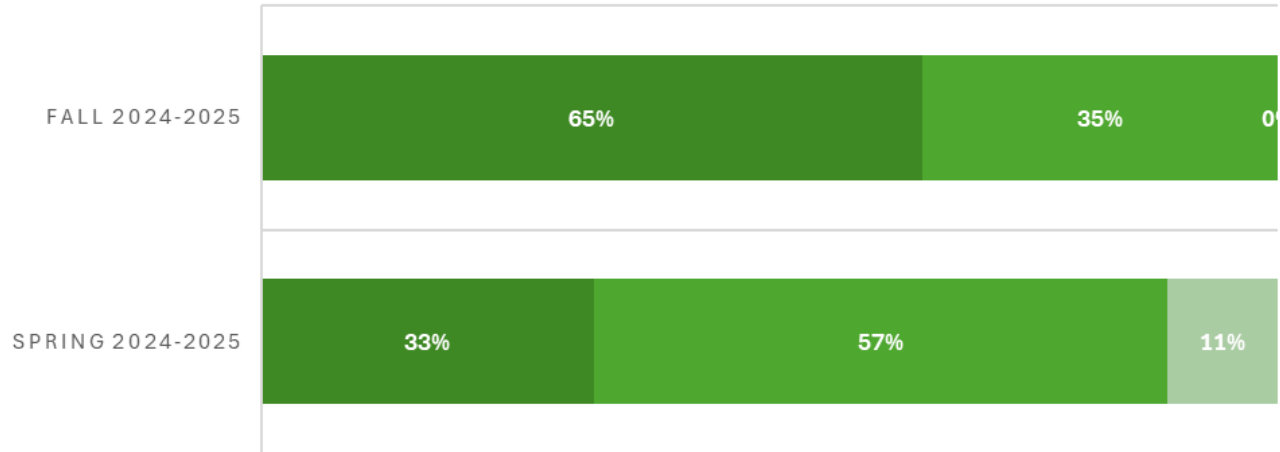
LANGUAGE

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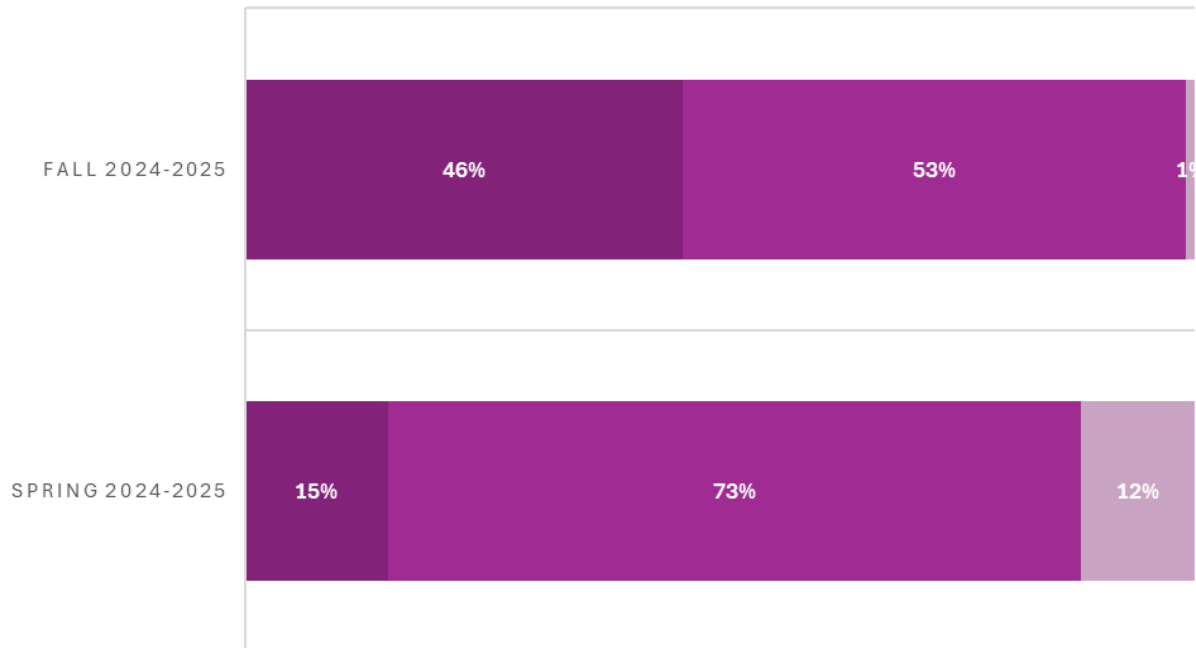
MATHEMATICS

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LITERACY

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Alaska Developmental Profile (ADP)

The ADP is an observational tool administered by kindergarten teachers to all kindergarten students during the first four weeks of the school year. First-grade students who did not attend kindergarten were also assessed, but are not represented in the data presented below. Teachers provide a rating for each student for 13 goals within five domain areas. There are three possible ratings:

- 0 = Student does not demonstrate the goal
- 1 = Student demonstrates the goal at least 50 percent of the time
- 2 = Student demonstrates the goal consistently at least 80 percent of the time

A student who receives a 2 on at least 11 out of 13 goals is determined to be demonstrating kindergarten readiness skills.

The following ADP data are from the Fall of 2025. During the Fall of 2025, 7,530 students were assessed with the Alaska Developmental Profile. Results show that 31.54 percent of students assessed demonstrated kindergarten readiness skills, while 68.46 percent did not consistently demonstrate them upon kindergarten entry.



Seven-Year View of Alaska Developmental Profile Results

The following graph represents ADP results from seven of the past eight school years. Please note the ADP was not administered in the 2020-2021 school year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

