



THE STATE  
of **ALASKA**  
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

**Department of Education  
& Early Development**

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

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March 22, 2025

The Honorable Jesse Kiehl  
Chair, Senate Education Finance Sub Committee  
Alaska State Capitol, Room 511  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Chair Kiehl,

Thank you for inviting the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) to present on March 11, 2025, on the department's FY2026 Governor's Budget Overview. This memo provides responses to the follow-up questions asked at that meeting. All of the dollar figures presented in this document and in the attachments are in thousands unless otherwise noted.

**1. Provide more details on why \$1,200.0 is estimated to lapse in the Residential Schools Program component in FY2025? How confident are we in the bed count estimates for the current fiscal year?**

The Residential Schools Program component includes both the Boarding Home Program and the Residential School Program. The Boarding Home Program is for secondary students who do not have daily access to the appropriate grade level at their local school; participation in this program has been variable due to other secondary options across the state. In FY2025 only Yukon Koyukuk School District is participating, so a small portion of the estimated lapse is tied to this program. The Residential School Program is based on an approved program capacity. The significant lapse is from this program and due in part to lower-than-anticipated enrollment across seven of the eight approved programs, as well as one approved program, North Slope, having not yet met the operational requirements outlined in their approved application resulting in not receiving funding in FY2025. It is expected that this program will qualify for funding in FY2026. Due to these issues, the estimated lapse in FY2025 is \$1,200.0.

**2. Which schools received grants for the hunter education program?**

Fifteen schools received \$500.0 in grants in February 2025 for implementation this fiscal year. A breakdown by recipient and award amount is found in the attachment titled, *FY2025 DEED Hunter Education Grants*.

**3. Please provide more information on what the department is doing to help districts retain teachers.**

DEED is committed to the implementation of the Teacher Retention and Recruitment Playbook strategies published in August of 2023. Key retention strategies DEED has taken action on in the past year are:

- Development of the Exit and Stay Survey, designed to provide a system for assessing school culture on an annual basis. This survey data will provide information for districts and DEED to assess current needs. In addition, this survey will evaluate conditions that drive some educators to stay in their school and role. The stay survey data will allow DEED to identify factors that drive strong retention and support districts in sharing effective strategies.
- The DEED has funded the establishment of the Alaska Educator Retention and Recruitment Center (AERRC) as a hub to support retention strategies. One activity that has been employed this year to support retention is the incorporation of retention strategies in the annual Alaska State Leadership Institute, ensuring that retention is a thread for this excellent, annual school leadership training. The AERRC has also convened a Steering Committee that will work to identify additional retention strategies from the playbook that can be pursued and shared across districts.
- The DEED is working with the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS), the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA), Bristol Bay Regional Career and Technical Education (BBRCCTE), Sealaska Heritage Institute (SHI), Alaska Council on School Administrators (ACSA), and other key partners to develop a Principal Registered Apprenticeship Pathway (P-RAP). The DEED provided funding through the State Apprenticeship Expansion Formula, Competitive grant for development of this pathway. The DEED is committed to developing this pathway with teacher retention as a focused goal. This will be done through the approved standards for On-the-Job Learning required for the program, and DEED is working with partners to embed retention strategies across the program. The goal is for P-RAP graduates to be teacher retention experts.

With continued funding for the Teacher Retention and Retention program, the DEED will continue to target retention strategies, outreach, and support for continued implementation.

**4. Are there federal funds to support Green to Teach?**

There are no dedicated federal funds available to support Green to Teach.

**5. For the teacher retention and recruitment (TRR) increment (slide 17), please get us a break down of how much of the price tag is going into each of the items? What's the plan to make shifts and adjustments to that in the coming fiscal year?**

The TRR increment has been used to implement identified strategies from the TRR Playbook. These funds, in addition to the three-year State Apprenticeship Expansion Formula (SAEF) federal grant in the amount of \$2,625.0, are dedicated to targeted investment in teacher retention and recruitment. As the SAEF grant is largely focused on apprentice fees and costs, such as

tuition and mentor support, the TRR funds are being used to support other areas of need. After the SAEF grant funds are expended, the TRR funds will be targeted toward support of apprenticeship costs.

Current funding is allocated in the following ways:

- Expand Teacher-Registered Apprenticeship Program (T-RAP) and Implement Principal-Registered Apprenticeship Program (P-RAP)
  - \$50.0 – Alaska State Mentorship Project (ASMP), training and coaching for apprenticeship mentors.
  - \$140.0 – DEED Apprenticeship Coordinator, to provide coordination with districts, universities, other sponsors, the State Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD), and the U.S. Department of Labor in enrolling apprentices, tracking reporting requirements, dissemination of SAEF funds, technical assistance and support to districts, and other teacher apprenticeship needs.
  - \$360.0 – National Center for Grow Your Own (NCGYO) Apprenticeship Technical Assistance and Support Contract. The NCGYO is contracted to support DEED, other apprenticeship sponsors, universities, mentor support agencies, and districts in standing up and implementing the requirements for teacher registered apprenticeship. This is a three-year contract to support implementation and build sustainable systems for Alaska educator apprenticeship.
- Expand Alaska Educator Retention and Recruitment Center (AERRC) Services for International Teachers
  - \$500.0 – Alaska Council of School Administrators (ACSA) Contract, funding is provided to stand up the educator hub as a resource to support sustainable coordination for teacher retention and recruitment implementation statewide and to support development of international teacher hiring systems to support district needs.
- Continue Administration of Teacher Exit and Stay Survey and Data Analysis
  - \$100.0 – Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) reimbursable service agreement (RSA), to develop a tool that can be implemented by a partner agency, currently planned for the AERRC to take on once developed. The Exit and Stay Survey will provide a tool to collect information on working conditions, reasons for leaving the field, reasons for staying in the field, and a mechanism to drive effective program development to improve teacher retention statewide. The tool will be designed for annual data collection to track changes over time, adjust implementation strategies, and identify successes for expansion.
- Design and Administer Principal Exit and Stay Survey

This is planned for the 2025-2026 school year, DEED anticipates a similar scope of investment as the Teacher Exit and Stay Survey. The goals will be the same, but to target principal retention strategies through an annual survey.

- **Develop and Implement Alternative Pathway to Certification**  
\$102.0 – DEED TRR Project Coordinator. This position is working on several TRR implementation strategies, including support for the AERRC hub, outreach and support for district implementation of TRR strategies, and the development of alternative pathways to certification. Current efforts are targeted toward implementation of the Green to Teach pathway.
- **Continued Promotion of TRR Awareness and Engagement**
  - \$75.0 – Adams Analytics contract. Barbara Adams has been contracted to support the TRR awareness and engagement strategies of the TRR playbook through statewide implementation support. This includes work on updating the teacher turnover data to include recent years, support for standing up the AERRC hub, support for educator apprenticeship, and direct district support statewide.
  - \$80.0 – Other Program Costs. These funds are used for supplies, to create clear graphics and materials, for staff to attend conferences and events to promote implementation and understanding of the TRR Playbook, and other program costs to support TRR implementation strategies.

**6. What were the sources of additional funds to support Minecraft in FY2025?**

To ensure continued implementation of the *Coding in Minecraft* program in FY2025, providing access to instruction leading to industry recognized credentials in computer programming, the DEED invested the \$600.0 UGF legislative allocation along with \$187.9 of the Career and Technical Education UGF allocation, and \$412.9 of general funds to support the statewide implementation.

The current contract for this program ensures capacity for all schools and districts to participate in the program. DEED is in the process of hiring a Computer Science Content Specialist. This position will support expansion of the program and assist districts in promoting opportunities for students. The industry recognized credentials students can achieve through this program support not only potential computer science career pathways, but also strong computer science skills that can be employed across a number of potential career pathways, ensuring Alaska graduates have marketable skills for a wide range of Alaska jobs.

**7. For the Alaska Career Guide initiative with rootEd Alliance, out of the \$440.0 how much is going to overhead? What is the cost for partnering with this national group? How many kids are participating in each district? Are you expanding to more rural sites? Is DOLWD contributing some funds in either FY2025 or in FY2026? Who participated at the professional development? What is the strategic plan for expansion?**

Approximately \$75.0 of the \$440.0 is allocated for the DEED project coordination costs, including staffing and contracting to support the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD), the Bristol Bay Regional Career and Technical Education Consortium (BBRCTE), and Sealaska Heritage Institute (SHI) in implementing the model. DEED does not take an indirect rate; DOLWD applies a 25 percent indirect rate, totaling approximately \$60.0. The department has paid the partner organization approximately \$3.5 for professional development conference fees; covering staff from BBRCTE, DEED, and DOLWD.

**DOLWD Student Participation by District:**

- a. Galena City School District – 29 seniors
- b. Kuspuksuk School District – 16 seniors
- c. Lower Yukon School District – 32 seniors
- d. Nenana City School District – 36 seniors
- e. Yukon Koyukuk School District – two seniors

DEED does not plan to expand caseloads with the current two career guides; the intent is to increase direct services to seniors by increasing site visits from semesterly to quarterly. The DOLWD is not contributing funds in FY2025 or FY2026. Representatives from BBRCTE, DEED, DOLWD, and SHI, including project leaders and career guides, participated in professional development. The DEED is working with an interdisciplinary group to develop a statewide strategy to expand student access to career guidance. This effort is in its early stages, and the group will present its initial work on March 31, 2025, during a Legislative Lunch and Learn hosted by Senator Kelly Merrick titled, *Building Alaska's Workforce: The Role of Career Guides in a New Statewide Plan*.

**8. The district cannot participate in the 0.5 average daily membership (ADM) if it receives funding from other sources. However, if it were to make adjustments in a small community, the district would be leveraging the federal funds. Is there a way to get there?**

There are instances when four- and five-year-old students cannot be counted in a district's average daily membership (ADM) that determines Foundation Formula funding. Students that are enrolled in early education programs that receive state and/or federal funding specifically for pre-kindergarten programs are not eligible to be counted in a district's ADM. For example, the Early Education Program Grant and the Pre-Elementary Grant have one purpose, to improve early education programs in the State, thus students attending programs receiving these funds cannot be counted in a district's ADM.

However, funding sources that have multiple purposes, not solely for pre-kindergarten programs, can supplement Foundation Formula funding. For example, Title 1, Part A funds can be used for a variety of purposes. These funds are provided to districts with high numbers of percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging academic standards. Since these funds can be used for PreK-12 education, they are not provided specifically for early education programs. Students who are four- and five-years-old attending programs receiving Title 1 funds can be counted in a district's ADM.

**9. What statute would need to be changed to allow Head Start to receive the 0.5 ADM?**

Districts do not operate Head Start programs. Head Start programs are federal programs receiving funding directly from the U.S. Office of Head Start. While some districts partner with Head Start for teachers and facilities, Head Start remains a separate entity. Since Head Start programs are not part of a school district, they are not eligible for 0.5 ADM funding.

**10. What data do we have to support Parents as Teachers (PAT)?**

The Parents as Teachers (PAT) program is supported by initiatives like the Alaska Reads Act which fosters collaborations between the Department of Health and DEED to effectively implement the program. The PAT model employs evidence-based systems to engage parents and offer high-quality early childhood education, with a strong emphasis on family engagement, education, and health supports.

The State of Alaska PAT grantees provide quarterly data on staffing, including completed and pursued certifications, as well as individual home visitor caseloads. They also report service delivery data, including the number of families served (new, continuing, exited, completed, and current), as well as information on family stressors and the number of children served. Additionally, the grantees report on completed screenings which include developmental assessments, parent-child interactions, depression screenings, protective factors, parent involvement in children's care and education, and vision and hearing screenings.

**11. How can grantees like Thread and other early education providers help with the childcare problem?**

The DEED's scope of work with Thread, fulfilled by the State's Quality Recognition and Improvement System (QRIS) called Learn and Grow, is designed to assist pre-elementary and Head Start programs to achieve high-quality program standards and provide professional development opportunities. These deliverables are free to the programs and fulfill para-professional and educator professional development needs. Learn and Grow also partners with the Alaska Department of Health in supporting licensed childcare providers offering tools and resources for program management, peer-to-peer learning, coaching, and developing plans for improvement.

**12. Are there still federal funds for Parents as Teachers? If the State provided more Unrestricted General Funds (UGF) as match, would the State be able to access more federal funds?**

Yes, the State would be able to access more federal funds if the State provided more Unrestricted General Funds (UGF) as a match. The Department of Health's (DOH) Women's, Children's, and Family Health (WCFH) section currently receives the required match for the Health Resources and Services Administration's Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) federal program through a reimbursable service agreement (RSA) with DEED. This state match

has allowed the DOH to obtain additional federal funding to support one to two Parents as Teachers (PAT) grantees. It is anticipated that a Request for Proposal will be released soon for FY2026. Please note that the State's MIECHV program is separate from the Administration for Children and Families' Tribal MIECHV program which also funds PAT services in Alaska.

The WCFH is already receiving the maximum amount of federal funding dollars available for MIECHV-PAT. Additional State funding would allow for more PAT services in Alaska outside of the federal grant program.

**13. For Online with Libraries (OWL), how much have licensure fees increased? Has the program kept up? Is the program canceling any subscriptions because of fiscal constraints?**

The Alaska OWL program connects Alaskans with high-speed internet, videoconferencing, and information technology training by providing internet assistance awards to 45 Alaska libraries in FY2025 (up from 12 Alaska libraries in FY2024).

The OWL program supports two statewide subscriptions: a statewide Zoom account for public libraries and a statewide subscription to Who-Fi that provides public libraries with a wireless session count. It is anticipated that Who-Fi will experience a significant cost increase in FY2026. There are no significant increases to licensure fees outside of WhoFi for next year, and staff is researching alternative statistics software.

**14. How is recruitment for the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE) Executive Director going?**

The ACPE held a special meeting on March 13, 2025, and approved a candidate for the Executive Director position. The final steps in the recruitment process will take place before an official appointment occurs.

**15. How did ACPE reach an estimate for a \$3,000.0 increment for the Alaska Performance Scholarship (APS) in FY2026?**

Given the 2024 APS legislative changes, in FY2025 the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE) has experienced a higher level of APS awards being awarded than previously seen since the program's inception in 2011. The FY2026 funding request for an additional \$3,000.0 is the ACPE's best estimate utilizing only one year (Class of 2024) as a basis of modeling future eligibility and use projections. The FY2026 projection utilized the eligibility and award amount data in FY2025 with a moderate increase, as the ACPE anticipates APS eligibility and use trending upwards in the coming years.

**16. How many graduates were eligible for APS from the class of 2023? How many graduates were eligible for APS from the class of 2024?**

See the attached report titled, *Summary of APS Eligibility by School Type for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024*.

**17. What budget reductions would you recommend for the department?**

DEED does not have a list of reductions or decrements to submit for consideration at this time. The department will work with the Office of Management and Budget to identify any future amendments for the legislature's consideration.

**18. Provide the most recent early learning report.**

See the attached report titled *DEED EARL Report for Legislature Early Learning 2025 (02-27-25)*.

**19. What reductions does the department plan to make to ensure the Public Library Assistance (PLA) grants are paid in full in FY2026?**

The Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums plans to move approximately \$574.0 UGF from personal services to grants to fund the FY2026 PLA grants.

Please don't hesitate to reach out with anything further.

Sincerely,



Deena Bishop, Ed.D.  
Commissioner

Enclosures: FY2025 DEED Hunter Education Grants  
Summary of APS Eligibility by School Type for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024  
DEED EARL Report for Legislature Early Learning 2025 (02-27-25)

cc: Jordan Shilling, Director, Governor's Legislative Office