

## **Initiatives in the Governor's Proposed FY14 Budget**

### **Digitizing Education in Alaska: 5,900.0**

This increment includes four distinct budgetary items that together complement one another, and create extraordinary learning experiences throughout Alaska. Today's students were born in an age of rapidly expanding digital technology, and how we prepare them to be career and college ready must dramatically change. This initiative will expand opportunities for students to prepare for a modern and changing workforce, assist educators in preparing students, and provide access to the tools necessary for today and everyone's future.

#### **Alaska 1:1 Initiative – 3,900.0**

In the first year this component provides 60% matching funds to:

- Put digital devices into the hands of 32,250 students.
- Put instructional digital devices into the hands of 2000 teachers.
- Provide training and professional development to adjust teaching strategies to best incorporate 21<sup>st</sup> century tools.

Over four years, with an on-going investment of \$15,840.0 in matching funds, digital devices and the professional development to use those devices will be in the hands of 129,000 students and in 8,000 classrooms.

The 1:1 initiative will provide opportunities for learning that takes advantage of resources that are up to date, aligned to standards, and allow students to learn when, where and how they best learn.

- Rather than having students use text books that are immediately dated, they will use materials that can be continuously updated.
- Rather than having teachers assess students and wait days for results, teacher will get quick feedback and can adjust instruction immediately.
- Rather than prepare to work in an economy that no longer exist, students will be prepared for an economy of the future.

#### **Alaska Learning Network – 1,100.0**

Alaska's Learning Network provides Alaska-designed courses to students' statewide as well as professional development to help teachers effectively teach students using digital devices and

resources to provide effective use of digital technology in every learning environment statewide.

During the 2011-12 school year 169 students took courses through the Network, and in 2012-2013 we have over 300 students taking course through the Network. The Network has provided professional development to 21 educators to improve the blended-learning (use of face-to-face and electronic medium) environments for students. Finally, many resources have been made available through the Alaska Sandbox for educators to use at no charge.

In the 2013-2014 school year:

- The Network will provide 70 courses for students in the state, of which four will offer dual secondary and post-secondary credit, taught by highly qualified – Alaska certified educators.
- The Network will be able to offer 500 students learning opportunities through course enrollment.
- The Network will train 20 educators to create powerful learning environments for students, regardless of location in the state, to students.

All courses piloted by the Network are held to a rigorous vetting process and are made available to all teachers statewide as whole or partial, to be adapted in their local classrooms. Resources and courses are aligned with Alaska state standards and are available at no charge for use by any Alaskan teacher.

### **Broadband support for Online With Libraries (OWL) – 761.8**

The Alaska OWL bandwidth allows interactive use of the internet for the first time ever in many Alaskan community libraries and the video conferencing networks open doors to the state and the rest of the world for many communities off the road system in Alaska. OWL brought broadband infrastructure to 67 community libraries and a video conferencing network to 97 community libraries across the state, of which 30 are joint school-community-libraries. The infrastructure is now in place in each library, and this investment will allow each library to:

- Gain access to distance education opportunities which were not possible prior to OWL due to insufficient bandwidth.
- Allow Alaskan K-12 students, beginning college students, and adult basic education learners' access to Live Homework Help during after school hours.
- Use the OWL videoconferencing network to access professional training opportunities such as fire safety and other vocational education.
- Extend lifelong learning opportunities to adult community members.

- Allow community to community video meetings for cultural and civic purposes.
- Enable communities in rural Alaska access to state agencies, state officials and other e-government services.
- Offer wireless services to allow students to use their digital learning devices outside of school hours if there is no internet access in the home.

### **Live Homework Help - \$132.0**

Live Homework Help is a powerful service that allows students to receive assistance with their homework and classroom learning. It brings students together with qualified online human tutors from 1 PM to midnight 7 days a week. The service is available throughout the state and can be accessed at school, at public libraries, at home and recently via mobile devices.

This program continues to grow and can be a powerful support to all students, and particularly to students across the state who are taking more rigorous courses called for in the new State content standards and to qualify for an Alaska Performance Scholarship. Live Homework Help gives students the immediate assistance they need to excel and helps parents who find their children's science, math, English or social studies homework baffling.

The usage of the Live Homework Help has exploded:

- In 2008 5,073 tutoring sessions took place, and in 2012 18,065 tutoring sessions took place.
- The total number of students using the service in the same time period has grown from 5,703 to 8,065 and the number of tutoring hours has climbed from 1,882 to 5,359.
- The student advisor to the State Board of Education & Early Development, Madison Manning from Pt. Heiden, AK, is a regular user and advocate of this service, which provides her the additional support she needs in a very small school environment.

## **Jobs for Alaska's Graduates Program (JAG) – 800.0**

The Jobs for Alaska's Graduates (JAG) initiative is a cooperative effort between public and private entities to have a direct and intentional impact on the graduation rate and the subsequent success rate of students who leave high school and enter the work force or additional training. The partnership in Alaska initially involves the Department of Education & Early Development (EED), Department of Labor and Workforce Development and the United Way. The program will have a statewide focus and be operated and monitored by United Way to maximize connections to the employers and the larger business community for support and opportunities to engage graduating students.

The initiative is currently in 33 other states and focuses on re-engaging students who are in danger of not graduating. The focus is on removing barriers in their lives that create challenges to graduating; assisting with acquiring credits necessary to graduate; and providing them with the skills to obtain and retain a job after graduation by addressing key employability competencies recognized by business leaders and employers.

The goals of JAG are met by implementing a graduation specialist into a school through a direct partnership with the principal and superintendent. Cooperatively, students are identified, interviewed and asked to join the JAG program. Graduation specialists will carry a caseload of 35-45 students, meeting with 10-15 at a time during a school period of the day. They address credit recovery issues when necessary, personal challenges that are a hindrance to success, setting a plan to graduate, and working on employability skills. JAG graduation specialists' work on a 12-month calendar rather than the school calendar, which allows time for additional connections, job shadows, and other activities that help keep students engaged. JAG specialists also follow students and offer support for 12 months after graduation to guide them into meaningful training and/or employment.

Across the country, 93% of JAG students graduate compared to approximately 20-30% of their at-risk peers. Most recently, 79% were in additional training, the military, or a meaningful job within 12 months of graduation. These percentages, with Alaska's student population, could significantly raise our state's graduation rate by re-engaging those who are on the brink of leaving and dropping out.

The \$800,000 request will allow for the hiring of eight or nine graduation specialists in ~~nine~~ different schools across the state, in urban and rural settings, that will impact approximately 360 at-risk students. It will allow for a supervisor to coordinate efforts and trainings, connect with business leaders, and assist with the regular data input that is required for accountability purposes in all JAG programs. It provides funding for the removal of barriers to student success

including helping with identification cards, clothing for interviews, food and gas vouchers, and connections with the proper agencies for support for situations like pregnancies and homelessness. Additionally, trainings for specialists and events for JAG students will be incorporated.

## **Kindergarten through Third Grade Literacy Project – 320.0**

This literacy project, which builds upon prior state investments, will address the need to make sure every student is reading on grade level by third grade. This investment specifically will provide for:

- Pre and post screening assessments for all students in kindergarten through third grade.
- Collecting, analyzing, and storing data from the assessment so it can be follow the student if the family moves.
- Creating the knowledge regarding which students need interventions, and ensuring those interventions are appropriate for the student.

The state previously invested in targeted funds to support literacy, which will effectively provide professional development and tools to ensure educators have the knowledge and most current practices to provide reading interventions at the early grades – and ensure students are ready to read by grade three.

## **Pre-Kindergarten Program – 480.0**

The FY12 budget includes the addition of one-time funding to support the state pre-kindergarten program. This budget proposes to maintain 480.0 of that one-time funding as part of the base for the state pre-kindergarten program.

## **Comprehensive System of Statewide Assessment – 500.0**

### **Statewide Assessment System**

The State of Alaska has adopted a comprehensive assessment system for all students that include a developmental profile for children entering kindergarten or first grade, standards-based assessments for grades 3 through 10, and a High School Graduation Qualifying Examination. This assessment system provides information to improve instruction and to hold schools and communities accountable for the academic achievement of children. The Department of Education and Early Development has a statutory responsibility to maintain this system for assessing student and school achievement

The current assessment system, developed in 2005, remains in place. With the adoption of revised Alaska Content Standards by the State Board of Education & Early Development in June 2012 the department is preparing for the development of new assessments. In FY14 additional item development will be necessary to prepare to test students on the new more rigorous college and career ready standards.

Refining assessments or procuring an assessment that can assess the students based on the new standards, and provide information for instructional improvement and accountability is a significant challenge to be met in the next two fiscal years. Change in assessment systems takes multiple years, and requires significant stakeholder involvement to positively impact student achievement.