

State Board of Education & Early Development

Report to the Alaska Legislature

January 2015



State Board of Education & Early Development

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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 AND OTHER BOARD ACTIONS

Educator quality

In March, the State Board approved the use of the latest version of Praxis I and II tests for teachers and set the minimum acceptable scores. Teachers use Praxis to satisfy the state's basic competency requirement, gain highly qualified status, add endorsements, and qualify for the Professional level of certification.

In July, the State Board approved a superintendent endorsement program at the University of Alaska Southeast. The program will be offered online across the state. It is the state's only operating superintendent endorsement program.

Alaska regulations do not require school district superintendents to have a superintendent endorsement on their administrator's certificate. However, an endorsement program allows current and aspiring superintendents to study the elements of educational finance; district operations; use of technology; district governance; program planning, implementation, and evaluation; and communication with constituencies; and to participate in a leadership internship. See http://education.alaska.gov/State_Board/pdf/14_july_packet.pdf.

Technology

In July, the State Board adopted regulations to implement a \$5 million legislative appropriation to fund the improvement of Internet speed in public schools. The goal is to allow schools to participate in interactive videoconferencing, such as for courses under the new Digital Teaching Initiative, which will help prepare students for the Alaska Performance Scholarship and postsecondary education. See http://education.alaska.gov/State_Board/pdf/14_july_packet.pdf.

Challenging of courses

In September, the State Board adopted a regulation to require school districts to allow students in grades 7 to 12 to test out of courses in math, language arts, science, social studies, and world languages by demonstrating mastery of course material. The regulation fulfilled a requirement of House Bill 278, the Alaska Education Opportunity Act. See http://education.alaska.gov/State_Board/pdf/14_september_packet.pdf

Pupil transportation

In March, the State Board adopted regulations to clarify eligible pupil transportation costs and how school districts must report pupil transportation expenditures under the Uniform Chart of Accounts. The regulations comply with AS 14.09.010(b), which required the department to

provide oversight of, and support to, school districts in achieving a safe and cost-effective pupil transportation system.

Charter schools

In December, the State Board adopted regulations to implement the charter school provisions of House Bill 278. School districts that operate charter schools must submit a charter school transportation policy to the department for approval, describing how the district will provide transportation for charter school students. The regulations set the criteria for charter school applications, local district review of applications, and appeal of local denials to the department. The regulations set the criteria by which charter schools may apply for one-time state grants.

Correspondence programs

In December, the State Board adopted regulations to implement the correspondence program provisions of House Bill 278. The regulations exempt unexpended student allotment funds from the state's limit on districts' year-end fund balances. The regulations set the requirements for individual learning plans, certificated teachers, curriculum materials, student assessments, open enrollment, tutoring, fund accounts, and course requirements in core subjects.

Graduation requirements

In December, the State Board adopted regulations to increase the number of math credits required for high school graduation from two to three. Forty-seven Alaska districts already require more than two math credits. The change is in keeping with the State Board's goal that graduates be academically ready for career training and college.

Restraint and seclusion

In December, the State Board adopted regulations to implement provisions in House Bill 210 regarding the restraint and seclusion of students. The regulations set the criteria by which the department will approve training programs, for use by districts, in crisis intervention. The regulations set requirements for districts' annual reporting of incidents of restraint and seclusion.

Residential schools

In December, the State Board adopted regulations to implement provisions in House Bill 278 regarding district-operated residential schools. The regulations provide an annual period for districts to apply to operate a residential school. Residential schools that have variable terms

(students attending for brief periods) have flexibility in submitting enrollment figures for foundation funding.

Natural and cultural history repositories

In December, the State Board adopted regulations to implement provisions in House Bill 154 regarding repositories of natural and cultural collections. The regulations set the procedure for the state to designate museums and cultural centers as natural and cultural history repositories. Designees have more opportunities for federal and state grants.

Assessments

In September, the State Board adopted regulations to fulfill the student assessment requirements of House Bill 278: repeal the high school exit exam and require 11th-grade students to take, at state expense, the SAT, ACT, or WorkKeys assessments. Accordingly, the State Board no longer requires all 11th-graders to take the WorkKeys assessments. The regulation also adopted the most recent state-allowed WorkKeys accommodations for students with disabilities and limited English proficiency. See http://education.alaska.gov/State_Board/pdf/14_september_packet.pdf

In December, the State Board adopted regulations to implement the assessment provisions of House Bill 278. The regulations set the conditions for waivers from the new requirement that 11th-graders take the SAT, ACT, or WorkKeys assessments as a condition of graduating high school. The State Board approved an updated version of the department's guidelines for student participation in state assessments.

Accountability

In June, the State Board approved regulations to provide fairer accountability, under the Alaska School Performance Index, for small schools in their graduation rates and for alternative schools in their graduation rates and student progress.

In December, the State Board adopted regulations to implement provisions in House Bill 278 regarding school accountability. The regulations adjusted the Alaska School Performance Index to reflect that WorkKeys assessments are no longer required of all 11th-graders. The regulations set the conditions by which teachers at low-performing schools may be exempted from jury service. The regulations require the annual state Report Card to the Public to include aggregate data about the academic performance of students from families on active military duty.

The 70% instruction requirement

In March, the State Board approved requests from five school districts for waivers from the state requirement that districts spend at least 70% of their operating funds on instruction. These waivers refer to the audited financial statements for fiscal year 2014. The districts are: Alaska Gateway, Galena, Klawock, Yakutat, and Yupiit.

In October, the State Board approved waivers for 23 districts from the state requirement to budget for fiscal year 2015 at least 70% of their operating funds for instruction. The districts are: Alaska Gateway, Aleutian Region, Bristol Bay Borough, Chatham, Copper River Hoonah City, Hydaburg City, Iditarod Area, Kake City, Kashunamiut, Kuspuk, Lake and Peninsula, Nome, North Slope Borough, Northwest Arctic Borough, Pelican City, Pribilof, Saint Mary's, Skagway, Tanana City, Wrangell, Yukon Flats, and Yupiit.

New officers, members and staff

The State Board elected Esther Cox as Chair, James Fields as First Vice-Chair, and Sue Hull as Second Vice Chair, effective July 1, 2014, through June 30, 2015. Kobe Rizk of Fairbanks joined the State Board in July 2014 as student advisor for a one-year term. Alec Burris of Mat-Su was named the student advisor-elect. He will become the student advisor on July 1, 2015.

The State Board approved Lisa Miller as its executive secretary, Heidi Teshner as the department's administrative services director, and Troy Thayne as director of Mt. Edgecumbe High School.

Resolutions

The State Board approved resolutions in support of the Alaska Education Opportunity Act and in support of repealing the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam.

Charter school applications

The State Board approved all three requests from charter schools to renew their charters: Star of the North Secondary Charter School in Fairbanks (10 years); the Kaleidoscope School of Arts and Science in Kenai (five years); and Birchtree Charter School in Palmer (10 years). The period of renewal matched the period approved by the local school board.

SIGNIFICANT STEPS

Implementing standards and assessments



The department's website provides easy access for educators, parents, the media, and the general public to understand Alaska's new standards and assessments. See <https://education.alaska.gov>

The department regularly emails a newsletter to school districts and education organizations to alert them to resources and professional-development events. The department participates in conferences and trainings with educators. See <http://education.alaska.gov/akstandards/> See <http://education.alaska.gov/akassessments/> See <http://education.alaska.gov/akaccountability/>

The department provides paper copies of the Parent Guide to Alaska's Standards for English Language Arts and Math and a web page. See <http://education.alaska.gov/akparentscommunity/#c3gtabs-standards>

At the beginning of this school year, the department distributed 110,000 copies of a brochure to introduce parents to the new assessments in English language arts and math, the Alaska Measures of Progress (AMP). The department distributed to all K-12 educators a four-page introduction to AMP.

Alaska will assess students in English language arts and math in grades 3 through 10 in the spring, as it has done since 2005. But there are some changes under AMP.

Before, students took separate tests in reading, writing, and math for three days in a row. Combined, the tests had up to 185 questions. The tests were untimed but, typically, students spent one to two hours on each test.

Now, students will take just two tests in those subjects -- English language arts and math -- with a combined total of 140 questions. The tests are still untimed. But schools do not have to give the tests on consecutive days. And schools can break up each test into shorter sections and give students just one section a day. If schools do that, students would answer 15 or 25 questions in a sitting. In 2015, the window for schools to give AMP tests is March 30 through May 1.

Students with disabilities may be eligible for accommodations. Students with severe cognitive disabilities may be eligible to take an alternate test.

AMP is more challenging and more engaging than our former tests. Students will fill in fewer multiple-choice bubbles. Instead, in some questions, students will have to analyze the question, perform multi-step tasks, solve problems, and apply what they know to new situations. In short, there are more opportunities to measure higher-order thinking.

Students will take the tests on a computer. In math problems, students might drag and drop items, put items in order, or plot points on a graph. In answering a language arts question, students might highlight text. Using computers, students actively participate in the test. With technology practice tests, students will learn how to answer questions using the computer's tools. See <https://education.alaska.gov/akassessments/>

Students will have access to a greater variety of accessibility tools in the computer-based assessment. Universal Tools are for all students and are accessible at all times. They include: highlighter, striker, eraser, tags, guideline, search, calculators on portions of the test, and text-to-speech for directions. Accessibility Tools are available to students with any type of documented need. These tools include auditory calming, magnification, masking, and text-to-speech on the math portion of the test for items, answer choices, and graphics. Accommodation Tools are available to students with disabilities and students who are English language learners.

Schools that do not have sufficient capacity for computer-based tests will use paper for now. The computer tests and paper tests have the same questions. The state will work with schools to increase their computer capacity.

The state will offer districts free tools to check whether students are on track while instruction is taking place. Short classroom tests on specific learning goals will have 8-10 questions. Longer computer-based interim tests will be available next school year.

Alaska hired Achievement & Assessment Institute at the University of Kansas to create tests for our standards. Alaska owns the tests. Alaskan educators are:

- reviewing the test questions for clarity, relevance, fairness, and cultural bias;
- helping define the achievement levels;
- helping decide which high school standards will be assessed on grade 9 and grade 10 tests; and
- writing passages of text for the English language arts test.

Students' scores will place them in one of four levels of performance defined by Alaska educators: Level 1, 2, 3 and 4, from low to high. Level 3 represents meeting the standards. But Level 1 and Level 2 do not represent failure by students or teachers.

Students' scores on AMP in 2015 will serve as a baseline. As students take AMP tests in future years, educators can see whether they are growing in their English language arts and math skills. Alaska needs a new baseline because it has a new goal: Students will graduate with the English language arts and math skills to succeed in the workplace, training, or education of their choice. Because the Alaska Measures of Progress are so different from our former tests, Alaskans should not compare results from the two tests.

Parents and educators will receive reports about their students' results. **No data about individual students will be released to the federal government.** Alaska has never done so.

AMP scores are one source of information to help parents and educators decide whether students need more support in learning English language arts and math. Other sources of information are classroom assessments and parents' and teachers' observations. Together, parents and educators look at the whole student.

AMP scores also help school districts and the state decide if a school needs to make improvements and what those should be.

Schools and districts will receive reports on their assessed students in these 10 aggregates: all students; economically disadvantaged; students with disabilities; English language learners; Alaska Native/American Indians; Asians/Pacific Islanders; African-Americans; Hispanics; Caucasians; and two or more races. The aggregate reports are public information.

Educator evaluations

Alaska has overhauled its requirements for school districts' evaluations of teachers, principals, and providers of special services, such as school psychologists. Helping their district decide how to meet these goals will be local educators, administrators, bargaining units, school boards, students, and parents.

Evaluations provide feedback and support to educators so they can increase student achievement. Educators who are rated unsatisfactory on any standard must be provided support through a plan of improvement.

The new rules do not change the requirements, pre-existing in state law, under which educators can be dismissed. The evaluations do not affect an educator's salary. Evaluations are confidential.

Districts will evaluate whether a teacher is exemplary, proficient, basic, or unsatisfactory on each of seven content standards and on student growth. Administrators will be evaluated on 10 content standards and student growth. In evaluations, districts will consider the state's standards for culturally responsive educators.

Districts must observe educators in the workplace; consider information provided by parents, students, community members and other educators; and provide educators the opportunity to comment on a draft of their evaluation.

Measures of student growth do not refer only to test results or other numerical measures. For example, for growth in student writing, the data might be a rubric to assess student portfolios, essays, or open-ended projects.

Student growth refers to improvement. Growth will be measured from where students start when they begin lessons with the teacher. Growth will be measured in ways that are appropriate to the students. For example, growth in special education students might be based on academic goals in their Individualized Education Program.

Districts must decide on measures of student growth in consultation with their educators. Districts must use two to four measures of student growth. Only when a state assessment is directly relevant to the grade and subject taught by the teacher would the assessment be one of the measures.

The department collaborates with the Northwest Comprehensive Center and the Southeast Regional Resource Center to offer opportunities for educators to learn about the regulatory changes. Trainings have been offered at the Principals Conference, NEA-AK's fall event, and the Alaska Career & Technical Education Conference. Three Educator Evaluation & Support Redesign Intensives have been held or scheduled.

For the many ways the department has helped districts prepare to implement the new evaluations, see <http://education.alaska.gov/akaccountability/> and look under the tab Educator Accountability and Support.

Grants to expand STEM in middle schools

The department awarded grants to two nonprofit organizations for pilot projects to expand STEM education for underserved public middle school students. The grants, which were established in HB 278, will provide funding for three years beginning in fiscal year 2015. The grantees -- the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program (ANSEP) and the Southeast Regional Resource Center (SERRC) -- will partner with school districts from around the state.

ANSEP's grant will expand its Middle School Academy, which is a two-week residential science and engineering experience. ANSEP has four academies now, and plans to have eight academies the first year and 12 academies the following two years.

SERRC's grant will have four components: 1) three week-long STEM Career Awareness Academies; 2) one two-week STEM Summer Camp; 3) community-based after-school STEM Clubs; and 4) a supported technology-based social learning network for program participants.

Alaska Digital Teaching Initiative

The Alaska Digital Teaching Initiative is a three-year, \$15 million demonstration project to give students better access to high-quality teachers in college-preparatory courses such as science, technology, engineering, and math. The initiative supports students, especially in rural areas, who are striving to be eligible for the Alaska Performance Scholarship. The initiative promotes educational choice at the course level.

The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District received an \$819,915 grant and is partnering with the Bristol Bay Borough School District and the Cordova City School District. The grant will increase distance-delivered math, science, and Advanced Placement courses; train and evaluate teachers for best practices in online and blended instruction; create support services; codify best practices; and conduct replication studies in the Bristol Bay and Cordova school districts. Blended instruction refers to courses that are partly in-person and partly online.

The Copper River School District received a \$652,053 grant and will partner with small, remote districts. The grant will expand access to high-quality, Alaska Performance Scholarship-eligible courses, including dual-credit high school/university coursework and innovative college- and career-focused elective courses through True North Academy Online, an online high school that dovetails with a planned variable-length residential educational program.

The Kodiak Island Borough School District received an \$890,260 grant and is partnering with the Pribilof, Lower Kuskokwim, Lower Yukon, Northwest Arctic, Lake and Peninsula, Nome, St. Mary's, and Annette Island school districts. The grant will increase student engagement and academic performance in core content areas with an emphasis in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM); increase life-literacy skills; enhance and expand online delivery models; and create a network of well-trained online educators.

The Ketchikan Borough School District received an \$837,744 grant and is partnering with the Craig, Annette Island, Klawock, Hydaburg, and Southeast Island school districts to create Alaska Digital Academies. The grant will provide an online enrollment portal to high-quality interactive courses for middle and high school students taught by highly qualified teachers who are proficient in distance technology and who understand alternative forms of education.

SELECTED K-12 TOPICS

Awareness campaign for early literacy

In accordance with AS 14.03.072(a), the department continues to implement a campaign to improve parental awareness of the importance of early literacy. The department distributes brochures to inform parents about their schools' intervention strategies, home literacy plans, grade retention policies, and strategies and resources to help children learn to read. The department maintains a web page to serve as a resource for parents about literacy research and ways to help their children at home. See

<http://education.alaska.gov/akparentscommunity/#c3gtabs-earlylit>

State System of Support

The State System of Support, established in regulation at 4 AAC 06.872, strengthens school improvement efforts across the state through the following efforts:

The department designates districts as Tier I, II or III, to determine what levels of support SSOS will give. Tier III districts receive the greatest support.

The department designates Priority Schools and Focus Schools based on their Alaska School Performance Index rating and student-performance data. Priority Schools are those Title I schools most likely to benefit from a significant program of improvement. Focus Schools are Title I schools that would benefit from an improvement program targeted to specific needs. Title I schools receive federal anti-poverty funds to improve student performance. Federal school improvement funds have been made available to Priority and Focus Schools.

The department assists 1-star and 2-star schools under the Alaska School Performance Index on required School Improvement Planning.

SSOS coaches serve selected low-performing schools with monthly five-day visits and distance coaching between visits. The coaches average more than two decades of experience in education. All have some experience in rural Alaska. Some coaches have been principals. The local school's leader and the coach create a plan of service with specific measureable goals, specific actions, and designated responsibilities.

SSOS operates under its Effective Schools Framework, which deals with leadership, curriculum, instruction, professional development, assessment, and supportive learning environment. These topics are central to the Alaska STEPP (Steps Toward Educational Progress and Partnership) online planning tool, which schools use to plan and implement school improvement.

Career and technical education

The Department of Labor and Workforce Development received state funding for fiscal year 2015 to help implement the Alaska Career and Technical Education Plan. The departments of education, labor, and the University of Alaska are partners in the plan.

Grant awardees are: Hiland Mountain Correctional Facility to train to install solar photoelectronics; AVTEC to buy a refrigeration simulator; Bering Strait School District and Northwestern Alaska Career and Technical Education Center to develop airframe and power plant mechanics; Galena City School District to develop construction and automotive technology programs; Iditarod Area School District to prepare for a shared use of its residential facility.

Also: Juneau School District to train students in health sciences and fisheries; Kenai Peninsula Borough School District to develop a middle school computer-drafting course; Kodiak Island Borough School District to develop a STEM Academy; Kuspuk School District to pilot a mining career pathway; North Slope Borough School District to develop an engineering and technology pathway.

Also: Pribilof School District to use the Young Alaskan Fisherman Training Academy; UAA Mat-Su to buy Cisco computer equipment for training programs that lead to certification; Wrangell School District to improve its maritime program; Yukon-Koyukuk School District to develop a natural resources pathway; and Yuut Elitnaurviat to develop a mining trades camp.

Alaska's Learning Network

Now in its fourth school year, Alaska's Learning Network (AKLN) offers online courses taught by highly qualified Alaska teachers, as well as professional development for teachers who create and teach online courses. The University of Alaska Southeast's School of Education manages AKLN. This past fall, students enrolled in 376 courses.

AKLN helps provide an equitable education for rural students and helps students throughout Alaska graduate on time. AKLN's courses meet all curricular eligibility requirements for the Alaska Performance Scholarship and for college entry in general. Some courses offer dual credit with a postsecondary institution. Course options include career and technical subjects, Advanced Placement and honors, and credit recovery.

A sample of courses in this spring's semester include: business applications, computer science, engineering design, introduction to mining, professional skills in the workplace, ACT preparation, documenting Alaska Native issues, British literature, Advanced Placement calculus, Advanced Placement statistics, algebra and honors algebra, biology, chemistry, physics, Advanced Placement U.S. history, honors U.S. and global economics, French, German, Spanish, and Mandarin Chinese.

AKLN is not a school in itself. The network partners with all 54 Alaska school districts, and has an advisory board of school district superintendents and community members. Alaska's school

districts oversee their students' use of AKLN's courses and grant credit. Courses often blend face-to-face learning from local teachers with online learning. The online portion of courses is taught by Alaska teachers.

AKLN partners with the University of Alaska Southeast Professional Education Center and the Alaska Staff Development Network to train teachers in online instructional methods.

AKLN is funded by \$850,000 in state general funds and by course fees, which generally are paid by the districts. See <http://www.aklearn.net/>

School safety and suicide prevention

The department's newly created Suicide Awareness, Prevention and Intervention eLearning course became available at no cost to districts in August. The course helps districts comply with state law, which mandates annual training for educators who serve public school students in grades 7-12. See <http://education.alaska.gov/ELearning/>. Also see <http://education.alaska.gov/tls/suicide/>.

The department received a \$9.1 million federal grant to improve school safety by addressing mental health issues in school-aged youth through Alaska's Project AWARE. The five-year award will provide \$1.8 million annually for districtwide Youth Mental Health First Aid training in Anchorage, Mat-Su, and Kenai, and targeted mental health resources to the following alternative schools in those districts: Burchell High School, Valley Pathways, Mat-Su Central School, Avail School, Crossroads School, Benson Secondary/S.E.A.R.C.H., S.A.V.E. High School, Kenai Alternative High School, and Homer Flex School.

Teacher mentoring

The Alaska Statewide Mentor Project, a partnership of the department and the University of Alaska, has been serving school districts since the 2004-2005 school year. One of its main goals is to improve teacher retention, particularly in rural districts, so that students can benefit from experienced teachers.

Since the project began, mentors have served in 52 of Alaska's 54 districts and 49% of Alaska's approximately 500 public schools. The state funds mentors in rural districts. A federal grant funds mentors in Anchorage, Kenai Peninsula, Fairbanks, Mat-Su, and Sitka. This school year 36 mentors are serving 508 teachers in 246 schools within 40 school districts.

Alaska's mentor project is built upon the nationally recognized model developed at the New Teacher Center. This research-based program has been shown to develop reflective teachers who are responsive to the diverse cultural backgrounds of students.

About half of new teachers in the U.S. leave the profession within their first five years. **Research on early-career teachers who have received mentoring from Alaska's mentor project shows**

that after five years over 94% of teachers are still teaching. Research shows that Alaska-mentored teachers not only stay in the profession longer than other teachers, but they achieve greater professional efficacy over the course of their careers, with greater gains in student achievement.

Teacher retention is defined as a teacher remaining in the Alaska public K-12 school system from one year to the next, although not necessarily at the same school. Overall, the average retention rate of Alaska-mentored teachers fluctuates around 79%, based on the number of first- and second-year, rural and urban teachers. Those who remain at the same school comprise the largest group each year, with far fewer moving between schools or moving to new districts. Before the Alaska mentor project began, the retention rate for new teachers (in those districts most served by mentors now) averaged 68% over five years. See <http://www.alaskamentorproject.org/>

Early education

The following districts are receiving state funds to serve 308 children in their pre-kindergarten programs:

| | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| Anchorage: | 48 children |
| Mat-Su: | 81 children |
| Lower Kuskokwim: | 45 children |
| Yukon Koyukuk: | 10 children |
| Juneau: | 64 children |
| Nome: | 60 children |
| Total | 308 children |

In the first quarter of fiscal year 2015, the third and final year of a state grant program, Parents as Teachers grantees were serving 179 children and their families with home visits using the nationally recognized Parents as Teachers curriculum.

The state's Early Childhood Background Check system has received a comprehensive upgrade, and multiple training sessions have occurred in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau.

At the end of September, Head Start grantees' were serving about 3,058 children and their families in approximately 100 communities.

The Early Learning Grant to Best Beginnings supports the Imagination Library, which provides more than 22,000 Alaska children from birth to age five with books. Additionally, the grant supports seven community-based early childhood partnerships, early childhood public service announcements, and the "Words Count" and "Story TRACKS" language and literacy initiative.

OTHER DEPARTMENT FUNCTIONS

Mt. Edgecumbe High School

Mt. Edgecumbe is the state-operated residential school in Sitka. The State Board serves as the Mt. Edgecumbe board. Parents and others participate on an advisory board.

In fall 2014, 427 students from 107 villages throughout Alaska attended Mt. Edgecumbe. Sixty-two percent of the student body is female. Alaska Native students compose 84% of the student population; 10% are Caucasian; and 3% are mixed ethnicity. Fifty-five percent of students meet federal guidelines for free and reduced-price lunches.

Mt. Edgecumbe freshmen and sophomores take the state's standards-based assessments in reading, writing, and math: In reading, 80.77% of freshmen and sophomores were proficient; in writing, 84.53% were proficient; and in math, 74.73% were proficient.

The school's Alaska School Performance Index score for this school year is 92.80 of 100 possible points, giving it four stars. The school's four-year graduation rate last school year was 91.30%; the five-year rate was 98.57%. (This does not include students who transferred out of MEHS and attended another school.) MEHS's attendance rate was 96.05%.

Alaska State Council on the Arts

The council supports educators, artists, community-based organizations and statewide partners in delivery of arts education in school and community settings. The council awards funding to Alaskan schools, districts, educators and arts/community-based organizations in several categories. Other grants to communities also serve students through school outreach and education programs provided by Alaskan arts and culture organizations.

In August 2014, the council published *Venture for Alaska's Youth*, a report on the state of arts education in Alaska's public schools. The report included a survey of 40 districts serving 92% of Alaska's students in the topics of arts curriculum and instruction, qualified teachers, professional development, budget and resource allocation, and leadership and policy. Over the past five years, more districts have adopted a written arts curriculum and employ more highly qualified arts teachers. But Alaska falls short of the goal that all K-12 students receive arts instruction and engage in arts experiences. See

http://education.alaska.gov/aksca/pdf/Venture_for_Alaskas_Youth_2014.pdf

The Division of Libraries, Archives and Museums

The State Libraries, Archives & Museums Building, now under construction, will place the Alaska State Museums, the Alaska State Archives, and the Alaska State Libraries in one facility at the site of the current State Museum. The new building is scheduled to open in April 2016. See <http://lam.alaska.gov/slam>.

Libraries, Archives & Museums benefits lifelong and K-12 education. Examples are:

- Live Homework Help monitors live tutoring for students in grades 4 to early college, seven days a week, from noon to 2 a.m. Use has grown exponentially in the past six years. See <http://sled.alaska.edu/homework>.
- An early literacy project sent public libraries materials for children age 2 to 4.
- OWL provided non-Internet computers for early learning and digital literacy to Alaska's 100 public libraries. See <http://www.awelearning.com>.
- Alaska's Digital Archives shares historical Alaskan videos, photographs and documents for students and researchers. See www.vilda.education.edu
- In Alaska's Digital Pipeline are hundreds of full-text online books, magazines, newspapers and other research resources specifically targeted to elementary, middle school, high school, and college student academic needs. See <http://sled.alaska.edu/databases/>.
- Many school districts' Alaska Native language materials are scanned and available online.

Alaska Professional Teaching Practices Commission

The Professional Teaching Practices Commission governs educators' ethical and professional standards and educators' compliance with state law and contractual obligations. The commission reports by fiscal year, not calendar year. In fiscal year 2014, the commission reviewed 69 cases and levied 12 sanctions, compared with 56 cases and 14 sanctions the year before. The sanctions were: two for sexual misconduct with students; two for criminal misconduct not involving drugs; three for contract violations; and five for professional misconduct. See http://education.alaska.gov/ptpc/pdf/2014_annual_report.pdf

SCHOOL AND STUDENT DATA

School accountability system

The Alaska School Performance Index (ASPI) measures schools by a combination of data: student achievement on the state's reading, writing and math assessments; growth in the school's student body in those assessments from the prior year; and attendance. Schools with high school students also are measured by graduation rates and student performance on college-ready and career-ready assessments such as the SAT, ACT, and WorkKeys.

The ratings released in fall 2014 reflect student performance in the 2013-2014 school year. Seventy-five of 501 rated schools earned five stars, the highest rating; 198 schools are four-star schools; 149 schools are three-star schools; 52 schools are two-star schools; and 27 schools are one-star schools. Collectively, 93% of students attended schools in 2013-2014 that earned three stars or above. See <http://education.alaska.gov/aspi/>.

Reward Schools

Under the Alaska School Performance Index, the department recognized 53 schools as 2014 Reward Schools to honor their student achievement from the 2013-2014 school year. There are two categories: highest performing and high progress. Reward Schools receive banners to display indoors or outdoors.

See:

http://education.alaska.gov/news/releases/2014/41_Recognized_Alaska_Reward_Schools.pdf
and http://education.alaska.gov/news/releases/2014/Reward_Schools_12_Additional.pdf

Graduation and dropout rates

In 2014, the five-year graduation rate was 76.4%. This refers to a cohort of students who were 9th-graders five school years previously. Many graduated in four years, but others needed a fifth year. The five-year rate more accurately reflects the percentage of 9th-graders that do graduate.

All states report a four-year graduation rate for cohorts of students. Alaska has been reporting this data since the 2010-2011 school year. A student who entered 9th grade in the 2010-2011 school year would be in the 2014 cohort. Cohorts also include transfers.

The graduation rate is calculated as the number of graduates in the cohort who receive a regular diploma by June 30, divided by the number of all students assigned to the cohort.

| | 4-yr. graduation rate | Graduate count* |
|-------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 2011 | 68.0% | 8,064 |
| 2012 | 69.4% | 7,987 |
| 2013 | 71.8% | 7,795 |
| 2014 | 71.2% | 7,672 |

*Graduate count is the number of students who graduated with a regular diploma during the school year (July 1-June 30). It includes fifth-year graduates.

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.

Preliminary information for the 2013-2014 school year shows a grade 7-12 dropout rate of 4.0%, which is stable from 4.0% in 2012-2013. The dropout rate generally has declined from 6.0% in 2004-2005.

State assessment results

Alaska students have been taking state assessments in reading, writing and math in grades 3 through 10, and in science in grades 4, 8 and 10. School year 2013-2014 was the final administration of the Standards Based Assessments. This school year, students will start taking the Alaska Measures of Progress, which are assessments in English language arts and math.

For all assessed students statewide in 2013-2014, 80.0% scored proficient or advanced in reading; 74.7% were proficient or advanced in writing; and 68.3% were proficient or advanced in math. Those numbers are similar to the previous five years.

In the science assessment, the percentage of students who scored proficient or advanced ranged from a high of 65.2% in grade 10 to a low of 50.8% in grade 4.

The final administration of the repealed Alaska High School Graduation Qualifying Examination also was in the 2013-2014 school year. Of 10th-graders (who were taking the test for the first time) 84.4% passed the reading portion, 75.8% passed the writing portion, and 76.8% passed the math portion. Nearly 66% passed all three portions in 10th grade.

The department publicized students' opportunity to receive retroactive diplomas. School districts contacted eligible students at the last-known address.

See http://education.alaska.gov/tls/assessment/results/2014/2014_statewide_sba.pdf

WorkKeys assessments

School year 2013-2014 marked the final year in which the state required 11th-graders to take WorkKeys assessments in reading for information, applied math, and locating information (in visual formats). The assessments were developed by ACT with assistance from employers.

In accordance with the Alaska Education Opportunity Act, the State Board no longer requires students to take WorkKeys assessments. Instead, 11th-graders will choose an assessment among the SAT, ACT, and WorkKeys, administered once at state expense. There are no passing scores for these assessments.

Students who earn a combined score of at least 13, with no score lower than 4, on WorkKeys have met the assessment requirement for an Alaska Performance Scholarship for a postsecondary certificate program, such as in the trades. In addition, students who score well receive a nationally recognized career-readiness certificate in one of four categories: bronze, silver, gold, and platinum.

Of the 9,432 students who took WorkKeys between August 2013 and December 2014, 7,600 (80.6%) earned a certificate.

- Winning a bronze certificate were 2,046 students (21.7% of all test-takers)
- Silver 4,511 students (47.8% of all test-takers)
- Gold 1,031 students (10.9% of all test-takers)
- Platinum 12 students (.001% of all test-takers)

National Assessment of Educational Progress

Every two years the U.S. Department of Education, through the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), tests large samples of 4th-graders and 8th-graders in each state in reading and math, including about half of Alaska's students in those grades.

Alaska has participated in the reading and math tests since 2003. The most recent NAEP assessments were given in 2013.

NAEP's definition of proficiency is more rigorous than that of many states. In NAEP, *basic* refers to partial mastery of the subject. *Proficient* refers to competency in challenging material, including knowledge, application, and analytical skills. *Advanced* is superior performance.

- In no state did 50% of students score proficient or above on the reading assessments.
- In no state did 60% of students score proficient or above on the math assessments.

NAEP's state and nationwide results are presented as average scores on a scale of 000 to 500. The "scale scores" fall into four categories of achievement as defined by NAEP: advanced, proficient, basic, and below basic. Thus, NAEP also reports the percentage of students who fall within those categories of achievement.

The following data, comparing Alaska results to the national average, are from the 2013 tests.

Math

Alaska 4th grade: 76% basic or above; 36% proficient or above; 6% advanced.

Nation 4th grade: 83% basic or above; 42% proficient or above; 8% advanced.

Alaska's average scale score is 236. The national average is 241.

Alaska 8th grade: 72% basic or above; 33% proficient or above; 7% advanced.

Nation 8th grade: 73% basic or above; 34% proficient or above; 8% advanced.

Alaska's average scale score is 282. The national average is 284.

Reading

Alaska 4th grade: 58% basic or above; 28% proficient or above; 6% advanced.

Nation 4th grade: 67% basic or above; 34% proficient or above; 8% advanced.

Alaska's average scale score is 209. The national average is 221.

Alaska 8th grade: 76% basic or above; 36% proficient or above; 6% advanced.

Nation 8th grade: 83% basic or above; 42% proficient or above; 8% advanced.

Alaska's average scale score is 261. The national average is 266.

A science test is given to a smaller sample of 8th-graders from each state, including about a fifth of Alaska's 8th-graders. Alaska has participated in the science test since 2011, which is the latest administration.

Science 2011

Alaska 8th grade: 68% basic or above; 34% proficient or above; 1% advanced.

Nation 8th grade: 65% basic or above; 32% proficient or above; 2% advanced.

Alaska's average scale score is 153. The national average is 151.

See <http://education.alaska.gov/tls/assessment/naep/NAEPNewsletterFall2013.pdf>

Selected topics of continuing importance

Teacher preparation: In fall 2014, the department convened an advisory committee to meet the State Board's request for recommendations regarding testing requirements for certification. The department will present proposed regulations for consideration in March.

Reading in early grades: Each year, all students in kindergarten to grade 2, plus 3rd-graders who have reading delays, are assessed for several key reading skills. The assessments, which take very little time, help educators identify students who are struggling.

Dual credit: An ad hoc committee of State Board members and University of Alaska regents has been meeting to remove barriers to high school students earning college credit. Committee members also are identifying successful dual-credit practices at a UA campus that could be replicated at other campuses.