

Safely Reopening Alaska Schools for the 2020-2021 School Year

Dr. Anne Zink, Chief Medical Officer
Department of Health and Social Services

Michael Johnson, Commissioner
Department of Education and Early Development

July 23, 2020



Agenda



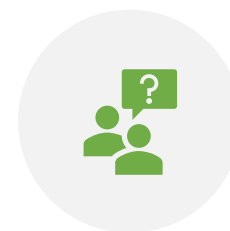
**Science & Data
Regarding
COVID-19 and
Children**



**School
Reopening
Guidance and
Support**



**Federal
Education
Funding Update**



Q&A

Science & Data Regarding COVID-19 and Children

Dr. Anne Zink, Chief Medical Officer

COVID-19 risks to children

- Most children have mild symptoms or no symptoms if they get COVID-19
- Deaths in children are rare but have happened
- Children with underlying medical conditions are at greater risk of severe illness if they get COVID-19
 - Diabetes
 - Obesity (between $\frac{1}{3}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ of Alaska children are overweight or obese)
 - Chronic lung disease
 - High blood pressure
 - Tobacco use (10.9% of Alaska teens had smoked a cigarette in the last month in a 2017 survey, 15.7% had used a vape pen)
- Multisystem inflammatory syndrome is reported in children and can have devastating effects

COVID-19: What we know about long term effects

- At 6 months in, nobody has been recovered long enough for true long term effects
- Many survivors of SARS and MERS, coronaviruses causing disease similar to severe COVID-19, had lung problems, bone problems, fatigue and PTSD symptoms that lasted for years or decades
- COVID-19 survivors report lasting fatigue, muscle aches, shortness of breath, even in some young, previously healthy people with mild COVID-19
- People who had to be in ICUs report fatigue, aches, shortness of breath as well as PTSD symptoms
- One study found that only 12.6% of patients hospitalized with COVID-19 were symptom free two months later; 44% reported worse quality of life; 53% had fatigue; 43% had difficulty breathing; 27% had joint pain; 22% had chest pain

COVID-19 transmission in children

- Evidence is limited
- Children under age 10 may be less likely to get the virus and less likely to give it to others (10-50% less, depending on the study)
 - Children under age 10 may also be the least likely to leave the house during periods of restriction, when many of these studies were conducted, so may have been exposed less
- Children over age 10 appear to be able to get the virus and give it to others at least as easily as adults can
 - In one South Korean study of 60,000 contacts of 5,700 cases, children age 10-18 were **more** likely to give it to other members of their household than adults were
- We cannot rely on all children having decreased transmission dynamics

School reopening: projected community effects

- Anytime we have increased numbers of people coming into contact with each other we expect increased opportunities for viral transmission
- Physical distancing, face coverings, hand hygiene, and encouraging people to stay home when sick are the mainstays of prevention
- Whether a community sees increased cases after school reopening depends a great deal on:
 - Community transmission rates
 - Other community factors (Use face coverings in public, community gatherings, density of population etc.)
 - Children and others staying home when they are sick
 - Maximizing prevention measures (distancing, face coverings, hygiene, cohorts) in schools

Risks of NOT reopening

- The American Academy of Pediatrics issued a strong recommendation in favor of holding school in person whenever possible starting Fall 2020
- Social interaction is key to child development
- Many children experience barriers that make distance learning less than ideal
 - Insufficient access to internet or computer
 - Learning disabilities
 - Language barriers
 - Young children in particular may not learn well independently
- Schools also provide services difficult to deliver remotely
 - School meal programs
 - Physical activity
 - After school child care
 - Child abuse detection
- Significant economic effect if parents must stay home or find childcare

Student Mental Health Supports

Routine and Predictability

- Last year, DEED in partnership with the Association of Alaska School Boards, released [*Transforming Schools: A Framework for Trauma-Engaged Practice in Alaska*](#)
- In August, DEED will be releasing the online *Transforming Schools Trauma Toolkit* for educators, which is specifically designed to address stress and anxiety for children and adults



Transforming Schools:

A Framework for Trauma-Engaged Practice in Alaska

“Childhood trauma turns a learning brain into a surviving brain.”

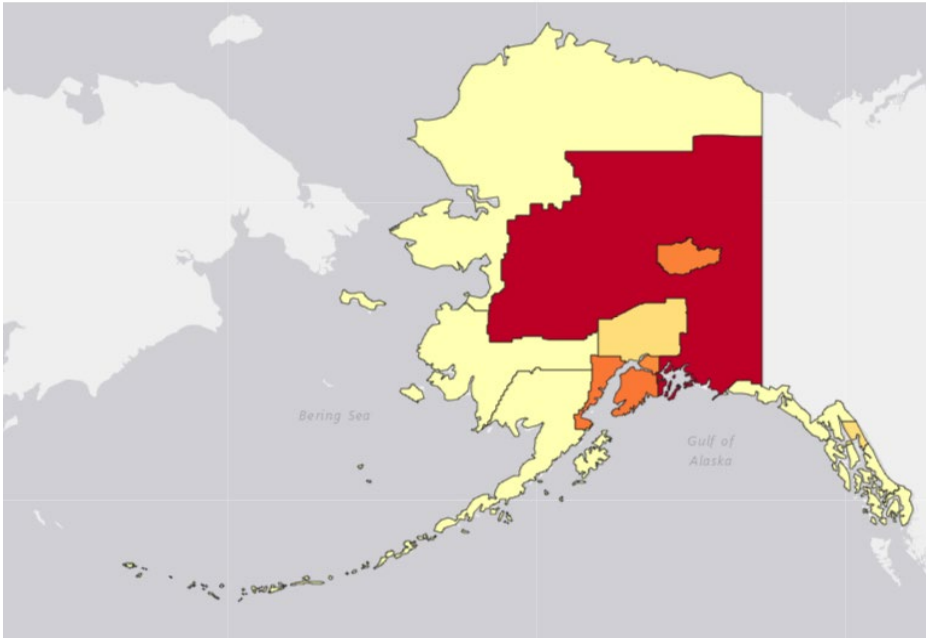
–Josh Arvidson, Director, Alaska Child Trauma Center

Alaska's school risk mitigation approach

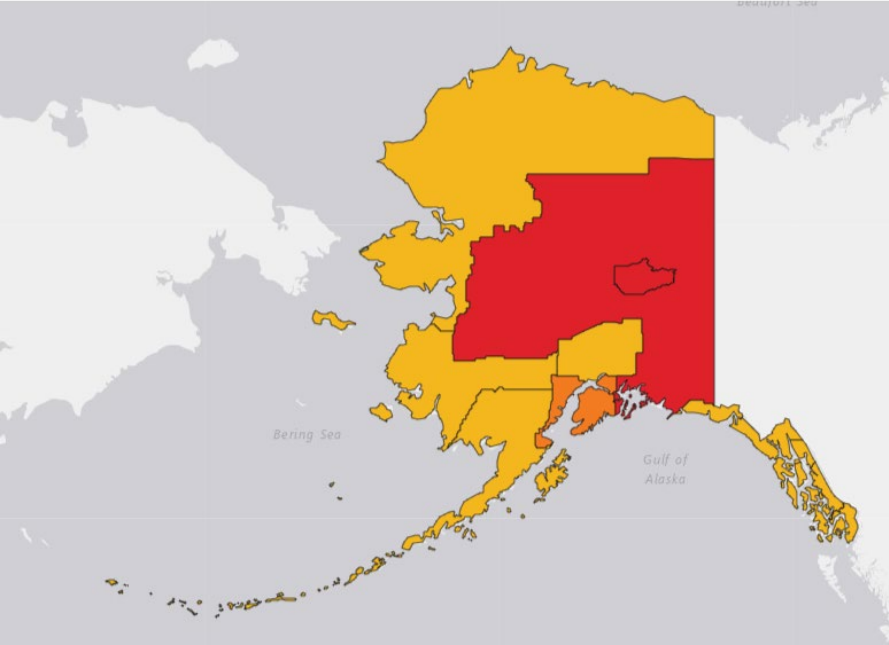
- Watch community case levels
- Watch for early warning signs of cases in schools
- Be ready to switch to distance learning
- Maximize physical distancing, wearing face coverings, hygiene
- Minimize mixing
- Age-appropriate cohorting as an additional risk mitigation strategy

Community case levels

7-Day Case Rate Map (Cases/100,000 People)



Alaska COVID-19 Alert Levels



Early warning signs

- Schools to perform symptom screening
- If several children in a school or community have new symptoms, will draw increased attention
 - If they are contacts of each other, consider small outbreak
 - If they are not contacts, consider large undetected outbreak or increase in community transmission
- Can isolate specific cohorts or classrooms to avoid closing schools

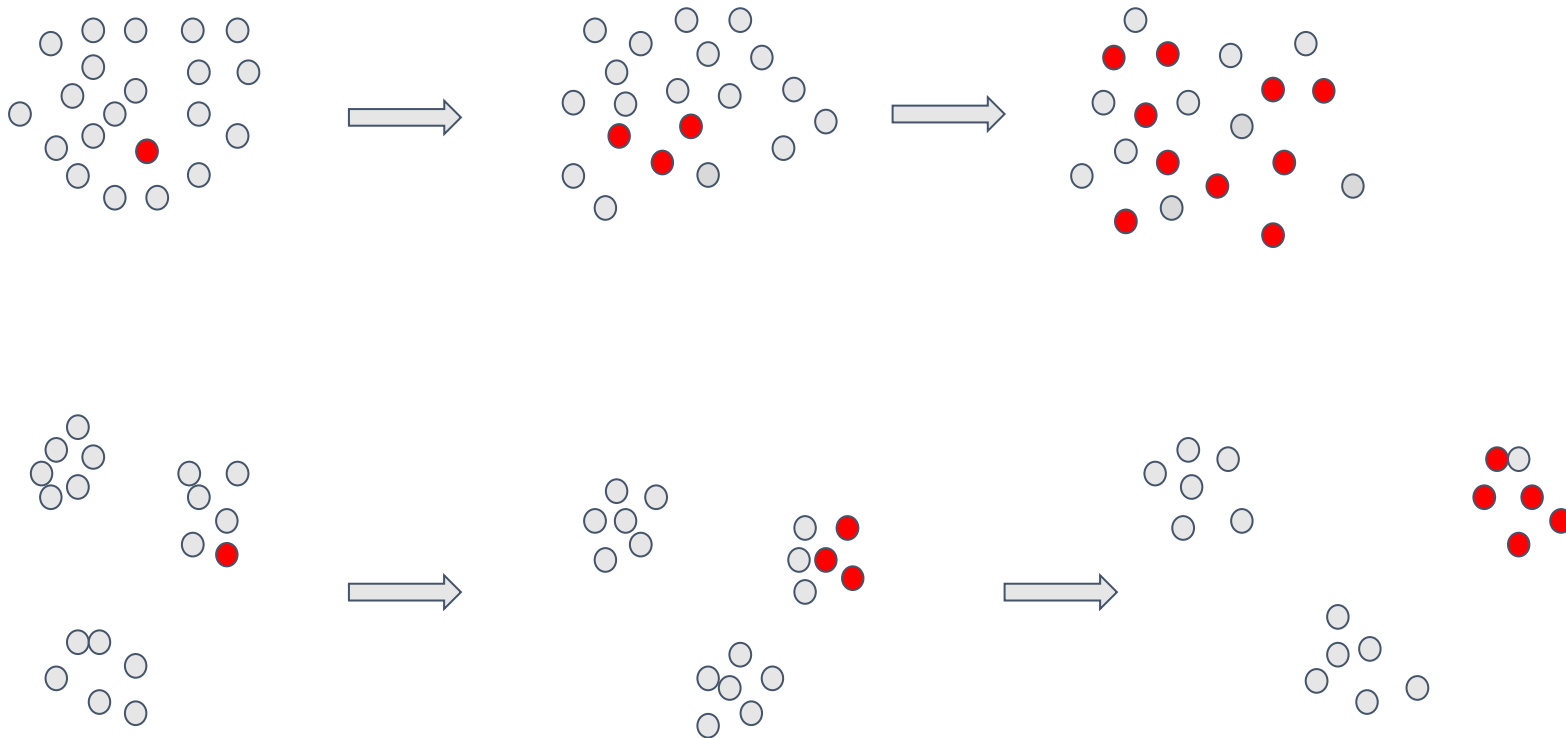
Distance learning ready

- DEED working to make sure every student and teacher is supported when remote learning must occur
- DHSS partnering with DEED and individual districts to provide decision support on when to hold school in person versus remotely
 - Taking into account community transmission levels
 - Taking into account school-specific factors
- Schools will help parents decide which learning option is best for their child
 - Parents will be presented with a robust 100% remote learning alternative

Maximize physical distancing and face coverings in schools

- In one large review of 172 studies across 16 countries, transmission of COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2), SARS and MERS viruses decreased by about 80% with distancing of 3 feet and 90% with distancing of 6 feet (absolute risk reduction)
- Face mask use (including cotton and medical masks) reduced transmission by about half in non-healthcare settings
- Eye protection reduced risk of infection for one group of healthcare workers from 16% to 6% in combination with other measures
- The best protection is all the above

Age-appropriate cohorting



Questions?



School Reopening Guidance and Support

Commissioner Michael Johnson

Supporting
teachers, students,
families, and
communities

**Guiding principle:
Teaching, learning, and
activity are the constants.
COVID-19 is the variable.**



School Reopening Guidance and Support

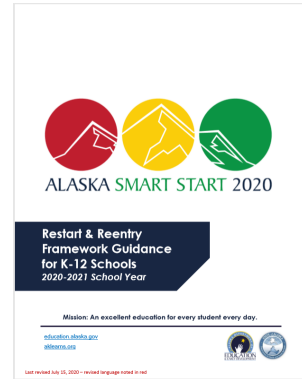
Online Resources

- aklearns.org
- education.alaska.gov
- Restart Guidance (last revised July 15, 2020)

Professional Development and Informational Webinars

- ZOOM sessions
 - Spring Smart Start 2020 Series (475+ participants)
 - Summer Smart Start 2020 Summit in August
- ECHO sessions
 - School Health (Tue, 3pm)
 - Classroom Teachers (Wed, 1pm)

School Restart Guidance



- Last revised July 15, 2020
- Local school districts need the authority, responsibility, and flexibility to make decisions to be responsive to their communities.
- DEED and DHSS' joint mission is to provide information, resources, and leadership to support districts in these tough decisions
 - District Plans Tracker:
 - https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1PMpqGUXxV9cG7aQhZq91j2L35vU9AzjJtHLDi_k1Jno/view#gid=0
 - Guidance:
 - <https://education.alaska.gov/news/COVID-19/Alaska%20Smart%20Start%202020%20Framework%20Guidance.pdf>

Summer Smart Start 2020 Summit in August



- Virtual, multi-day professional development event
- August 4 – 27, 2020
 - Mondays offer sessions developing communities around various topics, collaborating in size-alike districts;
 - Tuesdays present specific topics within Capacities and Conditions for Learning;
 - Wednesdays provide opportunities for Virtual Consultations; and
 - Thursdays focus on the Continuity of Learning.
- <https://aklearns.org/smartwebinar/>



ECHO Information Sessions

- DEED & DHSS co-host weekly webinars
 - Technical support provided by Project ECHO at UAA
- **School Health ECHO Series (Tue, 3pm)**
 - Superintendents, Principals, School Health/Nurse Leaders
- **Classroom Teacher ECHO Series (Wed, 1pm)**
 - Current classroom teachers
- Alaska ECHO Projects:
 - <https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/academics/college-of-health/departments/center-for-human-development/AK-ECHO/index.cshtml>

Questions?

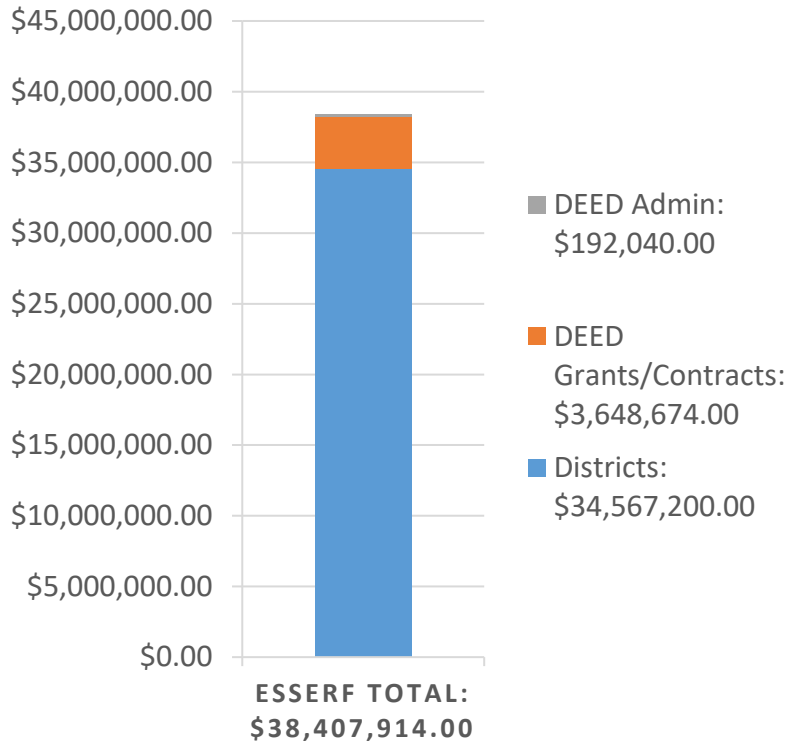


Federal Education Funding Update

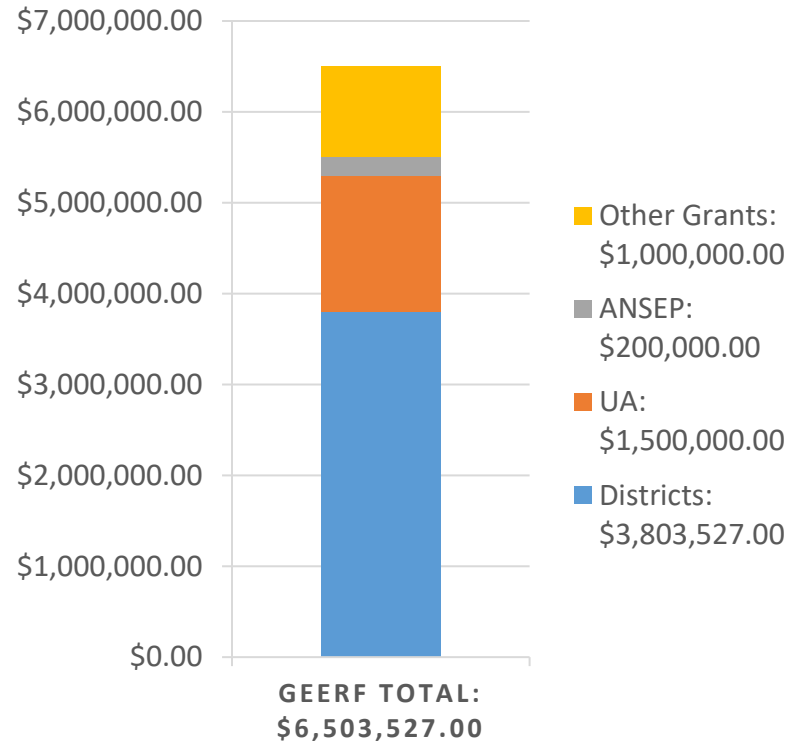
Lacey Sanders, DEED Administrative Services Director

CARES Act: General Education Funding Update (\$44.9M)

Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund



Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund



CARES Act: General Education Funding Update (\$44.9M)

Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEERF)	
CFDA 84.425C	
\$ 3,803,527.00	Grants to 35 School Districts
1,500,000.00	Grants to Institutions of Higher Education - University of Alaska
200,000.00	Grants to Institutions of Secondary and Higher Education - Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program
1,000,000.00	Grants to education and education-related entities - TBD*
\$ 6,503,527.00	Total GEERF Allocation
<i>*Requests for Applications (RFAs) are currently being reviewed</i>	
	\$6,503,527.00 Total GEERF Allocation
	\$38,407,914.00 Total ESSERF Allocation
	\$44,911,441.00 CARES Act Total
Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSERF)	
CFDA 84.425D	
\$ 34,567,200.00	Grants to 51 School Districts
3,648,674.00	Department Costs - Grants and Contracts
192,040.00	Department Costs - Administrative Costs
\$ 38,407,914.00	Total ESSERF Allocation

CARES Act: Child Nutrition Programs Update (\$41.8M)

- DEED's Child Nutrition Programs received \$41,869,616 in CARES Act funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
 - Purpose: Paying National School Lunch/Breakfast, Special Milk, Child and Adult Care Food, and Summer Food Service Program claims for reimbursement for meals served
 - Time Period: March 2020 - September 2020 claims
 - Allowable expenses: These funds are to support the school nutrition program

Questions?



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