

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 15, 2023

3:31 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Löki Tobin, Chair
Senator Gary Stevens, Vice Chair
Senator Jesse Bjorkman
Senator Jesse Kiehl
Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

OVERVIEW STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT AND FY 2022 ASSESSMENT RESULTS

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

KELLY MANNING, Deputy Director
Innovation and Education Excellence
Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented the Statewide Assessment and FY 2022 Assessment Results Overview.

ELIZABETH GRENINGER, Assessment Team Administrator
Innovation and Education Excellence
Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Co-presented the Statewide Assessment and FY 2022 Assessment Results Overview.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[3:31:34 PM](#)

CHAIR LÖKI TOBIN called the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 3:31 p.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Stevens, Gray-Jackson, Kiehl, Bjorkman, and Chair Tobin.

**OVERVIEW: STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT
and FY 2022 ASSESSMENT RESULTS**

[3:32:13 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN announced the consideration of an overview on statewide assessment and FY 2022 assessment results.

[3:33:22 PM](#)

KELLY MANNING, Deputy Director, Innovation and Education Excellence, Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), Juneau, Alaska, said she and her colleagues would present an overview of the statewide assessment system and include the assessments required at the state level. They would also discuss Alaska's new innovative assessment system and report on the 2022 assessment results.

[3:34:14 PM](#)

MS. MANNING turned to slide 2 and spoke to the department's mission, vision, and purpose as follows:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Mission - An excellent education for every student every day.

Vision - All students will succeed in their education and work, shape worthwhile and satisfying lives for themselves, exemplify the best values of society, and be effective in improving the character and quality of the world about them. - Alaska Statute 14.03.015

Purpose - DEED exists to provide information, resources, and leadership to support an excellent education for every student every day.

[3:35:11 PM](#)

MS. MANNING turned to slide 3, Strategic Priorities: Alaska's Education Challenge and spoke to the five shared priorities:

[Original punctuation provided.]

1. Support all students to read at grade level by the

- end of third grade
2. Increase career, technical, and culturally relevant education to meet student and workforce needs
 3. Close the achievement gap by ensuring equitable educational rigor and resources
 4. Prepare, attract, and retain effective education professionals
 5. Improve the safety and well-being of students through school partnerships with families, communities, and tribes

[3:36:27 PM](#)

MS. MANNING moved to slide 4, Purpose of Assessment, and discussed the three tiers of the assessment pyramid:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Summative

System-wide evaluation
Ranking, comparing

Interim

Periodically
"Are they on track?"

Formative

Frequent
"In the moment"
Educator and student feedback.

[3:38:50 PM](#)

MS. MANNING turned to slide 5, Statewide Assessments, and spoke about the Alaska System of Academic Readiness (AK STAR) and Alaska Science Assessment exams the state administers as required by statute.

[3:40:02 PM](#)

SENATOR TOBIN asked about the implementation of AK STAR following the pandemic.

MS. MANNING answered that the rollout of AK STAR was last spring, making this the second year of the development process. Feedback from testing coordinators demonstrated to the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) that school districts understand the testing requirements and reasons for changes. Furthermore, school districts are pleased by the

alignment of the interim and year-end state summative assessments.

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SENATOR KIEHL asked how much time schools set aside for administering the assessments and whether schools administered any test more than once a year.

MS. MANNING replied that the school districts administer the AK STAR and Alaska Science assessments annually in the spring. The estimated time for the evaluation is 3-4 hours. MAP Growth is part of the AK STAR system, and it is administered fall and winter with a lined score in the AK STAR assessment in spring. She stated she would provide the committee with a time estimate for MAP Growth.

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SENATOR BJORKMAN stated AK STAR tests take several school day mornings to administer. He asked if there were three parts to the AK STAR test.

MS. MANNING replied that AK STAR assesses math and English language arts.

SENATOR BJORKMAN asked if schools test reading and writing at different times.

MS. MANNING replied yes.

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SENATOR BJORKMAN concluded that schools typically administer the AK STAR assessment in the morning over several days. Students who were absent during the evaluation are removed from class later to complete the exam. Also, because the assessment is not time restricted, some students continue the examination into the afternoon and even the next day. He stated that school schedules are disrupted for up to two weeks when doing the assessment.

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SENATOR BJORKMAN asked what the training requirements are for administering the assessment.

[3:45:15 PM](#)

MS. MANNING deferred the question.

[3:45:36 PM](#)

ELIZABETH GRENINGER, Assessment Team Administrator, Innovation and Education Excellence, Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), Juneau, Alaska, clarified that AK STAR is estimated to take three hours, and this year the test is adaptive; students go through the test at their own pace in unbroken sections and school districts structure scheduling to fit their needs.

MS. GRENINGER said training requirements are in place, and the state provides the necessary training resources and materials to districts. District testing coordinators train building coordinators and administrators. District coordinators can prepare building testing coordinators and testing administrators in various ways, such as through e-learning modules. All test administrators must sign a test security agreement. The amount of time the training takes is district dependent.

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CHAIR TOBIN asked if the state had administered the AK STAR assessment in the past and if it would implement it differently in the future.

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MS. MANNING responded that when Alaska started developing the AK STAR system, it was a relatively new concept nationally because it aligned an interim and summative assessment with an assessment in spring. To create the system, the department had to administer the summative and spring interim assessments separately. Over the summer, the department did alignment studies to categorically connect data from the two assessment types. The test vendor and technical advisory committee were also involved. This year's administration of the test is how the department will continue administering it.

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MS. MANNING advanced to slides 6 - 7 and spoke about the following statewide assessments administered by the state:

Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM)
ACCESS for ELLs, Alternate ACCESS, and Kindergarten ACCESS
National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)
Alaska Developmental Profile (ADP)

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CHAIR TOBIN asked what the time requirement is for each test.

[3:54:54 PM](#)

MS. GRENINGER replied:

<u>Test</u>	<u>TIME</u>
DLM	3-4 hours
ACCESS	She will get back to the committee.
NAEP	Approximately 2 hours
ADP	Varies based on teacher observation protocols.
mCLASS/DIBELS	30 minutes

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SENATOR STEVENS asked how many students take the NAEP assessment and what the department does with the results.

[3:56:02 PM](#)

MS. GRENINGER replied that the department administers NAEP to a sample of students. In 2022, the department administered it to grades 4 - 8 in approximately 200 schools in math and reading. The sample size for Alaska was between 1,600 - 1,800 students per content area. The population was the base for determining sample size.

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SENATOR STEVENS asked how the NAEP test assists DEED.

MS. GRENINGER replied that NAEP is the only test in Alaska's statewide assessment system that provides a comparison to the nation and other states. DEED then uses the information when making policy and programming decisions.

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SENATOR KIEHL asked how the NAEP sample is selected, modeled, and analyzed.

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MS. GRENINGER replied that the department selects students through a random stratified sample, first at the school level and then at the student level. The sampling follows federal requirements that include factors such as school and community type and demographics. The sampling of students is random.

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SENATOR KIEHL asked how NAEP adjusts the model to account for absenteeism.

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MS. GRENINGER said schools assess the students that are present and plan make-up days for absent students. DEED relies on

district and school administrators to help them obtain the needed sample. In 2022 Alaska's participation rate was between 82 - 89 percent.

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SENATOR KIEHL asked the department to provide the committee with the demographics of the 11 - 18 percent of students who do not participate in the assessment.

MS. MANNING said she would see whether DEED had that information. DEED does have the demographics of students who did participate.

[4:01:33 PM](#)

MS. MANNING turned to slide 8 and said mCLASS with DIBELS 8th Edition is an early literacy screener. It is a new statewide screening assessment required by the Reads ACT. It informs teachers of reading resource needs and instruction for individual students. It takes K - 3rd-grade teachers approximately 30 minutes to administer.

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MS. GRENINGER advanced to slide 9 and said AK STAR is an assessment system designed for and by Alaskan educators over several years. DEED implemented it in 2022 and continues to work on merging summative and interim assessments into one system. AK STAR includes a summative assessment to measure student achievement concerning grade level expectations and aligns it with the Alaska Academic Content Standards, specifically in math and English language arts in grades 3-9. AK STAR also includes an interim assessment that measures student growth with national norms. The AK STAR assessment brings the interim and summative assessments together in the spring.

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MS. GRENINGER turned to slide 10 and said the graphic provides more details about the AK STAR assessment and its connected approach. She said connecting the two assessments creates a holistic system that better informs teaching and learning. A goal in creating the system was to benefit the teaching and learning process by having real-time information about students available to teachers, students, and parents. The system is also growth-oriented. A growth-oriented approach allows students to celebrate their progress, although they may need to improve their proficiency. AK STAR achieves its growth-oriented component through the interim assessment. Like the MAP assessment, AK STAR has an adaptive component inherent in its

design and offers students a unique experience. A student's performance as they take the test is the bases for the items they will see as they work through the assessment. The connected approach is also more efficient because it reduces testing events by merging the two pieces into one evaluation. In the past, MAP Growth and the summative assessment were independent. Through the AK STAR experience, the department can produce scores for the summative and growth components in one testing experience.

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SENATOR BJORKMAN thanked the department for integrating the assessments and making them more useful. He opined that the previous stand-alone assessments were not useful because integrating them with other student assessments was difficult. He asked if there was anything different about the AK STAR test that students need to know before taking it.

[4:08:00 PM](#)

MS. GRENINGER replied that the department strived to achieve a streamlined focus for the two assessments. The department is working with the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), the creator of MAP Growth, to design AK STAR. Although the tests use different platforms, many of MAP Growth's features are included in AK STAR to familiarize students with the experience. DEED employed universal design principles to ensure the tools and resources available to students in AK STAR were familiar. MAP Growth and AK STAR use a wide variety of item types. The department has created a series of student readiness tools, such as practice tests, to share the item types and universal tools and how they operate. The materials are available to parents, students, and teachers to prepare students for testing.

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SENATOR BJORKMAN asked if the department did what it could to create a resemblance between the two tests.

[4:11:09 PM](#)

MS. MANNING replied that it did. She reiterated that the AK STAR is still in development, and the department will continue to align the two assessments as much as possible.

SENATOR BJORKMAN exclaimed that is great because training students to take tests takes time, especially when the assessments are electronic.

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SENATOR STEVENS asked Ms. Manning to be more specific about how the department reduced testing.

MS. GRENINGER replied that the department analyzed MATH Growth and AK STAR last year. She stated she would provide the committee with exact numbers. The fall and winter MAP Growth assessments took approximately 1 - 1.5 hours per assessment. Integrating MAP Growth into AK STAR adds some time to AK STAR but not 1 - 1.5 hours. The estimate of three hours to complete AK STAR encompasses both assessment systems.

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MS. MANNING said districts would have one less testing window, saving time and creating efficiency.

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SENATOR KIEHL asked whether the state requires practice tests and student training.

[4:15:08 PM](#)

MS. GRENINGER said student readiness activities are voluntary. The state provides districts with training, resources, and guidance. The information can be found on the department's website. The state has held a readiness day for AK STAR and the Alaska Science assessment for the past two years. DEED encourages districts to evaluate their technology and expose students to the tutorials and practice tests. Feedback shows that the use of these resources is helpful to students.

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SENATOR KIEHL requested that DEED share the names of the districts that do not make time for training and practice. He stated he would also like to know the districts that do not hold the two optional MAPS assessments.

CHAIR TOBIN asked DEED to submit the information to her office for distribution.

SENATOR STEVENS asked if districts only test students attending brick-and-mortar schools.

MS. MANNING replied that assessments are made available to all students. However, parents can opt their children out of testing. Opting out occurs more with students in correspondence schools. Parents of correspondence students opt out of MAP Growth assessments less because it helps them with decision-

making, and students can take it remotely. She stated that the presentation has data that breaks down assessment participation.

[4:18:53 PM](#)

MS. GRENINGER moved to slide 11 and said the federal and state target for student assessment participation is 95 percent, which Alaska schools fall short of as follows:

Student Participation in Spring 2022 Assessments

	<u>AK STAR ELA</u>	<u>AK STAR MATH</u>	<u>ALASKA SCIENCE</u>
All Alaska Schools	79.7 percent	79.5 percent	75.2 percent
Non-correspondence schools	92.8 percent	92.5 percent	88.5 percent
Correspondence schools	14.9 percent	14.9 percent	12.5 percent

MS. GRENINGER stated that the department must report assessment participation to the federal government. It is essential to note that not all students are represented in the tested population, which makes it important to understand the limitations of the results. DEED continues to work with districts to increase participation.

[4:21:21 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN stated that when the federal government passed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), there was much discussion in Alaska about participation, ratings, and impacts. He asked how participation in the AK STAR assessment impacts school districts' ratings according to Alaska's ESSA model and what are the federal impacts.

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MS. GRENINGER said she did not work directly with the accountability system and deferred the question.

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MS. MANNING stated she is also not involved with the accountability system but would provide the committee with information regarding the participation rate and how it factors into accountability.

[4:22:31 PM](#)

MS. GRENINGER stated that the right side of slide 11 provides a snapshot of Alaska's NAEP results from spring 2022. It shows that Alaska's performance trails in both grade levels and subjects compared to the national public performance. Students in grades 4 and 8 are roughly 25 percent proficient in reading, fewer than half were proficient on the math assessment. She said DEED used the landscape of performance of the various assessments to make decisions about students, districts, and programming.

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CHAIR TOBIN noted that more information about NAEP and other assessments is available on DEED's website.

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MS. GRENINGER stated that the assessment brief on slide 11 is found on DEED's website and was widely distributed last fall.

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MS. GRENINGER turned to slide 12 and said knowing the achievement title definitions will assist in understanding upcoming assessment information. She provided the state's definitions for the four achievement levels as follows:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Proficient

Advanced (A) Student meets the standards and demonstrates mastery of the knowledge and skills on a range of complex grade level content.

Proficient (P) Student meets the standards and demonstrates mastery of the knowledge and skills of most grade level content.

Non-Proficient

Approaching Proficient (AP) Student partially meets the standards and may have gaps in knowledge and skills but is approaching mastery of some grade level content.

Needs Support (NS) Student may partially meet the standards but need support to

master the knowledge and skills of current grade level content.

She stated that the department changed the non-proficient title definitions to be student-centered and assets-focused. The new definitions acknowledged students' progress on a continuum of learning and were presented to stakeholders and approved by the Alaska State Board of Education in the spring of 2022.

4:26:33 PM

MS. GRENINGER moved to slide 13, AK STAR English language arts Achievement Level Percentages, and said the pie graph represents all of Alaska's students in grades K - 9 by their achievement levels. The chart shows that 70 percent of Alaska's students have not reached English language arts (ELA) proficiency. She described ways the data could provide a better understanding of student performance.

4:28:08 PM

MS. GRENINGER turned to slide 14 and said the graph breaks down students' performance on the ELA assessment across grades K - 9. Students in grades 5 - 6 tended to have the highest achievement levels relative to other grades. Students in grade 7 demonstrated the greatest need for support at 55 percent. Each grade had at least 60 percent of students scoring in the non-proficient achievement category. Seventy-nine and a half percent of students in the third grade need to meet grade-level expectations.

4:28:58 PM

SENATOR KIEHL said he finds slides 14 and 15 fascinating because they show massive shifts in the proportion of proficient students from grade to grade, and there are no general trend lines. He asked how the department explains the fluctuations, such as the doubling of the proportion of proficient students in grade 4 or a 35 percent drop in the number of students who need support in grade 5.

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MS. MANNING replied that typically the state would look for trends, but no statewide data was available during COVID, making it challenging to ascertain trend indicators. Data from the pandemic is challenging because there are no trends to look back at, and instruction was highly varied. She said that to address the issue, the department would take data from the second administration of the Alaska System of Academic Readiness (AK STAR) and do validation studies of cut scores. The department

will compare its findings to last year's analysis. In this way, the state will have two years of data to examine for trends this summer. The department can respond to trend data as further assessments and analysis occur.

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SENATOR KIEHL asked the department if a couple of administrations validated the assessment.

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MS. MANNING said DEED did an entire administration of the new assessment last spring. When new assessments are developed, a sampling of students might be tested. However, for the AK STAR, there needed to be more historical data to compare a sample against, and the department needed an assessment of all students for the alignment to MAP Growth. The items the department uses for AK STAR come from a pool other states use. DEED did various alignments of standards, which it continues to validate.

[4:33:18 PM](#)

MS. GRENINGER said the additional process last summer was a standards setting, a precursor to the validation work that will happen in the spring. Standards setting occurs any time there is a new assessment. The department did it for both AK STAR and the Alaska Science Assessment. It is a rigorous process that defines the scores students receive by following psychometric properties and the engagement of stakeholders, which she described in further detail. Once the cut scores were set, the department reviewed the information and presented it to its technical advisory committee for advice on meeting state and federal expectations.

[4:35:47 PM](#)

MS. GRENINGER said the state board of education approved the cut scores. However, because of the innovative nature of Alaska's assessment system, DEED would do an extra validation study this year. The validation study will allow the department to reflect on the second year of results through a process similar to cut scores and make adjustments if necessary.

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CHAIR TOBIN said she would like the department's presentation to be more granular next year by providing details that affect scores, such as class size. She stated that the additional information would help the legislature better determine how they can help students.

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SENATOR BJORKMAN asked when the math, science, and English language arts standards last changed.

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MS. MANNING replied that the English language arts and math standards had not been updated since 2012.

[4:38:12 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN asked when the science standards were last updated.

MS. MANNING stated her belief that science standards were updated in 2018.

[4:38:26 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN asked the department to provide the data to the committee.

[4:38:45 PM](#)

MS. GRENINGER turned to slide 15 and said the pie chart represents AK STAR mathematics achievement level percentages for 3rd - 9th-grade students. The chart shows that 77 percent of Alaska's students are non-proficient.

[4:39:22 PM](#)

MS. GRENINGER moved to slide 16 and said the bar graph shows a pie chart breakdown by grade level. All grades had upwards of 65 percent of students in the non-proficient category. Students in 5th grade achieved 34 percent proficiency, the highest level of all grades. Students in grade 8 demonstrated the greatest need for support at 75 percent. Eighty-seven percent of students in 8th grade did not meet grade-level expectations.

[4:40:07 PM](#)

MS. GRENINGER moved to slide 17, Alaska Science Assessment Achievement Level Percentages, and stated that districts administered the test in the 5th, 8th, and 10th grades. Sixty-two percent of students were determined to be non-proficient.

[4:40:39 PM](#)

MS. GRENINGER turned to slide 18 and said the pie chart breakdown shows 5th grade with the highest level of proficiency at forty-two percent. Students in 8th grade demonstrated the greatest need for support at 44.7 percent. Across all three grade levels, approximately 55 percent of students are in the

non-proficient category. Sixty-five percent of students in 8th grade are non-proficient.

[4:41:22 PM](#)

CHAIR TOBIN stated that she is curious about the synergy between music and math, and art and science. She asked if there is a way to correlate the attrition of these programs to the contribution of lower achievement scores.

[4:42:19 PM](#)

MS. MANNING advanced to slide 19 and spoke about how Alaska is responding to the 2022 assessment results and using them to support Alaska's Education Challenge:

[Original punctuation provided.]

- Interpretive resources
- Standards alignment
- Data-driven decisions
- Accelerated learning

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MS. MANNING turned to slide 20 and presented the department contact information.

[4:46:04 PM](#)

SENATOR BJORKMAN thanked the department for aligning assessments and making the summative test more beneficial for students, teachers, and parents. He commented that the state has come a long way with its student testing.

CHAIR TOBIN thanked the presenters.

[4:48:03 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Tobin adjourned the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting at 4:48 p.m.