

State Board of Education & Early Development
Approved Minutes
September 22, 2021
Virtual Platform Meeting
Department of Education & Early Development
801 West 10th Street
Juneau, AK 99801

Wednesday, September 22, 2021

Chair Fields called the meeting to order at 3:09 pm. After the pledge of allegiance, the board adopted the agenda for September 22, 2021. Member Van Diest moved to adopt the agenda and was seconded by Member Kowalski. There were no objections to the adoption of the agenda. There were no potential conflicts of interest identified by board members at this meeting. First Vice Chair Hamilton was excused from attendance. Member Griffin and Member Erickson were not present.

Agenda Item 1. Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Johnson provided introductory comments and introduced the Division of Innovation and Education Excellence (IEE)'s Director, Susan McKenzie, to the board. Director McKenzie then presented a PowerPoint which informed the board on the School Improvement Updates that the division is currently undertaking to align with the five priorities of Alaska's Education Challenge.

Director McKenzie discussed five projects that the IEE division is undertaking to support the mission of the Department of Education and Early Development. The first project centered around the approach of evidence-based reading instruction and the introduction of Alaska's Reading Playbook which is based on the Science of Reading. The project was started in the spring of 2020 and IEE division is currently finishing phase two of three.

The second project that Director McKenzie discussed was a refresh and refocus of the Alaska Standards. The IEE division is reevaluating the Alaska Standards because, although 71% of students are being successful on their assignments, only 17% of those assignments actually meet grade level standards. The refresh of the Alaska Standards allows the department to reset the bar so that students know what they should be learning at their current grade level as well as the grade level above them. The IEE division is also drafting parent resources so that parents can see what their child is supposed to be learning in their current grade in a user-friendly format.

The third project that the IEE division is currently working on is the implementation of a successful school improvement project. This project assists low performing schools with targeted and comprehensive support. The goal of this project is that by the end of the school year, the department's State System of Support is providing differentiated assistance to build local school and community capacity for improving results in student performance. This targeted support works with schools that have been designated for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) and Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI). As of now, there are five districts that will be participating with plans to add more districts as the project grows. The department is working to provide these districts with an Empowerment Specialist that would provide training and coordinate efforts so that these schools have the support they need. The district in turn would provide a liaison to engage with tribal leaders and the community to help develop a plan to improve student performance.

The fourth project that the IEE division is currently working on is the new assessment and data literacy project. The goal of this new assessment is to improve student growth outcomes and then to broaden the understanding of how assessment information can inform instruction. The plan for this new assessment is that the fall and winter assessments would serve as a summative assessment to provide input on student growth and progress. The three parts to the professional learning components of this new assessment are certified facilitator training, live and remote trainings, and self-directed online learning. The department is excited for this new assessment as they hope to provide a more complete assessment of student growth.

The fifth project that the IEE division is currently working on is the formation of a provider's roundtable. The purpose of this roundtable is to form a collaborative effort to strengthen what the department is doing to align professional learning to the five priorities of Alaska's Education Challenge and to provide a regular setting for stakeholders to connect and learn from one another. The IEE division plans to provide an overview of literacy learning opportunities from organizations and within districts. They also hope to increase opportunities for strategic collaboration and to communicate those opportunities via a state calendar that stakeholders will have access to. This calendar is currently on the Alaska Learns website and is available for anyone to view.

At the conclusion of her presentation, Director McKenzie then took comments and questions from the board.

Commissioner Johnson concluded the meeting by thanking the board and the IEE division for their work and presentation.

Meeting adjourned at 3:45 pm.